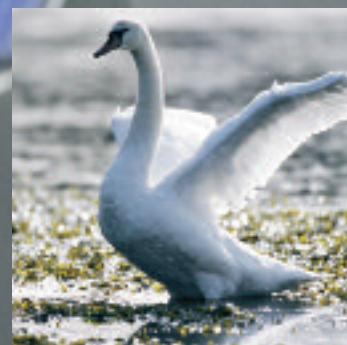
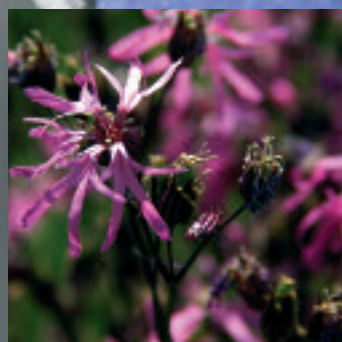
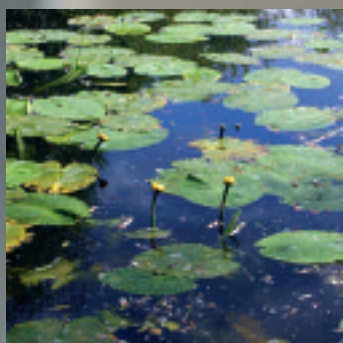


ACTION FOR NATURE CONSERVATION



Contents

A Vision for the Future

Biodiversity and Sustainability

Why it matters

Biodiversity – the Framework

International Framework

Regional Framework

Why we need a Local Biodiversity
Action Plan?

The Craigavon Borough Council
Approach

The Biodiversity Plan

Aims & Objectives

The Challenges

The Species and Habitats Action Plans

Craigavon's Nature Resources

Woodlands

Wet woodland

Parkland

Mixed Ash woodland

Wetlands

Eutrophic Lakes

Rivers and Canals

Fens

Reedbeds

Floodplain Grazing Marsh

Heaths and bogs

Grassland and Arable

Lowland Meadow

Purple Moorgrass and Rush Pasture

Ancient or Species Rich Hedgerows

Cereal Margins

Artificial Habitats

Designated Sites

Audit for Habitat and Species Action Plans

Species and Habitats for which Action Plans have been prepared

Making it happen

Landowners and Farmers

Business

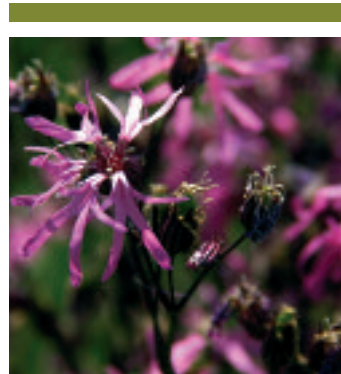
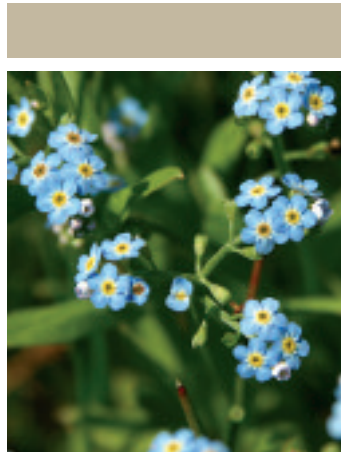
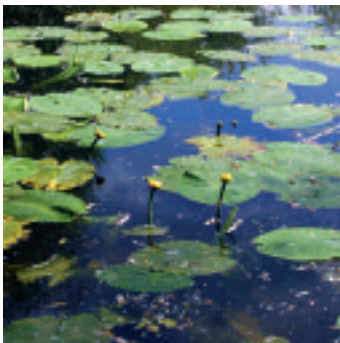
Community Action

Recreation Users

The Partnership

Cultural Interests

And Finally





A vision for the future

What do we want Craigavon to look like in the future? Certainly, a landscape that is rich in the animals and plants which has made the area so distinctive. A landscape that is enjoyed and used by the local people and tourists and whose richness and variety is an asset to the Borough.

Natural habitats and native animals and plants should flourish in a setting where sympathetic management of the natural environment allows them to prosper and even reverse some of the declines both in the quality of habitat and quantity of species that have occurred in recent years. Further, habitats that are rare or restricted should be actively conserved and extended and linked together wherever possible. Habitats that have deteriorated should be restored in quality.

Plants and animals native to the area should be encouraged and allowed to thrive. We must conserve the waders and ducks of the Lough, the farmland birds of the rolling pastures as well as the rarer species like the beautiful marsh fritillary butterfly of the wet grasslands and the equally magnificent orchids of the drier meadows.

However, we must accept that people should continue to play their part in this landscape managing it and enjoying it. Agriculture must be allowed to flourish on the land and fishing on the Lough. But both must be supported so that damaging practices can be eliminated and these land managers allowed to adopt practices which are profitable and support and sustain the environment.

Tourism will thrive in an environment which benefits all people. We have the example of the National Nature Reserve at Oxford Island which attracts over 200,000

people every year and is enjoyed by visitors and locals alike. The health benefits of exercising and relaxing in a rich natural environment will be fully realised.

Finally we entirely expect that the local community will be consulted and play their full part in the decision making. We see people enjoying and availing of this natural heritage with vibrant communities living and thriving. Further we will appreciate and understand the value of the resource that is being protected, a resource which will sustain us and continue to enrich our quality of life.

Mission Statement for Biodiversity in Craigavon Borough

“To protect and enhance the natural environment of the Craigavon area and to promote its appreciation and enjoyment to the public.”

The need to conserve Biodiversity in Craigavon

• Increasing interest in the environment

Interest in and concern for our natural environment and its wildlife has increased rapidly over the past few years. Much of this awareness is reflected in a growing public concern about the threats to our natural heritage, increased media coverage such as television natural history programmes, the large growth in the membership of many natural history organisations and an increasing desire to enjoy the countryside and its wildlife.

• Quality of Life

The benefits of protecting and managing our wildlife extend beyond those of protecting nature for its own sake and for future generations. Wildlife conservation is not just of great cultural and social value but it is necessary for our very survival. Apart from producing necessary oxygen, the presence of trees and vegetation can reduce the amount of airborne pollutants and improve air quality. Peat bogs are especially significant in this respect. The presence of wildlife also indicates a healthy environment - when air or water quality decreases, the wildlife are often the first indicators of this.

• Economic benefits

There are also direct economic benefits for tourism and industry from the implementation of a strong nature conservation policy. The image of the Borough as a place to visit, and as a location for new industry, can be enhanced by improving the environment for wildlife. High

value wildlife sites and attractive landscapes contribute to tourism opportunities in the area e.g. walking, cycling and birdwatching.

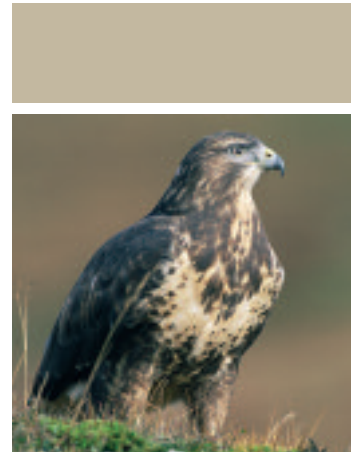
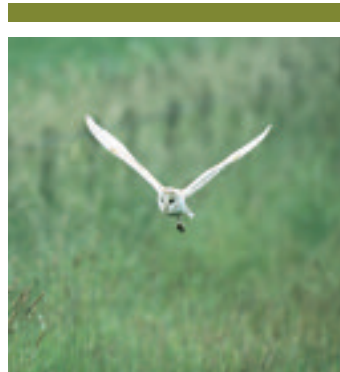
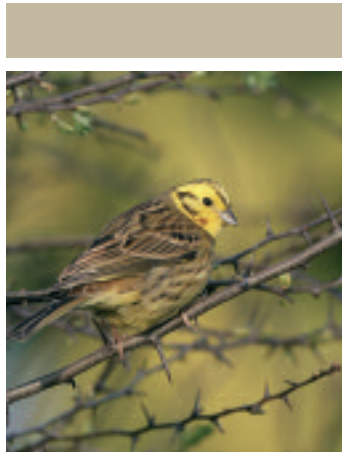
Natural products include food, fuel, medicines and construction materials

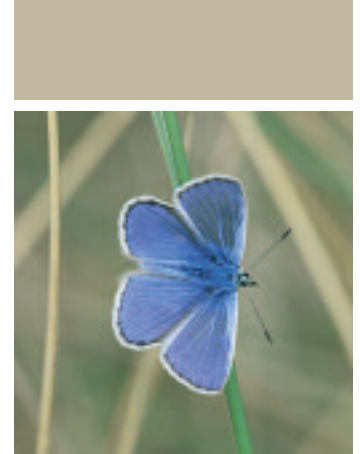
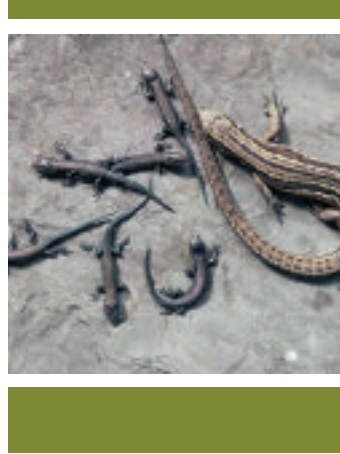
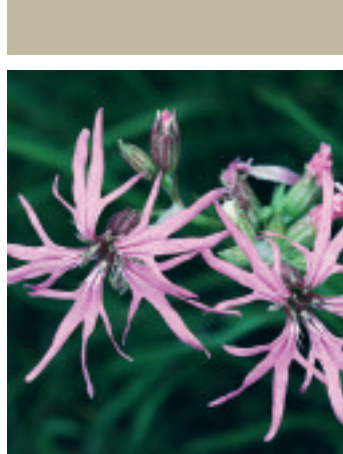
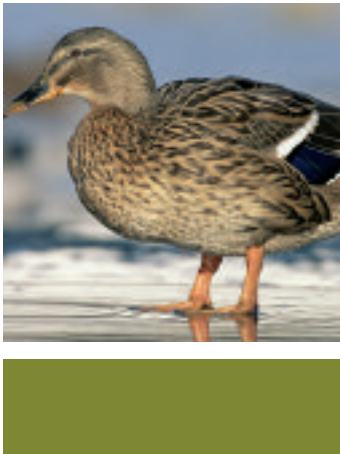
• Education resource

The natural environment is an excellent classroom and can offer areas of study for a wide range of subjects in the school curriculum. The Lough Neagh ecosystem is now given as a specific study topic in the GCSE syllabus. In a wider context it provides an opportunity to engage people on a local level with the big issues such as sustainability and global warming.

• Recreation

Areas of natural history interest often offer opportunities for informal recreation and it is well known that regular contact with nature can reduce stress and contribute to a community's well being. Everyone can benefit from the enjoyment of nature. Better community links could be established through the shared management and enjoyment of wildlife areas.





Biodiversity and Sustainability - Why it Matters

Biodiversity is life in all its shapes and varieties and encompasses all living things. In Craigavon we value our wild places and the animals and plants they include. We have a tremendous range of habitats from the urban and suburban gardens of the towns and villages to the vast waters of Lough Neagh and the rolling pastures of agricultural land to the wet places around the southern shore of the Lough.

We value these places and the plants and the animals they contain not only because we are part of it but also for the quality of life which they provide for us. However, it is important that we do not take them for granted and are aware of the tremendous effect we are having on our wildlife. Natural habitats and the animals and plants that live in them are being lost at an alarming rate. The pressures of development and agricultural improvement have combined to cause a loss of habitat and serious declines in a number of plant and animals.

Local Agenda 21 is the local community element of a national and international initiative of the United Nations to protect and preserve planet Earth and the way of life of its people. The principles of Local Agenda 21 are for a sustainable lifestyle and include the following:

- We must hand over to the next generation a world no less rich than the one we inherited
- Our culture is intricately bound up with the landscape and the wildlife
- So many organisms have been useful to us that we must conserve those about which we know little
- Life takes time to evolve but once lost it is impossible to replace
- Respect for the environment encourages respect for ourselves and power confers responsibility
- Our health is determined by the health of the environment

Biodiversity - The Framework

International Framework

As international concern grew over loss of Biodiversity, 178 countries, including the UK and Ireland, signed the Convention on Biodiversity at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. They also agreed to the sustainable use of the earth's resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of the range and variety of animals and plants (genetic resources).

In the same year the European Union also adopted the Habitats Directive which requires member states to

designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) to protect some of the most seriously threatened habitats and species across Europe.

Regional Framework

In 2002 the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy was published. This identified 15 major issues affecting Biodiversity in Northern Ireland. For each of these issues the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group (NIBG) proposed a number of specific recommendations. It identified lists of

priority species and habitats requiring conservation action in Northern Ireland. Latterly, a number of action plans to protect and enhance habitats and species have been published.

Why do we need a Local Biodiversity Action Plan?

If plans exist on a regional and national level why do we need a local plan?

Local people know and appreciate their own resource and for this reason alone a Local Plan is necessary. Each plan provides the opportunity for local people to decide on the priorities in their area and to have a full say in the preparation and implementation of the Plan. More than this, it provides the opportunity for everyone to feel part of the Plan and to contribute to the actions that we are all agreed upon.

- The local plan will ensure that national targets for species and habitats in the Northern Ireland Plan are translated into effective action at the local level. They also detail the actions required at a local level and what must be achieved on the ground.
- It will comprise species and habitats that are not included on the national or regional plans such as

the Bee Orchid and the Narrow Bordered Five-Spot Burnet moth. These are species which, although not a conservation priority elsewhere, have important populations in the Craigavon area.

- Develop long- term effective partnerships which are effective in taking action on the ground.
- Raise awareness of the local wildlife resource and the need for Biodiversity conservation.
- Establish a monitoring system for local priorities.

All action has to happen on a local level and the local plan determines what we do.

The Craigavon Borough Council Approach

Since its inception in 1973 Craigavon Borough Council has recognised the need to protect its wildlife and habitats. The establishment of its Conservation Service to manage the Oxford Island National Nature Reserve and other sites along the Lough Neagh shore placed Craigavon in a leading position to manage and value its countryside.

Craigavon was the first Council in Northern Ireland to appoint a Biodiversity Officer charged with preparing a Biodiversity Action Plan with the aim of conserving the natural heritage.

Biodiversity Plan

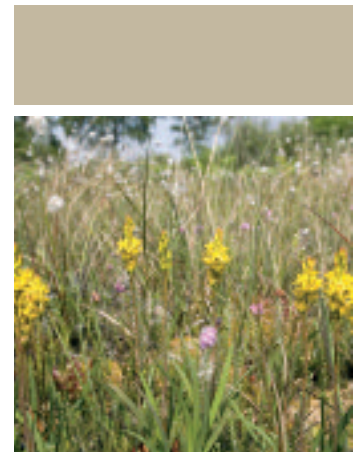
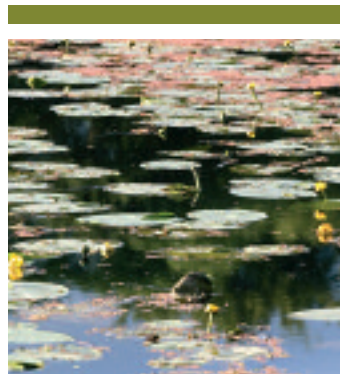
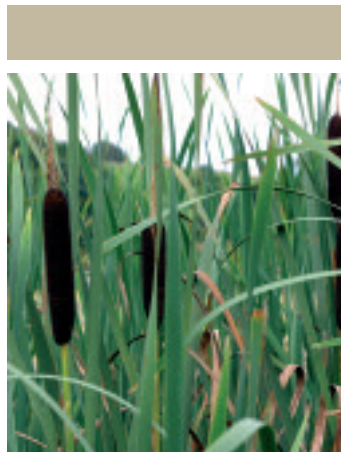
The aims and objectives

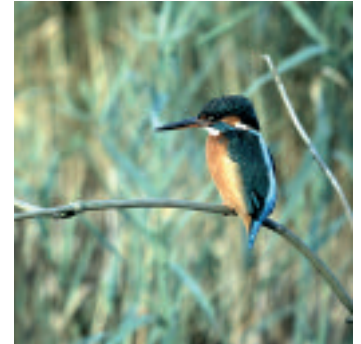
Craigavon established a Biodiversity Steering Group in 2004 to oversee the production of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). The aims of the LBAP were:-

1. Identify key species and habitats that are under threat in Craigavon Borough.
2. Prepare a plan in conjunction with other stakeholders
3. Target key actions which will conserve and enhance the environment and wildlife of Craigavon for the benefit of the visitors and locals alike.

4. Help people to discover more about wildlife in towns and in the countryside.
5. Encourage greater community involvement in practical conservation

One of the most exciting things about local Biodiversity action planning is that there is a role for everyone to play. Whether it is by being involved in a BAP Action Group, operating at the decision making level, volunteering with a local conservation group, tree planting, nest box building or digging ponds, you can be a part of Biodiversity action planning.





The Challenges

We should not underestimate the challenge before us. Preventing any further loss of Biodiversity by 2010, which is the UK target, is a giant peak to climb and we should appreciate that Biodiversity in Craigavon is still being lost at a significant rate. The pressures on Biodiversity will continue to mount. Economic development and the increase in living standards, with the consequent demand on resources, are pushing in the opposite direction.

We should also be realistic on our objectives. While there is a paramount need to raise awareness and introduce people to the concepts and ideas in Biodiversity we should also be honest about the outcomes. Introducing wildflowers into the garden or digging out a garden pool is admirable and a start and an opportunity for people to achieve something in their own space.

Preventing any further loss of Biodiversity can only be achieved by accepting and addressing the major challenges that we have set ourselves. It will only happen if we want it and are prepared to make it succeed but do we have an alternative if we accept our Vision for the Future?

The Habitats and Species Action Plans

Drawing up the individual habitat and species action plans has involved a wide range of organisations and individuals who have collaborated in the final document. Consultation with all relevant organisations has been sought and the draft plans have been made available to the public for their thoughts and comments. Individual specialists within organisations contributed greatly to the individual plans in consultation with other experts and relevant agencies.

The aim of the action plans written for the priority habitats and species is to provide a series of targets to be set and the actions agreed upon. All the action plans were adopted by Craigavon Borough Council.

Craigavon's Nature Resource

A key part of any Biodiversity plan must be an evaluation of the wildlife and habitats in the area. This should not only identify the species and habitats present but also local and national priorities in the context of the UK and the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategies.

The Conservation Service of the Borough has been surveying and documenting the natural resources of the area since its inception. This information helped to supplement the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR) records. Other data has gratefully received from RSPB, UWT, Woodland Trust, BTO, County Armagh Wildlife Society and many other amateur naturalists.

We have identified 5 broad habitat types in Craigavon and outline some of the main attributes of each and where they can be found. The key features of each are described followed by an inventory of the main habitats in the Borough which are most endangered and which are regarded as priority by the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and the Local Biodiversity Steering Group.

The key habitats are

- Woodland
- Wetlands
- Heathland and bog
- Grassland and Arable
- Artificial (Man made)

Woodland

Ireland is the least wooded area of the European Union. Even by these standards woodland cover is generally low in Craigavon with little planted or mature woodland. Most of the existing woodland is concentrated in the wetter areas around the Lough Neagh shores. However, areas that were formerly dug for peat have now largely returned

to woodland as willow, alder or birch scrub replace the herb layer, if they haven't been taken for agricultural use.

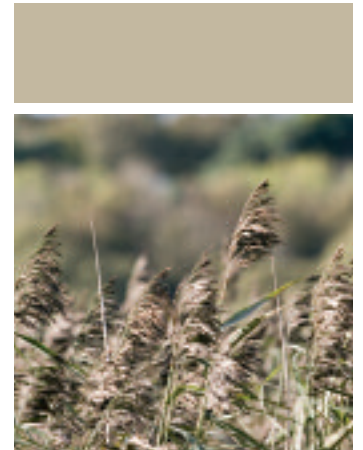
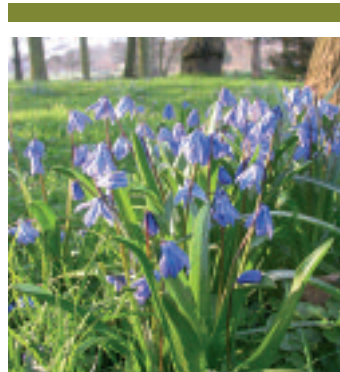
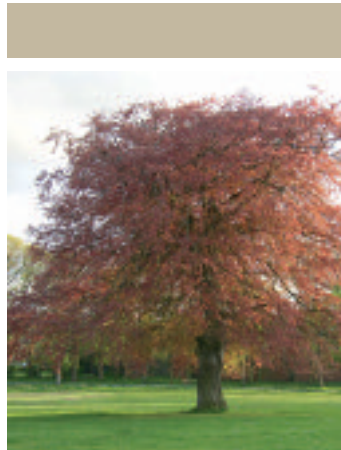
Although no true natural woodland exists, well established semi-natural woodland is valuable for wildlife and so is developing scrub which will in time add to the resource. There are two main types of woodland which have a significant presence in Craigavon with small amounts of a third type.

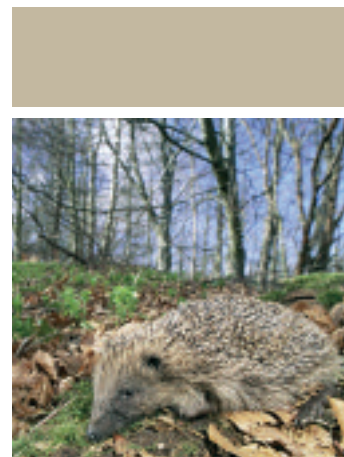
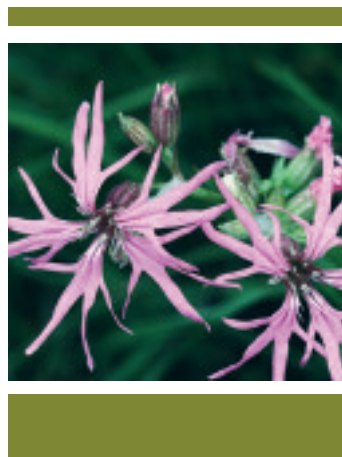
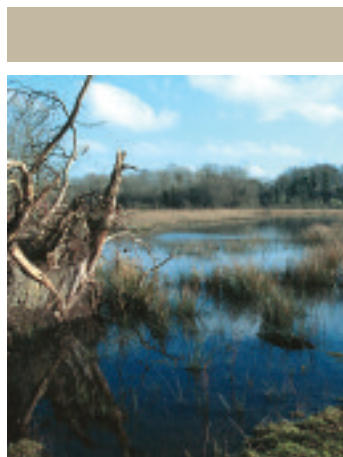
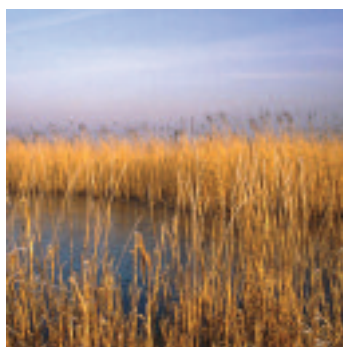
Wet Woodland

