



Grazing  
Animals  
Project



# GAP NEWS

*The Newsletter of the Grazing Animals Project*

NEWSLETTER - No 24 – WINTER 2003



“And I thought we’d left poaching problems behind us when we moved to Britain!” - Francis Kirkham

## Editorial – Tim Beech

How the years spin round. Another conference behind us and progress, progress, progress – or is that the galloping chimera disappearing over the hill. So aware are we of the brevity of our allotted span and so desperate to leave our name on the earth we seem to create progress as an origami figurine. Meanwhile the earth takes another turn and wonders whether the few who care can ever outmatch the rush of the many to destruction. Yet, the human spirit can be indomitable; Sisyphus did not yield to the rock and only those who try know how high we can fly.

Congratulations to Francis Kirkham for the wittiest caption (in the editor's distorted view), runners up were Jim Barber and Alison Smyth for joining in.



**On behalf of the GAP organisation  
A Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year**

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## Acknowledgements

The Editor would like to thank all the contributors, the team at Lewes and in the Print Room at Peterborough for the production of this Newsletter.

**Footnote: please note that the opinions in articles in the GAP Newsletter may not be those of the GAP Project**

## GAP 'ROUNDUP'

### 2. News from the Executive Group by John Bacon:

The last Newsletter came out in time for the 3<sup>rd</sup> GAP/FACT Conference at Lancaster 9 – 11 September. Since then the feedback from delegates has been really positive and many have said how the 'experience' has fuelled development

of their thinking on issues ranging from ensuring their management is truly environmentally acceptable (in the 'greening' sense of the word) through to the big picture options for how we all deliver management for wildlife in the UK. Apart from the presentational sessions indoors and the debates in the bar we discussed these issues where it really matters – in the field.

It appears these outdoor sessions were most appreciated and this message will be taken on board for the next Conference in 2005 – assuming that we hold one. Again the feedback from delegates was that we should, but they were less uniform on the subject or subjects to be covered, or where it should be held. The trick will be to foresee what will be the cutting edge issue in September 2005 and to start planning accordingly. Your further suggestions will be welcomed – to the GAP Office please.

The Conference provided the opportunity for the expression of a whole range of views and opinions and it's great that this provides the means by which one's views can be assessed against those of others. This eventually leads to the identification of the best way forward over what are sometimes very contentious issues. In the past we have drawn on information and data provided by grazing managers and advisers on our mailing list, which now extends to nearly one thousand names. It has always been a primary aim of the FACT and GAP Projects to bring together people with a range of views from many countryside and conservation organisations and after debate to provide some of the facts on which others can determine policy.

From time to time the GAP Executive is accused of having said all sorts of things! We would like to point out that what appears in the Newsletter by way of articles are the views of the authors of the

articles and not the GAP Executive. By way of example we have received representations in respect of our approach to the welfare of animals used on conservation grazing schemes. We cannot say more than to re-state our credentials on this one. It was GAP who back in 1999 initiated discussions with animal welfare organisations across the UK culminating in publication of our *'Guide to Animal Welfare in Nature Conservation Grazing Schemes'* in September 2001. Furthermore as long ago as last spring we agreed to reconvene that Working Group at an appropriate time to consider ethical and welfare issues that may be associated with landscape scale grazing schemes and that need to be addressed. The first meeting is being held in January 2004. It may be worth noting that GAP is also working on a 'Husbandry Handbook' to further improve the understanding and relationship between man and grazing animals.

#### GAP Website:

Design of the GAP (and FACT) websites are still ongoing. As extra bits were being added recently some gremlins cropped up which required some redesigning of the links. At the time of writing the sites are not available and have been taken off line whilst the gremlins are made extinct! So apologies – we will hope to have better news and provide full access details in the next Newsletter.

Representation on the GAP Executive has recently been further extended from the farming and ecological viewpoints. We are pleased to welcome representatives from the English Beef and Lamb Executive, ADAS and the British Ecological Society. A pictorial representation of organisations in the form of a 'page of logos' is included later in this Newsletter.

The next meetings of the Executive are on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2004 and Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>

June 2004. We welcome your suggestions for issues to be discussed at our meetings.

