



PLANNING CONTACTS

Angus Council 01307 461460.
 Dundee City Council 01382 434000.
 Perth & Kinross Council 01738 475313 / 4753125.

Scottish Natural Heritage –
 Tel. Perth: 01738 444177, or Airlie: Tel. 01575 530333.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency – Tel. Arbroath: 01241 874370,
 or Perth 01738 627989.

HOUSEHOLDERS' GUIDE TO BIODIVERSITY

This leaflet has been produced by the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, and funded by the Scottish Executive with generous contributions from Perth & Kinross Council, Dundee City Council and Angus Council. SNH has given permission to use its artwork.



Tayside Biodiversity Partnership

For further information about biodiversity contact Catherine Lloyd, Tayside Biodiversity Co-ordinator, Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, c/o The Environment Service, Perth & Kinross Council, Pullar House, 35 Kinnoull Street, Perth, PH1 5GD Tel. 01738 475273 E-mail: tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net Website – www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk



Tayside Biodiversity Partnership

Together with a Manual for Developers and Planners, this document is part of a series of leaflets and Advice Notes for Biodiversity Planning Guidance.
 Printed on recycled/environmentally - friendly paper





What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity means 'the variety of life.' We depend on it for the quality of our lives - from our clean water and air, to our food, clothing and medicines. There is much to be proud of within the 7,500 sq. km that makes up Tayside. Visitors from all over the world come to enjoy what we take for granted on our doorstep from our Big Trees and stunning upland scenery, to our coast and beaches.

Does it matter?

Throughout Britain it is the 1.25 million hectares of private gardens that help preserve the wildlife corridors that link public parks and roadside verges to the countryside. Small actions taken to enhance the biodiversity in each garden adds up, so everyone can play an important part in safeguarding Scotland's wildlife - whether it is a song thrush that visits the garden or a butterfly that takes nectar from flowers in a hanging basket.

Making changes?

If you are thinking about building a garage or porch, working on your roof, adding an extension, renovating a building, or carrying out work to trees or hedges, here are some suggestions to keep you on the right side of wildlife legislation and help the wildlife on your doorstep.

The Law

Many animals and plants are protected by law and require special care. If you are in any doubt, check with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) or the Planning Department before you carry out work - for instance all wild birds and some native animals are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Bats are also covered by the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994. National guidance is available from the Scottish Executive: visit www.scotland.gov.uk.

General Work on Extensions and Roofs, Renovating a Building or Outbuilding

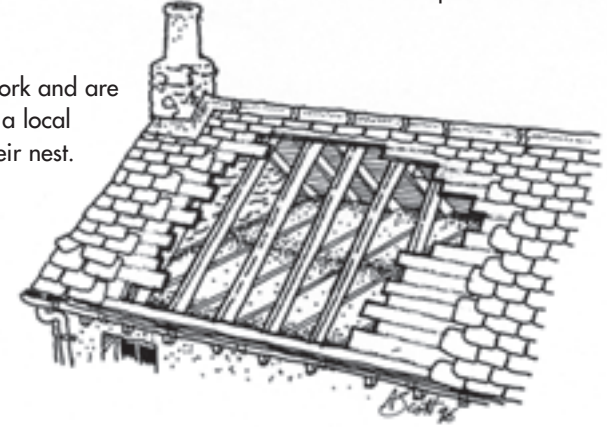
- Check for any birds or animals that may be present. Bats are a European Protected Species. They return to the same place every year and a bat roost in your roof space or outbuildings is protected even if bats are not present all the time. If in doubt seek advice from SNH or if bats are discovered after building work has started, stop work and again contact SNH.

- Avoid work on your roof during the bird-breeding season (March to September) - it is illegal to damage nests or disturb any birds when nesting. House sparrows in particular nest under eaves, in wall crevices or in ivy; avoid disturbing them during the nesting season.

- Swifts do not build nests but use small areas beneath soffits, under the roofline, or if there is access, just inside the roof. If there are swifts in your neighbourhood check before any work starts as it is not always obvious where they nest.

- Swallows mostly nest inside buildings, garages or outbuildings. House Martins build their nests on outside walls. If swallows are present make sure an opening for the birds to reach their nest is maintained. A board can be suspended or fastened below a swallow or martin nest to prevent droppings causing a nuisance.

- If honeybees are in the way of building work and are not swarming, contact the local authority or a local beekeeper who will remove the bees and their nest.



What Can I Do?



Help bats by installing bat boxes, bat bricks or shuttering in the eaves. Ask SNH, or your local Bat Group, for advice. If you make your own bat box do not use treated timber.