Wet Woodland occurs on cut-over bog and is usually birch with some willow in the wetter areas, usually with a varied herb layer which can consist of purple moor grass, brambles, raspberry and mosses. It is found in the north and west of the Borough and particularity associated with the once extensive peat deposits of the Bann and Blackwater rivers. On other peat deposits there are dense alder and willow carr woodlands

Wet woodland is also found around the shore of Lough Neagh. Successive lowering of the lough has led to a sequence of vegetation types from reed beds (reed canary grass and common reed) to gradually colonising woodland. Willows tend to be concentrated in a narrow band along the lower, wetter edge of young trees, but are also intermixed with the dominant alder and birch on the landward side or in the centre of islands. Ash is common in drier parts.

Resource: Brackagh Bog NNR, Oxford Island, Montiaghs Moss ASSI, Portmore Lough ASSI, Deer Park West shore, Lough Gullion, Derrykerran and Foy More, Derryadd bog, Derryinver, Derryvane, Selshion bog, Clare bog





Parkland

Parkland is a relic of the demesnes of the large estates that existed in the area. As one of the few habitats that was not stripped of its trees by the 19th century it generally contains some of the oldest and largest trees in Northern Ireland. These are very important for some highly specialised groups of species that require old wood. Parkland includes old or veteran trees where the land has often been converted to other uses such as arable farming and amenity land and where the surviving trees are of nature conservation interest.

Parkland is also found in small planted areas that are part of the planned layout of Craigavon. The old estates are characterised by a dominance of beech, but ash, sycamore, horse chestnut, Scots pine, and larch are frequent; there are also specimen conifers, such as redwoods, and exotic broadleaves such as Holm oak. In parts, the woodlands have a dense under storey of cherry laurel although the associated grasslands are often mown and there has been modern planting of belts of trees

Resource: Lurgan Park & Golf Course (former Brownlow estate), Waringstown House, Coney Island, Eden Villa, Fairview House, Raughlan Island, Straw Hill. Carrickblacker including the area at and adjacent to Portadown Golf Club.

Mixed Ash Woodland

The term mixed ashwoods is used for a broad range of woods on base-rich soils. Ash is generally the dominant species, although locally oak, downy birch and even hazel may be the most abundant species. Rowan is also common. Small stands occur throughout the Borough.

It is interesting to note that the predominant woodland, before the trees were extensively cleared, particularly in the north of the Borough was Oak Woodland. This is reflected in the extensive use of Derry, the Irish word for oak, in place names e.g. Derryinver, Derryvore, Derryadd and Derryvane to name but a few. However with the drainage of land and increased nutrient levels the small

stands of trees that have not been deliberately planted and their associated flora are usually more representative of Mixed Ash Woodland.

Resource: Glass Moss, Raughlan Island, Coney Island, Oxford Island

Wetlands

Craigavon is particularly rich in wetlands that range from the wide expanses of Lough Neagh in the north to the inter-drumlin fens of the south of the Borough. In between there are reedbeds of the Lough Neagh shoreline and the rivers and canals and their associated Floodplain Grazing Marsh used by the wintering flocks of swans and geese. Wetlands are particularly rich in wildlife and nutrient enrichment (eutrophication) and drainage are a major threat to these habitats.

Eutrophic Lakes

These sites are very nutrient rich and have a wide variety of habitats including submerged and floating aquatic vegetation (confined to sheltered bays and inlets), swamp, fen and fragmented wet woodland (see above). They are also notable for supporting an assemblage of breeding birds that occur in nationally important numbers: great-crested grebe, gadwall, pochard, tufted duck, snipe, redshank, common gull, lesser black-backed gull and black-headed gull. Other important breeding wetland species include shelduck, shoveler, lapwing and curlew. The site designations – of national and international status - are merited because they regularly support internationally important numbers of wintering Whooper swans and nationally important numbers of breeding common tern. The sites regularly support over 20,000 waterfowl in winter. The major threat to standing waters has come from nutrient enrichment, largely as a result of the application of slurry and fertilizers to agricultural land and discharge of sewage effluent. Algal blooms and loss of oxygen have resulted in the past, with consequent deleterious effects on fish life. Lough Neagh also hosts a declining population of pollan, one of the few locations in Ireland and one of the

two known locations in the UK (the other is Lower Lough Erne, where it may now be extinct). The decline of this fish is perhaps associated with inflow of nutrients to the Lough or over-fishing.

Lough Neagh has a number of the islands that have been designated, with others (about 80 in total), as the Lough Neagh Islands NNR. These provide secure nesting sites, free from terrestrial predators, for many species of wetland birds. They also have habitats that in themselves are of interest to Biodiversity;

Resource: Lough Neagh ASSI, SPA and part of a Ramsar listed site, Lough Gullion, Portmore Lough ASSI

Rivers & canals

This includes all watercourses down to the smallest tributary which have often been heavily modified by drainage operations. They are especially important as wildlife corridors linking other semi natural habitats. The large rivers which are part of the Lough Neagh catchment support an assemblage of fish species including salmon, brown trout including the migratory Dollaghan trout, eels and sticklebacks. Other fish have been introduced including pike, perch, rudd, minnows, bream, tench and roach, the latter having been introduced within the last 40 years.

The rivers of the Lagan catchment lack some of the coarse fish but contain trout, and salmon are also slowly returning to the catchment.

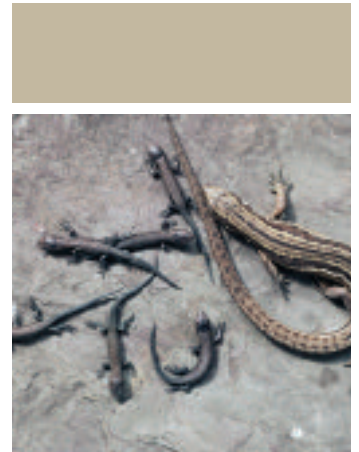
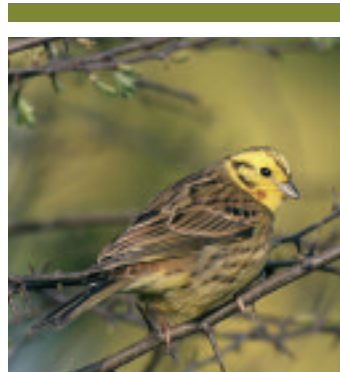
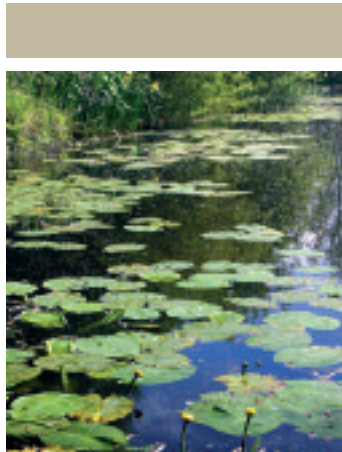
Resource: Two major rivers, the Blackwater and Bann enter Lough Neagh in Craigavon. The Cushier and Lagan are large rivers which flow through the Borough. The Lagan, Ulster and Newry canals are also found in Craigavon.