### **3. News from the GAP Office by Claire Weaver, Sarah Murphy & Sarah Macey**

This has been a particularly busy few months at the GAP Office, because of the recent conference. When you work behind the scenes at a conference, you see a very different picture to the delegates! However the team of Val, the two Sarah's and Claire worked very well and we had a lot of laughs in the conference office as well as a few panics and a lot of cakes! Apart from the help we received from John Bacon, Tony Robinson and Graham Burton, we'd also like to thank Tim Bass, Tim Beech, Nicholas Gibbons and Paul Lacey for helping out in the office, for getting up early when we needed extra drivers and for their moral support!

#### **Training Courses**

The benchmarking pilot course is now scheduled to go ahead in January and we are currently working on the delegates' course books. We expect to be able to deliver both courses in Spring/Summer of next year. We are still looking for potential trainers and still want to gauge where the demand will be, so if you can help with either request, please contact Sarah Murphy at the GAP Office.

#### **Husbandry Handbook Update**

We are organising a *Telling Tales* workshop for January. The aim of the workshop is to train potential 'hosts' from around the country so that they can run a story telling session. Equipped with basic story gathering skills and techniques, some confidence and a little experience, the 'hosts' should be able to run a productive session for livestock husbanders in their local area and record the contributions. There is an outline of

the day below – it will be a relaxed and informal event with, we are sure, some fun as well as learning how to gather people's skills.

We are looking for volunteers who would be interested in running a *Telling Tales* session and who would like to attend the training day. There will be no charge for coming along to see how to gather 'stories', it should be an enjoyable day and the skills are equally useful for running consultations and informal meetings. In return we ask that you consider running a '*Telling Tales*' session in your local area - a good chance to chin-wag and swap experiences with fellow conservation grazers over a pint of beer (or hot beverage). The GAP Office will help organise the session by supplying some local contacts and a pack of 'how to run a story telling session' developed for the training day.

If you are interested, please contact Claire at the GAP Office and we will let you know the date, location and a detailed programme.

Programme for the day:

Introduction - the benefits of storytelling for capturing technical experience and information.

Gaining Inspiration – input from a professional story teller focussing on stories as a means of learning and examples of projects that helped capture useful information.

Gathering tales – some simple tools and techniques for getting people to talk, ensuring everyone has their say and getting the most from the contributors.

Lunch

Having a go – break into groups and rotate the ‘host’ so that everyone gets some practice with the techniques and feels comfortable to lead a session for real.

### **Website weavings**

It is with regret that we have to apologise for the late arrival of the GAP Website. We could blame “leaves on the [internet] lines” or “the wrong kind of snow” on the PC screen, or even “gremlins in the essential flow of cyberspace as beings from a parallel universe try to break through...”. What has actually happened is that gremlins crept in as our Contractor progressed with the design and linkages and revealed the need for more sophisticated software. We expect to have a test version by 22<sup>nd</sup> December and hope to have it on-line by the time we write the next Newsletter when more details will follow.

### **4. Field Meetings**

21<sup>st</sup> January 2004, Lincolnshire: livestock production and marketing meat from conservation grazing systems

The aim of the day is to visit a viable livestock business and a butcher with a national reputation for selling traditional breed meats. We will explore and discuss rearing, finishing and marketing opportunities for conservation grazing schemes.

The morning will consist of a presentation by a well respected farmer and breeder of Lincoln Red cattle and a tour of his livestock enterprise. There will be plenty of opportunities to discuss how he integrates livestock production with management of a grassland SSSI and CSS agreement. In the afternoon a visit to Mr Phipps’ famous butcher shop will demonstrate what a high quality butcher

is looking for in the animals he buys and how he makes the most of the carcass.

Lunch will be at a local pub where we hope to have Lincoln Red beef on the menu – a chance to see how the ‘finished product’ tastes. Please note, a small charge will be made for attending this field visit in order to cover the cost of the meal.

If you would like to attend, please contact Sarah 2 (Macey) at the GAP Office and she will give you details of the location, cost etc. Places will be limited due to the small size of the butcher’s shop, so please book early. In the event of over subscription we may be able to offer additional dates.

