

## SPECIES ACTION PLAN: Brown Hare (*Lepus capensis*)

Associated Species Action Plans
Grey partridge
Skylark
Song thrush
Tree sparrow

### 1. Current Status

The brown hare is widely distributed throughout England and Wales, with the main populations occurring in the east of the country. Their preferred habitat is agricultural land especially rough pasture abutting arable land. They can also occur on lowland heathland, moorland, open woodland and parkland, within close proximity to agricultural land.

Nationally, the population is thought to be undergoing a steady decline, with an estimated decrease in numbers of around 75% since

the beginning of this Century. These figures are based upon data collected by the Game Conservancy Trust from game bag numbers and also from the national survey commissioned by the JNCC.

Locally, the extent of the hare population is unknown. EcoRecord contains records for the hare occurring in 4 one kilometre squares, 3 of which lie within Walsall Metropolitan Borough, with the fourth record occurring in north-east Birmingham. The majority of these records pre date 1990.

Associated Habitat Action Plans
Lowland heathland
Lowland grassland (all types)
Arable field margins & beetle banks
Woodland and Parkland
Hedgerows associated with farmland

### 2. Current factors affecting species.

- Change in agricultural practices through the conversion of rough pasture to grass leys, an increase in silage cropping, over grazing and the reduction of spring sown cereals.
- General loss of habitat diversity.
- Lack of knowledge about the life history of the brown hare.

### 3. Current action.

#### 3.1 Legal status.

Limited protection during the breeding period (1st March - 31st July) through the Ground Game Act 1880.

Included in the Red Data Book for British Mammals (1993), although this has no legal status.

### 3.2 Management, research and guidance.

There is a Brown Hare Steering Group which has produced a National Species Action Plan.

JNCC National Survey and Mammal Society Survey

### 4. Action plan objectives and targets.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Target</b>
1. Determine distribution and population of the brown hare in the plan area.	by 2006
2. Encourage recruitment from neighbouring counties.	by 2006
3. Bring all known sites containing brown hare into suitable management and protect existing sites from damage and destruction.	by 2006
4. Encourage the general public to be more aware of the conservation needs of the brown hare	by 2006
5. Encourage private landowners and public bodies to manage habitat appropriately for brown hares	by 2006

## 5. Proposed action with partners to meet objectives.

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number.
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
<b>5.1 Policy and legislation</b>										
Seek the inclusion of effective measures which protect brown hares and their habitats in the preparation of Unitary Development Plans and other policy documents.	LAs	EN, WT, FWAG	As UDPs and other policy documents are prepared.							3
All sites with brown hare populations to be notified as SINCS.	EN	LAs, WT	•	•				•	•	3
<b>5.2 Species management and protection</b>										
Introduce favourable management of existing sites.	LAs, FWAG, WT	EN	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	3
Liaise with neighbouring Wildlife Trusts/ Local Authorities/ FWAG to formulate a recruitment strategy.	LAs, FWAG, WT	EN	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	2
<b>5.3 Advisory</b>										
Set up a brown hare working party.	WT	LAs, EN, FWAG, LOs	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	1-5
<b>5.4 Future research and monitoring</b>										
Survey region for brown hare.	WT	LAs, Public	•	•	•	•	•	•		1
<b>5.5 Communications and publicity</b>										
Provide leaflet on species and habitat management.	WT	LAs, EN, FWAG, LOs	•	•	•	•	•	•		5
Increase general public awareness of the brown hare.	WT, LAs	EN	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	4

## **6. Co-ordination and review.**

This Biodiversity Action Plan will be implemented over 10 years with a first review after 5 years. A group will be set up to co-ordinate implementation and to report to the Biodiversity Steering Group. This group will meet at a minimum on a yearly basis.

Review will be carried out in conjunction with related Habitat and Species Action Plans as appropriate.

Review will consist of measuring achievement of targets. The group will, with the support of the Steering Group, develop and implement appropriate monitoring methods which will inform the review process.

The Action Plan will be revised and updated in the light of review results and any relevant changes in circumstances and/or additional information which becomes available during the review period.

In line with national guidance, the Steering Group will report to the UK Steering Group.

## **7. References**

Corbet G.B., Southern H.N. (eds) (1987) *The Handbook of British Mammals* 2nd edition. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford.