

## LITTLE OWL *ATHENA NOCTUA* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The little owl was introduced into Britain (Kent and Northamptonshire) in the late 1800s. It is not a UKBAP priority species but is considered to be significant locally.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority species (P) or species of conservation concern (S)	S
EC Birds Directive 1979	-
Conservation Regulations 1994	Sch. 2
Berne Convention 1982	App. II
Bonn Convention 1979	-
CITES 1975	Annex A
WCA 1981	Part I Section 1
Birds of Conservation Concern List <sup>30</sup>	-



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### 2. CURRENT STATUS

#### 2.1 UK and Wales

The little owl colonised much of Britain following several introductions in southern England from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Monmouthshire was the first Welsh county the owl reached, with breeding reported in 1914 near Chepstow. It has since spread widely over much of England and Wales, and parts of Scotland, with the exception of areas on very high ground. Breeding numbers have declined rapidly in recent years. It is both diurnal and nocturnal, hunting small birds and mammals, and large insects, over open farmland, parks and gardens, and unused industrial areas. It breeds in hollow trees, wall cavities and old quarry crevices.

#### 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough

This is an owl of the agricultural landscape where there are hedges, and where there are old trees and buildings, or even rabbit burrows, providing holes for nesting. It is also found in old quarries and at the moorland edge. In Gwent it is mainly absent from the major urban areas and also from the more extensive woodlands, where it may be out-competed by the larger tawny owl. There are a number of possible breeding sites in Caerphilly county borough but surveys are needed to confirm these.

#### 2.2 Links with Habitats

- *Deciduous Woodlands* (lowland wood pasture and parkland)
- **Wildlife Corridors (hedgerows)**
- *Urban* (old buildings, unused urban industrial sites, public parks)
- *Common Land*
- *Post-Industrial Land*
- Scrub areas

### 3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Loss of habitat due to:
  - Over-mowing of urban grassland areas
  - Scrub clearance
  - Excessive use of insecticides and rodenticides
- Loss of nest sites such as hollow trees, old buildings and quarries.

### 4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 Preservation of rough grassland areas, parkland management and the provision of nest boxes.
- 4.2 Education at schools and colleges.
- 4.3 Sympathetic management of sites; grass cutting, rodenticide and insecticide use.
- 4.4 Monitoring of nest sites – ringing and/or marking nestlings<sup>41</sup>.
- 4.5 The Gwent Ornithological Society and Glamorgan Bird Club gather information from its members on the distribution of little owls and other birds and both bodies publish annual bird reports<sup>17, 18, 19</sup>.
- 4.6 BTO's Breeding Bird Survey contributes to regular monitoring of breeding population<sup>6</sup>.

### 5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

#### 5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable to this species.

#### 5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Maintain current distribution and populations by conserving existing foraging, nesting and breeding habitats (Target: ongoing).
- 5.2.2 Identify confirmed breeding sites in the county borough (Target: 2005).
- 5.2.3 Identify possible new habitats and create a number of further nesting sites (Target: 2008).

### 6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<b>6.1 Policy and Legislation</b>											
None proposed at this time.											

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<b>6.2 Site Safeguard and Management</b>											
6.2.1 Maintain the current extent and quality of foraging habitats such as hedgerows, parklands, etc. through appropriate management.	CCBC	GWT GLWT CCW landowners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.2.2 Seek to create new habitat for the species, providing a network of foraging sites and linking nesting sites.	CCBC	GWT GLWT WOWLS landowners		✓					✓		
<b>6.3 Species Management and Protection</b>											
6.3.1 Seek to create new nesting sites by providing nest boxes and safeguarding mature trees in suitable areas.	WOWLS	GWT GLWT CCBC		✓					✓		
6.3.2 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>6.4 Advisory</b>											
6.4.1 Produce advisory material for landowners and other interested parties on the requirements of owl species and sympathetic management of habitats.	CBP	WOWS	✓								
6.4.2 Disseminate information regarding ringing of owlets and the monitoring of nest sites to interested organisations and relevant individuals.	WOWLS	GBC GOS BTO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>6.5 Future Research and Monitoring</b>											
6.5.1 Survey all possible breeding sites and habitats to identify where the little owl is or would be likely to breed and benefit from nest-site creation.	WOWLS	GBC GOS BTO	✕								
6.5.2 Monitor all known breeding sites on a regular basis.	GBC GOS	WOWLS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>6.6 Communications and Publicity</b>											
6.6.1 Encourage membership of wildlife trusts and local ornithological societies.	CBP	GWT GLWT GOS GBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6.2 Provide schools and colleges in the county borough with information in order to educate children, parents and teachers about the conservation status of owls in the local area.	CBP	WOWLS Schools Youth Forum		✓					✓		
6.6.3 Use all relevant publicity material to discourage the use of insecticides and rodenticides.	CBP	FUW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✕ Survey year to be determined.