BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANNING

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Zoo BAPs: How to create a plan for zoo native wildlife

INTRODUCTION

In the UK, Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) are administered by 48 Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs), announced in 2012 to replace the former UK BAP partnership, which ended in 2010. A BAP is the first step to effective native wildlife conservation, an easy to follow plan with achievable targets and timescales in line with national targets for biodiversity. A BAP is designed to be easily accessible by any audience, and each chapter should be 'stand-alone', allowing specific information to be isolated without the need to read the whole document.

Zoo BAPs are plans for conserving native in and around zoological gardens. This kind of plan is important to help guide activities, and also for demonstrating conservation action to the public. Zoo BAPs also help to formalise agreements between zoo conservation managers and zoo directors to help facilitate the funding and implementation of work.

CONSULTATION AND ASSESSMENT

The first stage to developing a BAP is to gather together all the interested parties within the local community. These parties can potentially include staff, natural history groups, and local residents. For full integration with national biodiversity planning, it is very important to make contact with the nearest district or regional government office to determine the aims of the local BAP (LBAP) – just ask for an ecologist or LNP representative. Together these parties can assess the extent of native wildlife knowledge, from historical and anecdotal evidence. From here, targeted surveys should be used to assess the current "baseline" level of biodiversity.

Gather interested parties

↓

Assess knowledge

Survey ⇄ Records

Key points

Forging links with local natural history groups can offer opportunities for free help in wildlife surveys.

KEY SPECIES AND HABITATS

The next stage is to use information from the assessment to define which habitats and species are "key" to the biodiversity of your site. At this stage, local government representatives will be especially useful, as they can help to identify what species and habitats are locally important, while also ensuring that nationally important species and habitats are not missed. They may also be able to help identify important threats and tips for their management, including direct threats such as invasive species or unsustainable development, and indirect threats such as climate change.

UKBAP input → Define key species

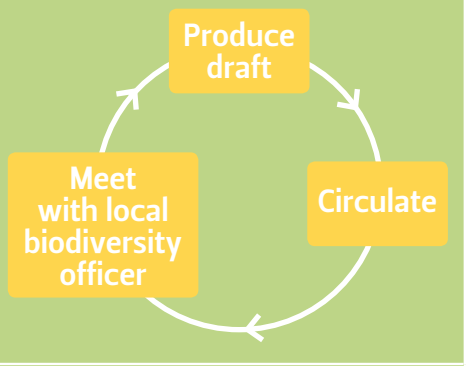
LBAP input → Define key species

Key points

Your local BAP representative can be located using the Biodiversity Action Reporting System website

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

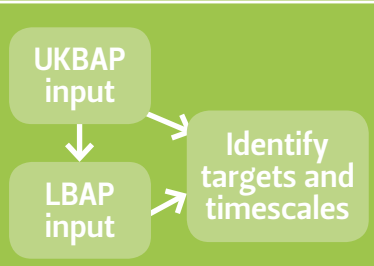
A huge key to the success of any biodiversity project is the co-operation and support of local communities. In addition to the consultation phase, try to involve local residents and visitors in the work, and keep them updated on progress. In the meantime, also try to support other local initiatives (eg fairs, markets and discussion groups), especially ones that will help boost other local biodiversity events or the local economy. This should help to develop a good working relationship, and ensure that the Zoo BAP work is not carried out in isolation.



TARGETS AND TIMESCALES

When the priority species and habitats have been identified, you will need to set up some targets and timescales for achieving these targets. Given the UN biodiversity target of 2020, it also makes sense for Zoo BAPs to create targets for the same year, with continual reassessment each year. The targets can also be in alignment with the targets of your LBAP and/or the UKBAP. Most important is to determine a system of monitoring progress towards targets, so that annual assessments can be made easily, and communicated to the LNP (eg through BARS; see link below).

Natasha Hambly and Andrew R Marshall (CIRCLE, University of York and Flamingo Land), 2014



Key points

Making realistic targets and timescales is very important for a successful BAP, small achievable steps over 5 years are much better than one large step.

ACTION:
An "action" is any activity carried out in fulfillment of a BAP, eg digging a pond, training staff, or planting trees.

TARGET:
A "target" is the desired outcome of actions over a specified period of time, eg a five year increase in nesting birds, or a 25% annual increase in staff knowledge of native species on site.

USEFUL LINKS

www.jzar.org/jzar/article/view/63/27
Article summarising the justification and procedure for creating a Zoo BAP, including some relevant scientific literature.

www.circle-conservation.org/circle-publications/flamingo-land-biodiversity-action-plan
The first formal Zoo BAP was developed at Flamingo Land, and may provide a useful format for other zoos to follow when producing their own Zoo BAP.

UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework: http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/
This website gives a wealth of information about the original UK BAP and the subsequent plans based on the UN Aichi targets, including links to all of the chapters of the UK BAP.

Biodiversity Action Reporting System: http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk
This website identifies all current LBAPs, their representative and current actions in place. It is a database where all BAPs report any actions they are currently undertaking. Zoos, under guidance from their LBAP representatives, can add their own efforts for native wildlife conservation into the UK database.

Natural England: www.naturalengland.org.uk
Natural England's website has a host of information about biodiversity planning and habitat and species conservation.

The Wildlife Trusts: www.wildlifetrusts.org
The Wildlife Trusts have local groups which may be able to offer advice and volunteers. Their website will also have information on locally important species and habitats.

Bat Conservation Trust: www.bats.org.uk
The Bat Conservation Trust offers information and advice on bat conservation including downloadable resources for education.

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation: www.arc-trust.org
The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation has information on a variety of amphibian and reptile topics including planning laws, species identification, habitat management and disease. There is also links to training courses and surveys which may help with both BAP planning and implementation.

Plantlife: www.plantlife.org
Plantlife has a selection of resources for plant conservation, and links to local plantlife events and campaigns.

Woodland Trust: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk
The Woodland Trust's website has links to information about woodland ecosystems, and links to potential grants for woodland creation.

Mammal Society: www.mammal.org.uk
The Mammal Society has resources for mammal conservation, including links to local mammal group representatives.

Buglife: www.buglife.org.uk
Buglife's website has information on invertebrate conservation, including specific information on managing BAP habitats for bugs.

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