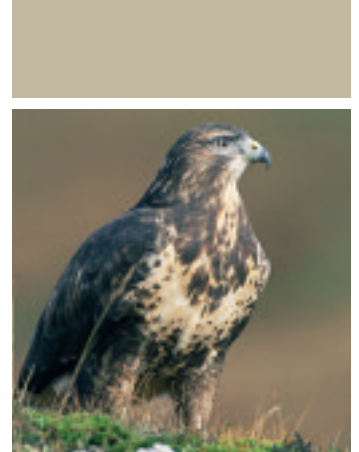
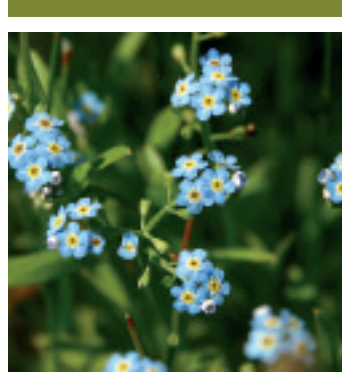
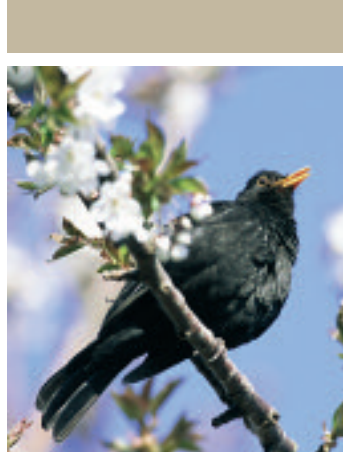
Fens

The fens of north Armagh have long been recognised as of national and international significance, not only for their plant life, but as part of a complex of open water,

reedbeds, wet meadows and carr woodland that provides a diversity of habitats for mammals, insects and birds. Although not as extensive as formerly, because of drainage for agriculture, the fens and other wetland habitats remain of importance. Fens are not only confined to the Lake shores; they also occur as isolated patches along the major rivers. Fens can be described as “poor-fen” on base-poor substrate or “rich-fen” fed by nutrient rich water. Fens also originated from cut-over lowland bogs and large parts are now in alder and willow carr. The most notable fen communities include tall fen vegetation dominated by florin, sheep's fescue and bottle sedge, and reed swamp dominated by reedmace. However, there is great diversity of habitats (including bog, fen, carr and wet grasslands), flora and fauna so that the sites should be seen as a whole. Important plants include the royal fern. The beautiful Irish Lady's Tresses orchid was last seen at Brackagh Bog NNR in 1989, Montiaghs Bog NNR c. 1984-1986, and Derrywarragh Island near Maghery in 1983 and may now be extinct in the south Lough Neagh area. There can also be a rich invertebrate fauna; butterfly species, including marsh fritillary and green hairstreak, and dragonflies and damselflies, including Irish damselfly have been recorded. Fen also occurs between drumlins and most individual sites are small; however, in some parts, the drumlins are widely spaced and the fens more extensive, with developing wet woodland. Many of these fens have become enriched by nutrients from surrounding agricultural land.

Resources: Glass Moss, Montiaghs Moss ASSI, Brackagh Bog NNR, Derryvore, Lough Gullion, Turmoyra marsh.





Reedbeds

Reedbeds are shallow wetlands where the water table is at or above the ground level for most of the year. It is dominated by stands of the common reed and often occurs as a transitional zone along the shore of lakes.

They are important habitat for a number of bird species which use the reeds for shelter, feeding and breeding.

Resources: Much of the shore of Lough Neagh e.g. Oxford Island and Maghera Country Park, Lough Gullion, Portmore Lough, Croaghan Island

Floodplain Grazing Marsh

Floodplain grazing marsh includes periodically inundated pasture or meadows which maintain the water level. It includes a wide range of vegetation types ranging from rushy pasture to wet grassland and is particularly prevalent in the north of the Borough. It is especially important for breeding waders which have exhibited a sharp population decline due to the loss of the habitat to drainage and related agricultural improvement. The improvement of some pastures has, however benefited wintering geese and swans that graze on these pastures.

Resources: The floodplain of the rivers including the Blackwater, Bann, Closet and Cusher rivers.

Heaths and Bogs

Northern Ireland has a large proportion of the UK's lowland raised bogs and they are therefore of national importance; they are also of European importance as examples of the maritime or oceanic types of lowland raised bogs. However, although lowland raised bog is widespread in the northern part of the Borough, almost all has been cut-over in the past and much has been colonised by birch woodland. There can be also patches of lowland heathland; this may be found where the peat left after cutting is shallow (wet heathland has less than 50cm of peat). However, because it is inter-mixed with other cut-over areas it is difficult to delimit.

The once extensive lowland bogs found in the meanders of the River Bann have largely been lost through past cutting, drainage and straightening of the river. Several are now in fen, wet woodland or damp grassland, but there are areas of acid bog remaining with typical bog species. These include cross-leaved heath, sundews, bog asphodel and a number of Sphagna (bog mosses). The bog habitat and species are a part of a nature reserve of high diversity that has to be managed as a whole.

There are no remaining intact bogs; the lowland raised bog has been cut over and much reclaimed into pasture. However, there is an impressive complex mosaic of habitats with peat ramparts, trenches, pools and drains interspersed with small hay fields, alder and willow carr and tall hedgerows. This diversity of habitats supports a range of plant and animal communities associated with acid bog, rich fen and swamp. The drains, pools and old peat cuttings support frogbit and cowbane and are important for wetland invertebrates especially aquatic beetles, aquatic bugs and dragonflies. The Irish damselfly is found on some sites which also supports a rich terrestrial insect fauna, especially moths and butterflies, and includes the marsh fritillary butterfly. Song thrush, linnet, skylark and reed bunting have been recorded.

Both hand and mechanised peat cutting have been recorded and there is a considerable amount of dumping, especially of builder's rubble and soil excavated from building sites on the fens.

Resource: Derryinver, Derryadd, Derrykerran and Foy More, and Derryvane, Derryhanagan- Drumaleet part of Montiaghs Moss, Brackagh Bog.



Grassland and Arable

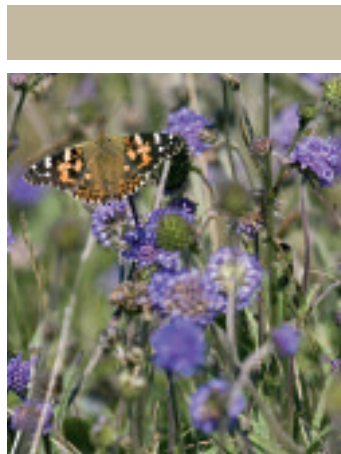
Grassland is the prevalent vegetation type in Craigavon. However much of it is improved agricultural land, intensively managed with heavy applications of inorganic fertilisers, installation of drains and often reseeded with a high proportion of perennial rye grass. This type of grassland is generally of low conservation interest. Similarly, arable crops with their associated high levels of fertiliser herbicides and pesticides can have low interest conservation interest, though it can provide a food resource for some birds and a few moths .e.g. Turnip moth are dependant on crops. However some patches of more wildlife rich areas do exist and these habitats include less intensively managed pasture and meadows, hedgerows and field margins.

Lowland meadows

This includes many unimproved and semi-improved grasslands which are used for hay or grazing. It includes grassland with a high percentage cover of fine-leaved grasses; such as bent or fescues and an absence or very low percentage cover of rye grass. If the agricultural improvement is slight, particularly if the amount of fertilizer applied has been low, then the meadow can be rich in wildflowers.