### **Programme**

#### **Morning (starting at 10am)**

*Roger Wardle, farmer of pedigree Lincoln Red cattle and Senior Advisor, Lincolnshire FWAG*

- Interactive slide talk: integrating livestock management and conservation grazing Presentation of how habitats on the farm and cattle rearing are managed as part of a viable livestock business. Those attending will be encouraged to ask questions and contribute to the discussion as part of this ‘interactive talk’.
- Site visit A chance to see the herd, including finished cattle ready for sale, and discuss the rearing and finishing process as well as potential markets. View of the farm’s pasture, including wildlife rich areas.
- Discussion and lunch at local pub – hopefully roast Lincoln Red beef.

#### **Afternoon (finishing at 3:30pm)**

*Mr Phipps, Q Guild Butcher and small slaughterhouse operator*

- Points to look for in the slaughtering. The role of finishing techniques. Hanging and chilling in development of texture and flavour.
- What makes a good carcass? A chance to view beef and lamb carcasses and discuss their merits. Presentation and discussion of the importance of good 'eating quality', conformation, fat and the disadvantages of very small breeds.
- Making the most of all the cuts. Display and discussion of different cuts and home made products from the freezer cabinet. Presentation and discussion of different marketing approaches including adding value to cheaper cuts by processing, box schemes and Rare Breeds Survival Trust scheme for selling rare breed meat.

Mr Phipps has a web-site on which you can view the range of his produce. Visit [www.fcphipps.com](http://www.fcphipps.com)



## 5. Horse Passport Update by Sarah Murphy

These rules come into force at the end of November and the deadline for equine owners to have a passport has been extended from the end of December this year, to the 30th June next year. These have come about because of the EU wanting to track the entrance of any horse meat into the food chain, because some drugs used to treat horses are unsafe for human consumption. Spot-checks will be taking place by Trading Standards – they will be able to stop horse boxes whilst in transit and check the horse passport.

Semi-feral ponies are not exempt under the rules. The only exempt areas are the New Forest and Dartmoor and this is only

because both places have official bodies who will keep the equivalent records. However, if a pony is moved outside these areas, it will then need to have a Passport.

Most passport issuers require a vet to fill in the ID section, but a UK wide company called Wetherbys do one that doesn't entail the services of a vet. The cost will be around £17.50 per passport but can be less for a greater number of horses. In some areas, different organisations are thinking about grouping together to get a reduced fee for the passports. Further details on the passports from Wetherbys can be seen at [www.Passportsforhorses.co.uk](http://www.Passportsforhorses.co.uk). or call 01536 201301.

For further details; the why and the how, visit

[www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/tracing/horses/horses\\_index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/tracing/horses/horses_index.htm)

To read the press release try [www.defra.gov.uk/news/2003/031105a.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2003/031105a.htm) (with thanks to E.P.I.C.)

## 6. Local Grazing Schemes (LGS) by Bill Grayson

### Regional Co-ordinators

The Working Group met at the end of October at the Shropshire Wildlife Trust's offices in Shrewsbury where Jan McKelvey, the LGS co-ordinator for the West Midlands region, hosted our latest meeting to review progress in the LGS arena. We had to consider a replacement co-ordinator for Gary Nixon in the South West region who had decided to resign his post due to the problems he experienced in combining the LGS work with his existing duties for Devon WT. We could all sympathise with this problem and would like to thank Gary for all his splendid efforts on behalf of GAP over the last year. He has succeeded in laying a sound information base from which to continue to try and build an

