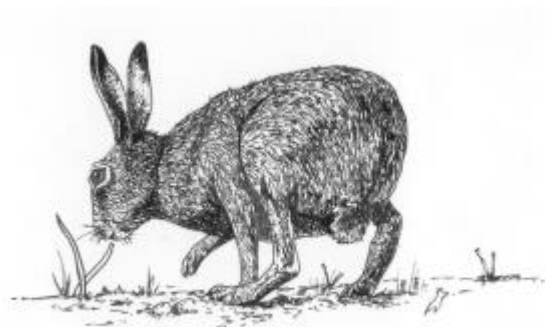


BROWN HARE *LEPUS EUROPAEUS* SPECIES ACTION PLAN**1. INTRODUCTION**

The brown hare is a familiar mammal of open countryside throughout most of Britain. It is primarily nocturnal and feeds on grasses, cereals and root crops. It is a UK priority species with a UK SAP³⁹ and CCW has identified it as a priority in Wales.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority (P) or species of conservation concern (S)	P
EC Habitats Directive	-
Conservation Regs 1994	-
Berne Convention 1982	Appendix III
Bonn Convention 1979	-
CITES 1975	-
WCA 1981	-
Other Legislation	Ground Game Act 1880
	Hare Protection Act 1911
Other Species Status	RDB Mammals (1993)



© CCBC 2002

2. CURRENT STATUS**2.1 UK and Wales**

The brown hare is widespread throughout the UK and Ireland, although its numbers have declined substantially since the 1960s. Current brown hare population estimates range between 800,000 - 1,250,000, only 20% of the estimated hare population that occurred in 1880. The Ground Game Act 1880 affords the species limited protection during the breeding period, from the beginning of March – end of July.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

The current population in Caerphilly county borough is not known, as a detailed survey of the area has never been undertaken. There are a few known sites for the brown hare in the county borough, but it is likely that it is under-recorded due to several factors, including its nocturnal habits, possible confusion with the rabbit and because it is not considered rare or threatened.

2.3 Links with Habitats

- **Species-rich Grasslands** (lowland neutral, acid and wet grasslands; rhos pasture)
- **Heathland** (lowland heath)
- **Common Land**
- **Arable fields**

2.4 Links with Other Species

Other species that share similar habitats to the brown hare include:

- *Grey Partridge*
- *Skylark*
- *Song thrush*
- *Tree Sparrow*

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Conversion of grassland to arable farmland.
- Loss of general habitat diversity in the agricultural landscape, such as field margins and hedgerows as well as crop diversity.
- Intensive farmed land (includes high stocking rates and improvement of grassland through reseeding, fertilising, ploughing, levelling and improving drainage).
- Changes in planting and cropping regimes.
- Wet springs are thought to have adverse effects on breeding performance.
- Changes in the fox population, as they are a key predator of leverets.

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 Sympathetic management under the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme benefit hares.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS**5.1 UK Objectives and Targets**

- 5.1.1 Maintain the current range and population.
- 5.1.2 In the long term, expand the current range through natural re-colonisation and landscape enhancement into areas where research shows that climate and landscape features are suitable.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Establish the baseline status and distribution of the brown hare in Caerphilly county borough. (Target: 2004)
- 5.2.2 Halt the decline of the breeding population in Caerphilly county borough (Target: 2005).
- 5.2.3 Enhance breeding sites and important feeding areas with the aim of increasing hare population levels within the county borough. (Target: ongoing)
- 5.2.4 Enhance breeding success through protection of breeding 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											
6.1.1 Ensure Policies and Strategies do not adversely affect hares.	CCW	CCBC WDA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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 (continued)											
6.1.2 Ensure that consideration is given to breeding sites and the surrounding habitat when developing structure plans and assessing planning applications; and establish mechanisms to ensure a regular survey of suitable grasslands allotted for development.	CCBC	CCW WDA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.3 Consider the requirements of hares when reviewing agri-environment schemes, such as Tir Gofal and Woodland Grant Schemes /Woodland Improvement Grants (CCW, NAWAD, FC) and in habitat creation/reclamation schemes (WDA).	CCW	NAWAD FC WDA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.4 Consider designating sites with breeding brown hare populations as SINCs, SSSIs or LNRs.	CCW	CCBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.5 Work with the EA to ensure the needs of hares are taken into account in LEAPs.	CCW	EA CCBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Review management of habitats owned and managed by CCBC. Develop a good code of practice in relation to the conservation and management of grasslands which are of value to hares.	CCBC	CCW		✓							
6.2.2 Consider the use of management agreements (Local Authority and Tir Gofal, etc) to improve important habitats.	CCW	CCBC			✓						
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Introduce favourable management of existing sites.	CCBC	CCW WDA FC NAWAD	✓								
6.3.2 Liaise with neighbouring Wildlife Trusts/Local Authorities/FWAG to formulate a recruitment strategy.	CBP	-				✓					
6.3.3 Encourage members of the public, local businesses, consultancies and other wildlife / environmental groups to report hare sightings.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3.4 Coordinate the collation of records obtained by members of the public and other sources within the region to produce a database of information from which distribution maps can be produced.	CBP	-		✓							
6.3.5 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	CCW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Advise project officers for WGS and Tir Gofal of the location of key breeding sites, their importance and surrounding area habitat management.	CCW	CCBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.4 Advisory (continued)											
6.4.2 Raise awareness of hares and advise key landowners and managers, and other relevant organisations in the vicinity of important populations on appropriate habitat management for conservation.	CCW	CCBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Carry out a county-wide survey to provide estimates of population size and distribution.	CCW	CCBC GWT GLWT Mammal Soc.		✓							
6.5.2 Develop guidelines and policies for habitat protection, creation and management on and around breeding sites.	CCW	CCBC			✓						
6.5.3 Search for and assess the importance of breeding sites with a view to establishing protection for key sites.	CCW	CCBC GWT GLWT			✓						
6.5.4 Develop and maintain a database for hare records.	CBP	(CCW)	✓								
6.5.5 Participate in national monitoring schemes.	CBP	(CCW CCBC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Provide leaflet on species and habitat management.	CBP	-			✓						
6.6.2 Operate a programme of educational activities and events to raise awareness of hare conservation issues amongst the general public, land managers and businesses. Consider using relevant organisations and appropriate media sources.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