There are areas where rough grazing is extensive; generally, these are damp, have been reclaimed at some time in the past and may now have some rush cover. Damp grasslands are important for waders and wildfowl and for the Irish hare and other national priority species including barn owl, curlew and golden plover.

Resource: Kinnego and Hill meadows at Oxford Island, various fields at Derrytrasna, Derrykeeran and Foy more and the central area either side of the railway line at the City Park Lakes. Strips of hay meadow are found around Portmore Lough and Lough Gullion. Some are also found around the Montiaghs.



Purple moor grass and rush pastures

This habitat is found on poorly drained soils and includes meadow dominated by purple moor-grass and often including devil's-bit scabious, meadow thistle and tormentil and/or tall rushes, predominantly sharp-flowered rush which may include marsh bedstraw and wild angelica with a low cover of scrub or dwarf shrub.

Resource: Various strips of Montiaghs Moss, Derryinver and Turmoyra marsh

Ancient or Species Rich hedgerows

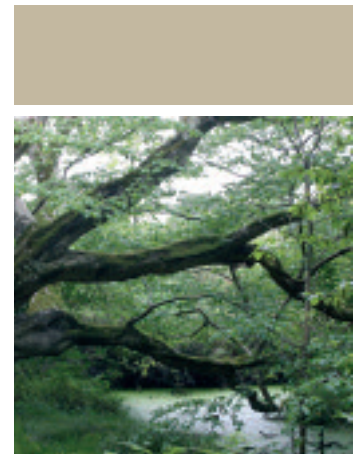
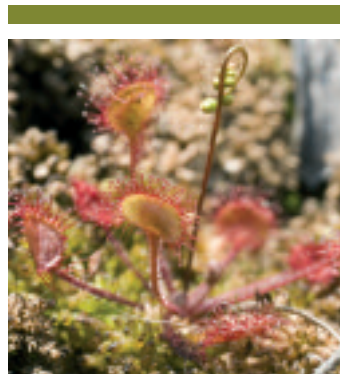
Craigavon has a low density of woodland but this is partly made up by a high density of hedges. Any hedgerow which contains 6 or more native woody species in an average 30 m strip or has a rich base of wildflowers is considered species rich as are all ancient town land hedges. Hedges are often rich in wildlife and are an important refuge particularly on agricultural grassland where they provide vital corridors for wildlife.

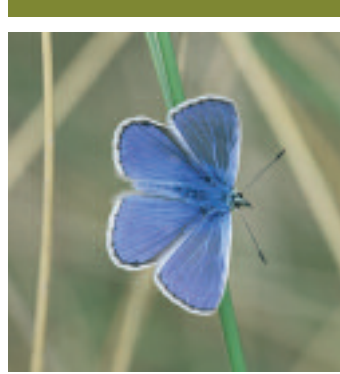
In a rural landscape, well-managed hedgerows and mature trees provide important habitats for a wide range of wildlife, including many bird species. Equally, they represent a range of formerly more common trees and shrubs, providing wildlife corridors in a network of living boundaries across the countryside. Hedges associated with rock or earth banks are visually interesting and valuable for wildlife.

Resource: Widespread across the Borough especially in the small fields near the Lough shore and some around the City Park.

Cereal Margins

Farmland is often of low Biodiversity interest, but can be significant for farmland birds such as song thrush and reed bunting. Cereal field margins, the strips of land which lie between the field boundary and extending for a distance into the crop and are managed for the benefit of the wildlife provide nesting and feeding areas for birds and are important for a range of invertebrates and wildflowers





These tend to coincide with larger farms and estates on better soils. Farmland birds including linnet have been recorded, as have reed bunting, tree sparrow and yellowhammer. Leaving stubble over the winter and growing spring-sown cereals creates favourable environments for other farmland birds including the yellowhammer.

Resource: Arable fields are scattered through the Borough but there are areas of concentration especially in the south and east; for example south of Donaghcloney, the lower slopes towards the River Lagan and northwest of Moira where soils are deeper.

Artificial Habitats

Artificial habitats are important for certain plants, birds, insects, dragonflies, butterflies and day flying moths. These man made habitats include quarries road verges, suburban gardens and waste ground.

Gardens can often be an important resource for wildlife and provide an opportunity for us to encourage biodiversity and appreciate the animals and plants that are found there.

Other sites like cemeteries and golf courses can support a wide range of habitats and species and, if managed sympathetically, can provide a rich resource

Quarries are located at Selshion near Portadown and limestone quarries near Magheralin. One of these has been used as a landfill site and its restoration is providing an opportunity to target some of our scarce wildlife.

The other artificial habitats reflect the population density of the area.

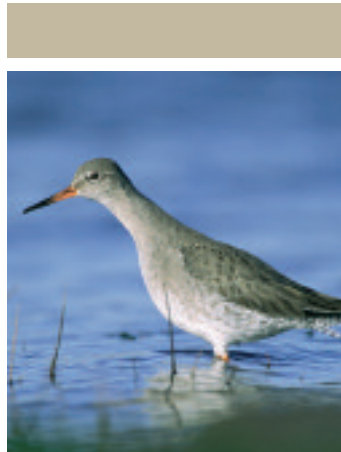
Resource: Around the centres of population

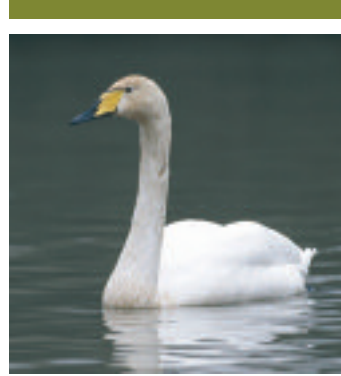
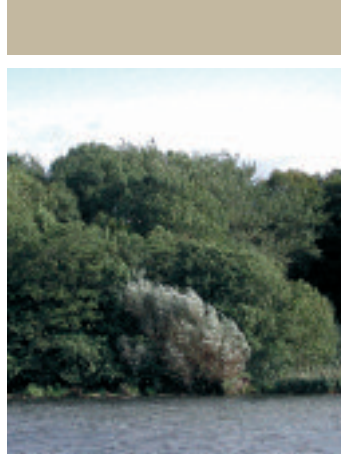
Sites which are designated for Wildlife

Declared Sites	ASSI	SPA	SAC	NNR
Lough Neagh*	•	•		
Selshion Bog	•			
Montiaghs Moss	•		•	•
Oxford Island	•	•		•
Brackagh Bog				•
Portmore Lough	•	•		
Padian Island	•	•		•
Tolan's Point	•	•		•
Tolan's Flat	•	•		•
Turmoyra Marsh	•			•

* The Lough Neagh designated site also includes some land along the shoreline and the islands in the Lough.

- ASSI** – Area of Special Scientific Interest
- SPA** - Special Protected Area (for birds)
- SAC** - Special Area of Conservation (for species and habitats)
- NNR** - National Nature Reserves





Audit for Habitat and Species Action Plans

The wildlife resource audit identified a large number of habitats and species within the Craigavon Borough and in order to identify those for immediate action they were reviewed within the local, regional and national context and a set of criteria were used to prioritise them.

The following criteria were employed to decide on the relevant habitats and species for action.

1. Status of the habitat/species as a National (UK) and Regional (Northern Ireland) priority.

2. Significance of the habitat/species in the Borough
 - Importance of the habitat/species
 - Cultural significance of the habitat/species
 - Visibility of the habitat/species
3. Potential impact of LBAP on the habitat/species.
4. Range of species and habitats
5. Measurability of the habitat/species
6. Local and expert opinion particularly for local priorities.
7. Assessment whether HAP will cover conservation action for a species.

