

# **OVERTON BIODIVERSITY SOCIETY**

## **FIRST REPORT FOR THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 2002 TO MARCH 2004**

**Following an initiative originating from Overton Parish Council, a group of people first met in November 2002 to consider the possibility of studying the biodiversity of the Parish of Overton. They agreed that there was sufficient interest and enthusiasm to begin such a project. By March 2003 fifteen people were meeting regularly. They had agreed the Objectives for the group (see Annex 1) and identified the first two areas for investigation: to carry out a hedgerow survey and to create a 'Base Map'.**

**The 'Base Map' covers the whole parish and records – as far as possible – all the different habitats within the parish. This large-scale map gives a quick overview of habitats and can easily be modified/amended in the light of further investigation or as land use changes. It has the added bonus of drawing local people into lively and useful discussion.**

**The decision to make the Hedgerow Survey the principle focus was taken for a number of reasons.**

- 1. The national importance of hedgerows as wildlife habitats**
- 2. The ease with which they can be identified**
- 3. The fact that Defra had recently agreed on a national methodology for surveying hedgerows**
- 4. A wide variety of people could take part in the survey work**
- 5. It could be fun! The local primary school children were involved in a pilot survey – this was found to be a great success.**

**A Preliminary Hedgerow Report has now been produced. This is based on the twenty-one hedgerows that have been surveyed and recorded. (see note 1) Results have shown that the most common species are hawthorn, dog rose, blackthorn, bramble and hazel and the most abundant species hawthorn, blackthorn and hazel. Together these comprise more than half of the species range of the hedgerows. It has also been shown that most of the surveyed hedgerows are *species rich*, i.e. they have more than five species. This is a very healthy sign as it shows they may be relatively old and potentially provide rich habitats for a variety of species both vertebrate and invertebrate. A number of recently planted hedgerows are also species rich, which is a tribute to the environmental awareness of our local farmers.**

**Community support has been a priority from the outset. A First Open Meeting was held in June 2003 to explain the meaning of biodiversity, inform people of our aims, and to seek their support. As a result of this over 35 people volunteered to assist with the hedgerow survey and about fifteen to keep regular wildlife diaries. The local primary school children keep their own Nature Diary and have designed our beautiful logos. Throughout the year various other activities were arranged to either inform or involve parishioners. These have included displays, walks and talks and a very successful photographic competition for which there were 37 entries. (see note 2)**

**Work has now begun on two other projects designed to improve environmental facilities and to involve the local community. One is the development of a nature trail – it is hoped that this will be the first of a number of such trails. The other is the creation of a wildlife meadow – at the suggestion of Overton Parish Council - and will involve school children as well as adults in the construction and planting. These projects will both depend on funding and a grant application has recently been made. We are delighted that already a number of people have volunteered to work on these projects.**

**Members of OBS (Overton Biodiversity Society) are now involved in the Ancient Tree Survey. This is a national survey designed to record the location and health of the oldest trees in the country. And the most recent development has been that of a web-site.**

**Throughout the year we have also been concerned with establishing ourselves as a society – having drawn up the necessary constitution OBS was officially launched at the Open Meeting, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2004. Our initial membership numbers forty eight.**

**The members of OBS would like to thank express their thanks to the following people:**

- Our local farmers and landlords for their co-operation because without it we would not have been able to carry out some of the survey work.**
- The Parish Council of Overton and The Borough Council of Basingstoke and Deane from whom we have received both financial and practical support.**
- The children and staff of Overton Primary School for their support, survey work and the design of our logos.**
- Hampshire Wildlife Trust – especially Naomi Ewald - and Hampshire Biodiversity Centre who have helped with training and information.**
- Local business people especially The Hospice Shop and Overton Business Connections.**
- All the parishioners of Overton who have supported our work and become involved in surveys, keeping nature diaries, attending various activities and giving us much moral support.**

## **Notes**

### **1. *'Hedgerow Survey of the Parish of Overton – Preliminary Report'***

**See our web-site: [www.bike2nature.co.uk/OBS/](http://www.bike2nature.co.uk/OBS/)**

### **2. Activities.**

- Moth trapping sessions**
- Guided wildlife walks led by local farmers**
- Wildlife Photographic Competition**
- Open Evening/AGM**
- Bat walk**
- Bird walk**
- Walk to Micheldever Spoil Heaps (SSSI)**
- Displays in Library, Church Fête, Laverstoke Park Open Day**
- Talk on local birds by member of RSPB**
- Talk about Biodiversity by Member of Hampshire Wildlife Trust**
- OBS members giving talks to Overton Society and local branch of WI**

## **Annex: 1 Objectives of the Overton Biodiversity Society**

- To identify and record the natural and conservation resources of our local area**
- To identify important habitats and species including those that are locally distinctive**
- To prepare action plans for selected habitats and species**
- To encourage and support community involvement in habitat and species recording and monitoring**
- To raise local awareness and promote involvement in biodiversity conservation**
- To monitor the effects of Overton Biodiversity Society's activities**
- To review and update the Society's objectives and plans periodically**

**March 2004**