

LONG-EARED OWL *ASIO OTUS* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

Although it is not a priority species in the UKBAP, the long-eared owl is a UK species of conservation concern³⁹ and is of importance locally.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority species (P) or species of conservation concern (S)	S
EC Birds Directive 1979	-
Berne Convention 1982	Appendix II
Bonn Convention 1979	-
CITES 1975	Annex A
WCA 1981	Part I, Section 1
Birds of Conservation Concern List ³⁰	-



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2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

The long-eared owl is a nocturnal hunter and feeds mainly on small mammals and occasionally on small birds. It hunts over coniferous and, sometimes, deciduous woodlands and their margins.

There is a population increase in the winter months as migrant birds from the colder regions of Europe arrive in Britain. It is often seen in communal winter roosts in low scrub trees and young conifers. It breeds mainly in old woodland corvid nests, in both coniferous and deciduous woodlands. Breeding populations of the long-eared owl are contracting and declining, with numbers estimated at 2,000 – 2,500.

2.1 Caerphilly County Borough

In the Gwent/Glamorgan area the main nesting habitat is thicket/early mature stage conifers and the hunting habitats are coedcae/ffridd, rhos pasture, upland heath and re-stock areas. There is one recent record of the long eared owl in Caerphilly county borough around Cwmcarn, and a historical record from Wern Ddu. The species is thought to be under-recorded because of its nocturnal habit and is easily overlooked. More survey work is required.

2.2 Links with Habitats

- **Planted Coniferous Woodlands**
- *Deciduous Woodlands*
- *Species-rich Grasslands* (rhos pasture)
- *Coedcae/ffridd*
- *Heathland* (upland heath)

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Loss of foraging areas is one of the main factors affecting the long-eared owl, for example loss of rough grasslands through excessive cutting.
- Over-use of rodenticides and pesticides.

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 Many SIN C sites have been designated which contain woodland habitat suitable to support long-eared owls⁸.
- 4.2 The Gwent Ornithological Society and Glamorgan Bird Club gather information from its members on the distribution of long-eared owls and other birds, and both bodies publish annual bird reports^{17, 18, 19}.
- 4.3 BTO's Breeding Bird Survey contributes to regular monitoring of breeding population⁶.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable to this species.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Identify and maintain current breeding numbers, and continue survey work to identify new breeding areas. (Target: ongoing)
- 5.2.2 Protect important breeding and roosting sites. (Target: ongoing)

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
6.1 Policy and Legislation											
None proposed at this time.	-	-									
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Maintain the current extent and quality of breeding and roosting sites, especially in coniferous woodlands, through appropriate management.	FC	CCBC, GWT, GLWT landowners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.2.2 Maintain and seek to enhance the current extent of hunting habitats through sympathetic management of rhos pasture, ffridd and upland heath.	CCBC	GWT GLWT landowners									
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Seek to create new nesting sites by providing nest baskets and safeguarding areas of conifer thicket.	WOWLS	FC GWT GLWT CCBC			✓					✓	

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.3 Species Management and Protection (continued)											
6.3.2 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Produce advisory material for landowners and other interested parties, about the requirements of the species and sympathetic management of habitats.	CBP	-	✓								
6.4.2 Disseminate information about ringing of owlets and the monitoring of nest sites to interested parties.	WOWLS	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Monitor nest and roost sites annually, marking young owlets	WOWLS	GBC GOS BTO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Encourage membership of wildlife trusts and local ornithological societies.	CBP	GWT GLWT GBC GOS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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	CCBC Schools Youth Forum WOWLS		✓					✓		
6.6.3 Use all relevant publicity material to discourage the use of insecticides and rodenticides.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