Species and Habitats for which Action Plans have been prepared

Habitats

Fens
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
Eutrophic standing waters
Lowland meadow
Lowland raised bog
Parkland
Reedbeds
Wet woodland

Species

Marsh Fritillary
Yellow Hammer
Lapwing
Bee orchid
Redshank
Leisler's bat
Barn Owl
Tree Sparrow
Reed Bunting
Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet moth
Green Hairstreak
Irish Hare

General Wildlife Action

As well as the habitat and species action plans there are a number of generic objectives which can improve Biodiversity. These often impact on a number of habitats or species and can be crucial for improving conservation as a whole. They have been grouped around the existing Conservation Service's objectives

Craigavon Borough Council Conservation Service

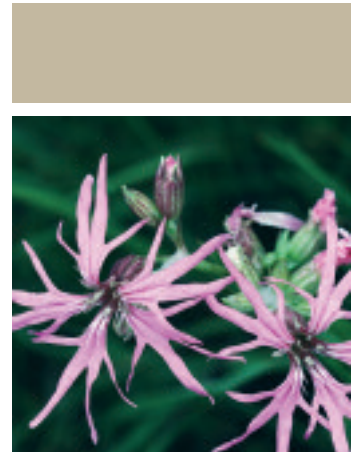
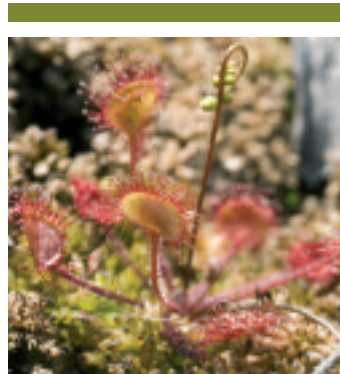
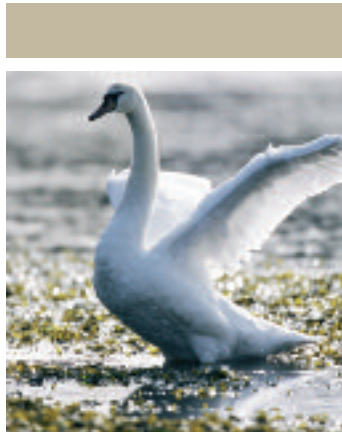
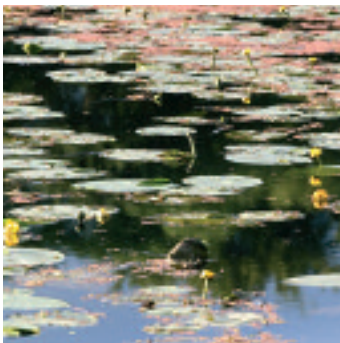
The Craigavon Biodiversity Action Plan will make a significant contribution to the achievement of the aims of the Conservation Service. These are:-

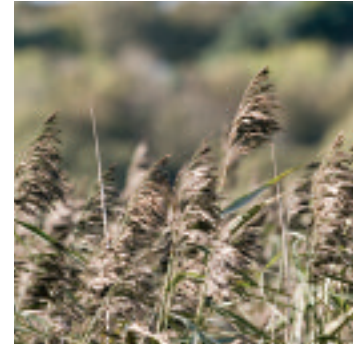
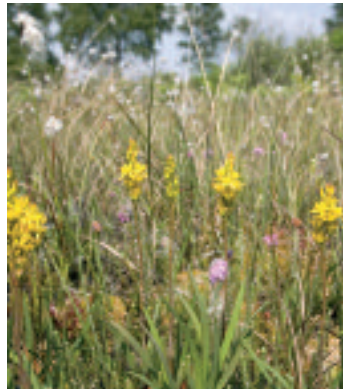
To Describe and Evaluate the Nature Conservation and Wildlife Resource of the Craigavon Area.

To Maintain, Enhance and Improve the Nature Conservation and Wildlife Resource of the Craigavon Area.

To Promote Environmental Education, Awareness and Enjoyment of the Nature Conservation and Wildlife Resource of the Craigavon Area.

The detailed actions are available to view on the website: www.oxfordisland.com/biodiversity





Making it happen

This Biodiversity Plan has been drawn up after consultation with a wide group of people. The Plan has committed a partnership that is keen to realise the Biodiversity goals enshrined in this document. They are represented on the steering group but also include other organisations and individuals. Only by this partnership working together and by inspiring and encouraging others to become involved will the action plans be successful. All of us in Craigavon have a part to play in conserving our wildlife. The Action Plans have outlined clear goals for Craigavon and its preparation has stimulated practical dialogue which will hopefully continue as the plans are implemented and updated in the future.

There are a number of key groups that we need to be involved in the process for the plans to be successful

Landowners and farmers.

Most of the land in Craigavon is privately owned and the majority of this is farmland where the animals and plants, the very Biodiversity that we wish to enhance, inhabit. In order for the loss of Biodiversity to be halted farmers must be part of the Plan.

Fortunately farmers and other landowners are often keen to incorporate management for wildlife on their land and grants are available through the Countryside Management Scheme and it has provided a useful impetus to improve nature conservation.

We must continue to build on this by providing an incentive for farmers to make it worthwhile to manage their land in sympathy with nature and for them to do so profitably. Equally important is practical guidance on best practice and habitat management and how to integrate this into their farming system.

Business

Craigavon has a wide range of businesses from the fishing and extractive industries of Lough Neagh to the retail and industrial services of the rural and urban area and much else besides.

We have the potential to mitigate the effects of our economic activity, where we can work, sympathetically with nature. Space can be left for our wildlife and opportunities can be taken to increase the Biodiversity of our working areas. Other programmes like sustainable development and environmental audits will share common goals with the Biodiversity Strategy.

The Quarry Products Association of Northern Ireland have set an example by appointing their own Biodiversity Officer and we expect to undertake joint projects where our interests overlap. Other businesses have a direct interest in the environment. Walking and bird watching are promoted by the tourism related business sector and many promote a 'green' image to attract the consumer. Our wild places can attract people with over 200,000 a year visiting the National Nature Reserve at Oxford Island and this provides an opportunity for the local businesses that service them.

Other partnerships focused on the sustainable use of the local Biodiversity can boost economic activity. The Upper Bann has long attracted anglers to come to Craigavon with the consequent economic benefits. Local angling groups and the riparian owners have been involved in rehabilitating the habitat through the Salmonid Enhancement Programme and other funding.

However, there are many opportunities to increase the partnership with local business either through their sponsorship of projects or incorporating sustainability and Biodiversity into their future development and way of operating. Many firms are keen to improve their image and show off their "green" credentials and we must take the opportunity that this provides to fully engage with them and

have them aboard the partnership.

Community Action

A major challenge of the Biodiversity Project is to raise awareness and help people to become involved. It has been pleasing to see the number of local groups who want to engage at some level and particularly the number of young people who are active and involved in nature. We are fortunate in Craigavon in having an educational and interpretive team, as part of the Council's Conservation Service, who cover a series of topics in the curriculum on nature conservation both as outreach in schools throughout the Borough and as part of their work with school children at Oxford Island National Nature Reserve. These links must be built on and schools encouraged and assisted to undertake projects in Biodiversity. This practical introduction to Biodiversity is the best way to educate the next generation in the problems that we face. It is very reassuring to know that Biodiversity is included in the new school curriculum.