By not over-tidying the garden, you can provide a source of natural materials such as moss or twigs for birds. House martins and swallows need mud to build their nests. Encourage them to nest by using rough-surfaced soffit facing boards which allow wet mud to stick successfully.



Many birds are losing nest sites: provide a variety of nestboxes for birds such as blue tits, robins, swallows, swifts or sparrows. Hibernation boxes can also be provided for hedgehogs, amphibians or insects such as bumble bees.



Many garden centres sell a range of boxes, or you can make your own. The British Trust for Ornithology Nestbox Guide gives step-by-step instructions for 20 types of nestbox - www.bto.org. General advice is available from www.rspb.org.uk (Tel 0131 311 6500), www.concernforswifts.com. (Tel.0141 554 8262), or www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk.



If re-roofing, replace a few old lichen-covered tiles evenly among the new tiles to allow the original lichens to colonise them.



Consider incorporating a barn owl ledge in a gable end of a renovation if you live in a rural area. If birds of prey, including barn owls, are present, contact SNH before work begins.

Trees

• Old trees are an increasingly important habitat – unless there is a safety issue leave them as they are. Standing deadwood or retained tree stumps are also very valuable for invertebrates, birds and bats.

• Check with your Council Tree Officer to establish whether trees likely to be affected by your proposed works are covered by a Tree Preservation Order or are within a Conservation Area. In both cases you will need approval before carrying out any works.

What Can I Do?

Plant new trees - consider native oak, ash, birch, juniper, willow, aspen or Scots pine. They support many different animals, birds and insects. Bear in mind the size of the mature tree; if space is at a premium, choose smaller trees.

In a small garden, trees such as crab apple, rowan, hazel, holly and bird cherry provide an important, and attractive, focal point. They provide nectar-rich blossom or catkins for insects and berries or nuts for birds and mammals. Consider growing an old Scottish variety of pear, plum or apple tree.



Hedges

• Hedges provide shelter and roosting sites for birds, as well as preventing soil erosion. They are much cheaper to buy and maintain than fences and do not have to be replaced after high winds. If chemicals are not used nearby they also help safeguard bumblebees and other beneficial insects. Privet hedges, if allowed to flower, provide nectar for beneficial insects. Native hedges which include hawthorn, wild rose, hazel, blackthorn and holly are important 'wildlife corridors' between properties, allowing wildlife easier access to neighbouring gardens and ultimately between urban areas and the surrounding countryside.

• Avoid removing a hedge during the bird-breeding season (March to September) and at other times of the year be careful not to disturb hedgehogs hibernating in the base of a hedge. Consider planting a new hedge elsewhere in your garden.

What Can I Do?

Trim your hedge in January or February as this leaves berries and shelter for over wintering birds. It also safeguards nesting birds during the spring and summer. Retain long grass under the hedge to provide shelter for hedgehogs, field voles and beneficial insects.

Plant a new hedge using the native species above. Small hedgerow trees such as crab apple, bird cherry or rowan provide blossom in the spring and autumn food for birds. If appropriate, consider planting the larger native hedgerow trees such as ash or oak – bearing in mind the size of the mature tree.



Fencing, Pergolas, Willow Screens

• Consider planting a hedge instead of a fence, but if you do erect a fence use untreated timber where possible – it helps the development of natural lichens.

What Can I Do?

Choose fragranced or colourful rambling plants for pergolas, fences and screens – honeysuckle, sweet peas, roses, nasturtiums or clematis. They help create a micro-climate which encourages many types of beneficial insect.

Hide a bumblebee or hedgehog box at the foot of these structures, or hide a wren's nesting basket in the furthest spot where it will not be disturbed.

Walls for Wildlife

• Retain lichens on walls wherever possible. On the wall top replace lichen-covered stones in the same orientation.

• Renew lime mortar, if feasible, rather than using other materials – this prevents exclusion of masonry bees. If the bees are causing problems, provide artificial nesting boxes nearby.

• Before re-pointing, check for amphibians (especially toads) and reptiles (slow worms and lizards). Where possible leave small gaps in garden walls for the same reason.

• Retain ivy where possible, but if a lot of ivy needs to be removed, cut the plant at its base and let it decay naturally. Damage to the wall can occur if ivy is pulled off; bat and bird roosts can also be destroyed.

• If you create a rubble pile check for reptiles such as lizards and slow worms before dismantling it.

What Can I Do?

Retain lime-loving plants such as ferns, liverworts and mosses where possible. It is an offence to destroy protected species.

Plant honeysuckle, clematis, wisteria, cotoneaster and ivy to provide food or roosting sites for wildlife.