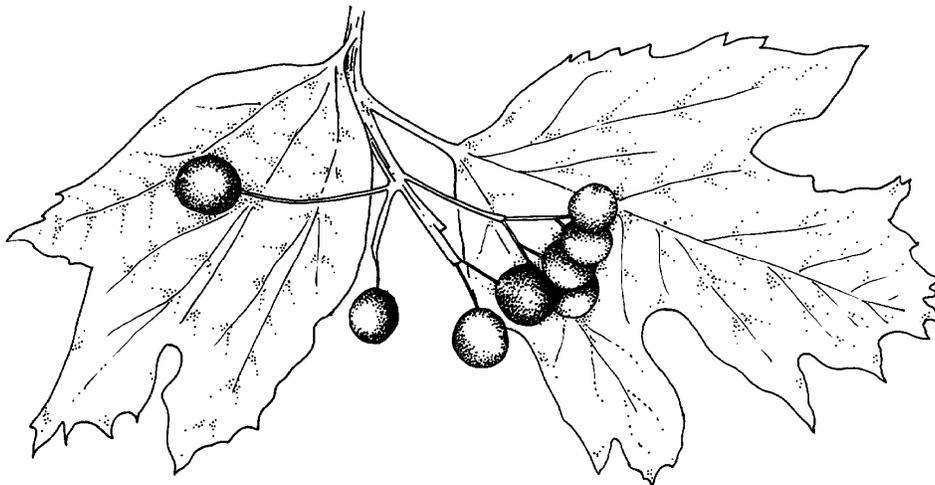
effective LGS network in the region. We now have a successor who is Andrew Pollard from the Dorset Wildlife Trust. All of the other regional co-ordinators are having to deal with very similar constraints and most of our meeting was given over to discussing strategies for resolving these bottlenecks. We are continuing to work on an 'LGS blueprint' that aims to have a half time co-ordinator appointed to work in each of the Government Office regions and the three devolved countries.

The afternoon was a somewhat lighter affair when we all trooped off to visit Paul Allen of the Wyre Forest District Council who showed us his very urban fringe LGS on the edge of Kidderminster. He uses Belted Galloways, owned by a local farmer, but kept mainly on a series of nature reserves managed by the Council, the Shropshire WT and English Nature. Managing this scattered grazing system amidst housing estates can be a very time consuming business and one 'high risk' site demands almost continuous surveillance when the animals are grazing because of the threat from vandals. The benefits, however, are considerable, not least because of the positive PR that these particular animals engender. With their big hairy ears, they bear a striking resemblance to the Eewoks out of Star Wars although happily they do not display such combative dispositions when roused; or not so far

anyway! Our thanks to Paul for taking the time to show us round on what we all agreed should just be the preliminary for a full GAP visit to be arranged for 2004. GAP News will provide further details in due course.

We are continuing to identify potential new LGS projects that are keen to source assistance from the LGS team. Help in exploring prospects for new LGSs is being provided or planned for emergent partnerships in North Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Wolds, South Wales, Kent and Somerset at present. An exciting event is planned for the West Midlands in the spring of 2004, which will see English Nature and the Rare Breeds Survival Trust staging a joint workshop to assess the benefits of using endangered native breeds to graze nature reserves. The date and the venue are not yet fixed but the details will be announced in the RBST's journal, the Ark, as well as in GAP News. We hope that this could help to kick-start new LGS initiatives in the region by bringing all the key stakeholders together.

The FACT/GAP conference, held in Lancaster last September, was a resounding success. It featured numerous grazing projects and discussed several important issues that impact on the sustainability of LGSs. I was particularly impressed by the way that the conference organisers managed to live up to the ideals of the LGS concept by completing



the famous 'positive feedback loop'. The delicious organic beef that we enjoyed as the main course for the conference dinner came from the same farm that is supplying the Blue Grey and Shorthorn cattle that delegates had, earlier that same day, seen grazing the NNR at Ingleborough. This is precisely the kind of 'Eat the View' connection that GAP hopes LGSs everywhere will succeed in promoting in the hearts and minds of local people.

#### **7. Dates for the next Newsletter:**

The deadlines for submission of entries (including 'grazelots' adverts) for Newsletter No 25 to Tim Beech please by 27<sup>th</sup> February 2004. Posting date is planned for 26<sup>th</sup> March 04. Newsletter No 26 will be submission of articles by 28<sup>th</sup> May 2004 with posting planned for 25<sup>th</sup> June 2004.



**Witty caption for next issue?**

## 8. GAP Contacts

The GAP Office for all general enquiries

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*All enquiries relevant to the mailing list, and to be put on the mailing list:*

The GAP Office

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Sarah Murphy who is helping Bill with LGS from the GAP office

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# Grazing Animals Project



Driving Change



The Countryside Agency



Royal Agricultural College



Rural Development Service



**Agricultural News – Extracts from English Nature’s monthly newsletter**  
**17<sup>th</sup> September 2003**

**The Potential Environmental Impacts of CAP Mid Term Review Proposals**

The final report on 'The Potential Environmental Impacts of the CAP Mid-Term Review Proposals' carried out by GFA RACE for Defra has been posted on the Defra website via the link <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/reports/capmtrp/default.asp>

This report is based on the proposals published by the EU in January 2003, and Defra are now planning to commission a short extension contract which will bring the work up-to-date so that it relates to the CAP reform agreement of 26 June. As well as agriculture this further analysis will cover forestry.