Some of the side benefits of this Biodiversity work should be mentioned. It has already provided an opportunity to bring cross community groups together in joint projects which reflect both communities' natural and cultural heritage. There is still considerable social need and exclusion in Northern Ireland and interacting with nature provides a stimulus to remove some of these barriers. Mention should be made of the motability scooters at Oxford Island which allow disabled access to four of the five bird hides throughout the Island in addition to the four miles of roads and paths in the Nature Reserve and it is hoped to make these available at some of our Parklands

The Conservation team already works with a wide range of individuals and groups and opportunities should be taken to involve interested people on volunteer activity if appropriate. This can include anything from recording the sighting of a particular animal or plant to adopting and enhancing an area of habitat.

There is also an opportunity to bring together groups with a common interest. Most people want to see an

enhancement of their local environment and where this involves nature conservation efforts will be made to form partnerships to achieve the Biodiversity objectives.

Recreation Users

The challenge is to encourage everyone to enjoy and access the natural environment without degrading the Biodiversity of the wild areas. Some habitats are more fragile than others but generally most problems can be avoided with some planning and forethought. Zoning of areas at Oxford Island and limiting access for part of the year protects nesting birds which are particularly sensitive to human disturbance is one illustration of how the problems can be overcome.

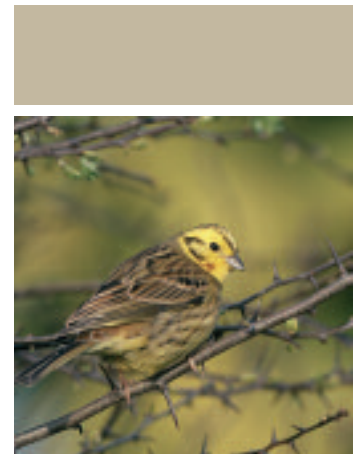
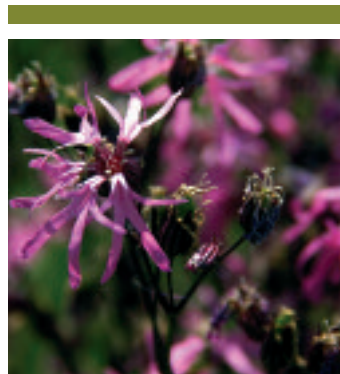
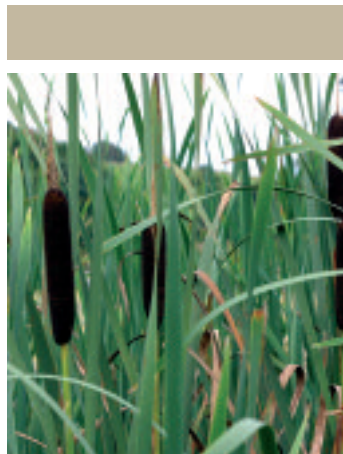
Many rural sports and activities have codes of conduct which help to mitigate on their damage to the countryside and we must engage and seek to influence where these need to be strengthened to protect our Biodiversity.

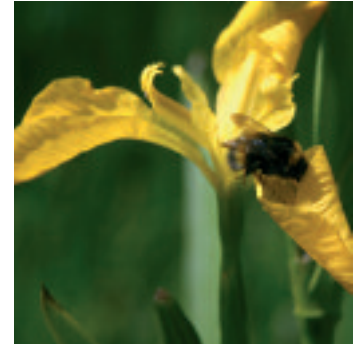
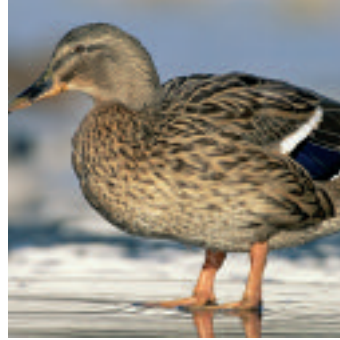
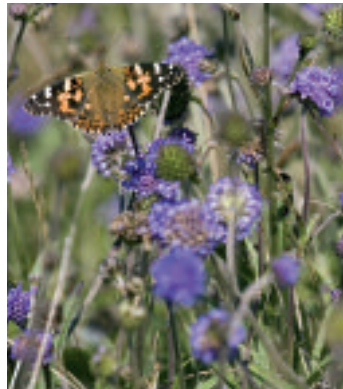
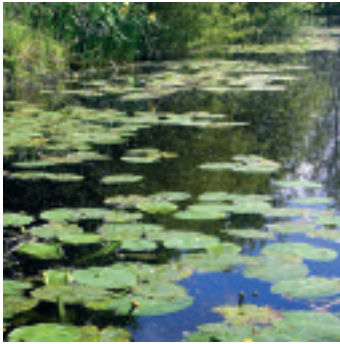
Mention should be made of the health benefits of Biodiversity. Research commissioned by the RSPB indicates that varied and wildlife-rich natural environments with inspiring landscapes are most effective in promoting sociable walking and a healthier lifestyle. Time spent in natural environments is known to promote a positive outlook on life and enhance our ability to cope with, and recover from, stress, illness and injury.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan has established targets to restore and recreate natural habitats. The delivery of these targets would not only fulfill the Government's international obligation to halt Biodiversity loss by 2010 but would also deliver on a wide-range of other people-based Government objectives, including enhanced public health.

The Partnership

The Craigavon Biodiversity Steering Group has been established and has successfully 'steered' the production of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The challenge now will be to take forward and implement the Plans. This will





require that new partnerships are established and a greater range of stakeholders engaged in the process. Successful projects will draw together a wide range of organisations and individuals towards the common goal.

The present steering group will still form the core of the new group but the interest, expertise and involvement of as wide a range of individuals and groups will be welcomed. All the effort towards the implementation of this Action Plan will be geared towards practical work which has a meaningful effect on the enhancement of the Biodiversity throughout Craigavon.

Cultural interests

Reference has been made to recreation and health as two important reasons for improving Biodiversity. Equally important are the cultural aspects of our Biodiversity. Many of the habitats and species that we wish to conserve and enhance are valued because people can remember them and related to them in days past.

Our wild places are embedded in our culture and our wish to enhance them is because they existed and were important to earlier generations and because we wish to pass these values and treasures onto our children and future generations.

Projects that pull together culture and Biodiversity can be particularly valuable. One project involving a number of schools illustrates this example. Willow was an iconic plant of the Lough Neagh wetlands and a valuable industrial resource little more than a generation ago. The project aimed to show the children the historical importance of the willow to their grandparents and help them to recreate the crafts that had produced the variety of equipment that was produced. To provide the raw material willow was grown and the necessary requirements and habitat identified and studied. This led to an appreciation not only of the importance of the willow in the landscape but the birds and animals associated with them. Biodiversity took on a relevance and importance to the children who may not yet appreciate that stands of willow are Wet Woodland Habitat, a Northern Ireland and UK Priority Habitat. But they do

appreciate that willow is important and relevant in the landscape.

Reporting

A vital element of the BAP process is the reporting stage. Reporting will be undertaken by Craigavon Conservation Service on behalf of the BAP partnership using the software produced by English Nature called the Biodiversity Action Reporting System or BARS. Annual progress will be added to the BARS system thereby providing the UK BAP steering group with a progress report at a local level and providing the local partners with a regular update.

The Biodiversity Action Reporting System can be found at www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk

And Finally

It is intended that the Biodiversity Action Plan is a dynamic document which is subject to constant review. In particular, the Actions undertaken will increase as more stakeholders join the process and agree work which can be implemented on the ground.

Progress towards the targets will be assessed annually and it is anticipated the LBAP will be reviewed after 5 years. But the LBAP is a flexible process with further priorities being identified and habitat and species priority action plans prepared as necessary.

If you would like to get involved by volunteering or just find out more about Biodiversity in your local area , please contact the Biodiversity Officer at:-

Email: Biodiversity@craigavon.gov.uk

Telephone: 0283822205

Website: www.oxfordisland.com/Biodiversity