Ponds, Wetlands, Burns or Water Features

• Timing work is important – ponds are best drained or cleared in late autumn and early winter. Avoid the main breeding season for amphibians and invertebrates (March to September).

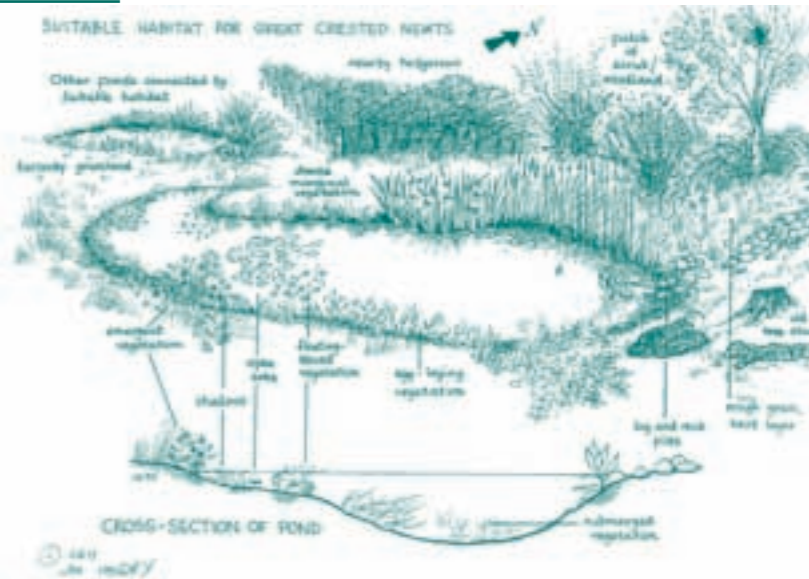
• Check for amphibians (frogs, toads, newts) before beginning work. The uncommon Great Crested Newt is a European Protected Species and work which will harm them or their habitat can only proceed with the approval of the Scottish Executive through the issuing of a licence. If Great crested newts are found contact SNH for advice on how to proceed.

• Avoid canalising or dredging burns; ditches should only be worked a section at a time to maintain refuges for biodiversity. Where there is a possibility of spawning fish or water vole being present, obtain specialist advice from SEPA or SNH before carrying out any work.

What Can I Do?

Make a shallow pond in your garden that is safe for both children and animals.

Retain a deeper pond, but alter it so that it is shallower and has more vegetation planted into it. Or create an attractive wetland feature instead - amphibians need rough grass and log piles as well as water. Contact Froglife for advice – www.froglife.org - tel. 01733 558844.



More Ideas for Creating a Wildlife-friendly House and Garden

Improving biodiversity within your home and garden is a lot easier than you might think. Contact the following organisations for advice:

- Scottish Natural Heritage – www.snh.org.uk ('Gardening for Life' series of leaflets)
- Wildlife Gardening – www.wildlife-gardening.co.uk
- Garden Organic (HDRA) – www.gardenorganic.org.uk (useful factsheets)
- Butterfly Conservation Scotland – www.butterfly-conservation.org
- Bat Conservation Trust - www.bats.org.uk

Plant shrubs for their flowers and berries – these will attract butterflies, moths, bees, and birds. Evergreen shrubs provide winter foliage and shelter.

Create a colourful wildlife window box or hanging basket by including nectar or pollen-rich plants and herbs.

Encourage bats into your garden by planting flowers that attract insects: night-scented stock, evening primrose and lavender. Each bat can consume up to 3000 midges a night.

Leave a deadwood pile for invertebrates, amphibians and hibernating hedgehogs. Or just pile up some autumn leaves under a quiet corner of a hedge – hedgehogs will use this instead.

Hang up a bird feeder with nuts and seeds – helpful to the birds even if placed outside a window many storeys up. Feed all year round.

Create a pond or, if space is short, consider a mini pond (an old sink or barrel in which you put a variety of plants).

Leave rough grass areas around the pond for small mammals, frogs and newts to use.

Make your own wildflower meadow in a corner of the garden – this will encourage butterflies and bumblebees to use it for foraging or laying their eggs.

Retain species-rich grassland instead of reseeding with a standard lawn seed mix. Cut areas of the grass and wildflowers once or twice a year – this will provide habitat for small mammals and insects such as bees and butterflies. Contact Flora Locale for advice - www.floralocale.org.

Make a compost heap and benefit from homemade fertiliser whilst helping to reduce the amount of waste going to local landfill.

If you buy compost choose one that is peat-free as this will help protect Scotland's fast disappearing peat bogs.

Collect rainwater from your roof and grey water from the bath in a water butt – it saves money and helps the environment.