**Agri-environment Schemes Review: Framework Document Consultation Analysis**

The analysis of the responses received from the consultation on the agri-environment schemes Framework Document is now available on Defra's A.E Review web pages via the link: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/reviews/agrienv/consultnew.htm#Phase2>.

The consultation included the following topics:

- Scheme objectives
- Relationships
- Broad structure
- Design brief for higher tiers
- Payments systems and agreements
- Self assessment, farm plans and audits
- Regionalisation
- Advice, support and training
- Administration systems and IT
- Timetable for change and transition arrangements
- Monitoring

The results from this consultation will be used to help finalise the framework for future agri-environment schemes in England. The detail of the scheme objectives and options is being developed through a series of options groups arranged by habitat. English Nature habitat and species specialists sit on these groups. The final consultation on the design and content of the "Higher Tier Scheme" will be in early October.

**6<sup>th</sup> October**

**Prepare now for 2004 agri-environment schemes**

Defra and RDS staff need to train and prepare for the implementation of the new agri-environment data system (GENESIS) and the new scheme which will be available from 2005. To accommodate this process some changes are needed to the 2004 agri-environment scheme application round:

- Application deadline for ESAs and CSS (renewals and new schemes) will be 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004, with all agreements issued by the end of September 2004;

- The 2004 CSS Handbook was available after October 2003;
- RDS envisage spending around 65% of the allocated budget for next year's agreements (as less staff time is available);
- The priority will be on high (monetary) value agreements which are administratively straightforward – e.g. complex Common Land agreements which will not meet the above deadlines may not be considered;
- RDS are seeking help with the preparation of applications (e.g. from English Nature on SSSIs);
- RDS are seeking a streamlining of the SSSI consultation process, especially for ESA renewals, to enable them to meet above deadlines.

### **CAP reform – moving forward**

The deadline for the Defra consultation on CAP reform was extended to 24<sup>th</sup> October. As the implications of the reform start to sink in, the industry is clearly apprehensive, particularly over the issue of whether the Single Farm Payment should be averaged out on a regional basis or based on historic receipts. The former would result in winners and losers: whilst SSSI owners would tend to benefit, there is little evidence about what the environmental outcomes would be. There are also concerns about the position of SSSI tenants and licensees. ExCo met to discuss this difficult issue and the wider issue of our position on future CAP reform on 7/10: see the paper on the ExCo intranet page: [EC61/03 - Reviewing English Nature's agricultural policy in light of CAP reform.](#)

English Nature is involved in Defra groups looking at facets of implementation. On “Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition” the signals are that standards will initially be fairly minimal. Legal and enforcement issues will be the main constraints. Work is also progressing on interpreting the cross-compliance implications of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, protection of permanent pasture, and on environmental standards for set-aside. English Nature also sit on the National Envelopes sub-group that is looking at if and how these mechanisms should be used in England. Progress is proving difficult largely due to uncertainty over the detailed rules on implementation, which have not yet been agreed or even discussed in Brussels, uncertainty over exact legal meaning of various terms and wording of the relevant Articles and complexity and cost of administration.

Ministers were presented with options for consideration on the 15<sup>th</sup> October and the various Defra groups in which English Nature are involved are aiming to provide briefing for this meeting as an early priority, although English Nature are unlikely to discuss possible schemes for some time yet.

### **Agri-environment review – what’s happening now?**

The review process is accelerating. A (final?) consultation exercise on the design and content of the ‘**Higher Tier Scheme**’ has been published by Defra. There will be a 2 month consultation period (nationally and regionally) – when Chris Reid will be asking for your input. The detail of the HTS options is being worked up by a series of groups each focusing on a habitat or issue.

Defra’s evaluation of the **Entry Level Scheme pilots** was completed in November. Results from the pilot area evaluation fieldwork that English Nature has undertaken have illustrated that the scheme is delivering wildlife benefits on the majority of farms, although there are some areas where the scheme design will need to be tightened up to maximise these. Key issues are:

- boundary and margin features are proving very popular at the expense of ‘in-field’ options;
- the ‘resource protection’ management plan options have not proved popular;
- options for *wildlife* management in the Less Favoured Areas of the uplands are limited and not popular.

### **Review of Capital Payment Rates**

English Nature recently responded to a Defra consultation on the Review of Capital Payment Rates in Agri-environment Schemes. The schemes are a key delivery mechanism for achieving favourable condition on SSSIs, helping deliver the PSA target by 2010. The key messages from our response were:

- Rates for capital works must recognise that financial benefits to farmers from work on sites of high nature value are often nil (and in some cases negative). In these circumstances rates should be set at 100%(+) of costs.
- Current payment rates can lead to missed opportunities and continuing wildlife loss, unless ‘topped-up’ with Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (only available on SSSIs).
- Wildlife Enhancement Scheme ‘top-ups’ or ‘substitution’ for agri-environment scheme items are an inefficient way of delivering outcomes, and should end.
- In future ‘mainstream’ agri-environment scheme payment levels and options should be sufficiently flexible (e.g. through use of supplements) and well resourced to deliver the full range of desired environment outcomes.

### **GMO field scale trials**

The results of the GM crop farm-scale evaluations were published on 16 October and will be freely available for all to see on that day. For details of how the results can be obtained see [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/fse](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/fse). This includes details of a free public meeting on 16 October at which the research team and scientific steering committee presented the findings. Defra will take the advice on them from the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE), an independent group of experts appointed to advise the Government - see [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/acre](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/acre).

### **20<sup>th</sup> November**

#### **English Nature's response to CAP reform implementation in England**

English Nature’s response on the implementation of CAP reforms in England has been submitted. A further consultation should emerge in the New Year.

#### **Single Farm Payment**

The debate on the payment method for the new Single Farm Payment (historic basis or regionally averaged) is acrimonious. Thank you for useful comments on this debate, which largely favoured the historic route for a variety of reasons. Much of this concerned the ongoing iniquity of perpetuating support for intensive producers, but it is difficult to assess what the impact of redistributing this support would be. We have signalled our concern to Defra about the potential additional cost of administering the historic approach, particularly since Defra have signalled that the hugely complex task of administering the reformed CAP from 1/1/05 will be done from within existing resources. This militates against environmental approaches to implementation (cross-compliance and national envelopes).

#### **Cross-compliance and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions**

Progress on defining new standards of “Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions” is problematic: Defra is working to a clear steer on minimising delivery costs and regulatory burdens. Standards for over-grazing, under-grazing, set-aside, and permanent pasture are all in the frame, but none are guaranteed. We also need greater clarity on whether cross-compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives will have any meaningful outcomes and what the English Nature opportunities and responsibilities for compliance monitoring will be. This is inextricably bound up with the debate over rural delivery.

#### National Envelopes

The picture on national envelopes is also unclear with industry opposition and a restrictive view being taken by the European Commission. An options paper has been commissioned from IEEP by Defra.

#### Research

A CAP research programme has been drafted and discussed with Defra and LUPG partners. Work will now be placed to gain better understanding of the impacts on the regional environment and on agri-environment schemes.

#### ERDP mid term evaluation

We have started to look at the future of the Rural Development Regulation and the links with the Structure Fund reforms. We need to use the outcome of the ERDP mid-term evaluation (publication expected in the New Year) to guide our approach to RDR reform and the content of the new ERDP in 2006.

#### Farm advisory service

We think the issue of farm plans and the roll-out of a mandatory Farm Advice System in 2007 is pivotal to success on a number of fronts, but progress is slow. We need to make a clear and quantified case to Defra on the benefits of advice and planning if we are to make any progress on this issue.

#### **Agri-environment review - latest consultation**

Defra has launched the latest (possibly final) consultation as part of the agri-environment review – seeking views on the detailed ‘higher level’ scheme objectives and options. In parallel, a series of Defra subgroups (with English Nature reps.) are developing detailed prescriptions and, eventually, payment rates for options. English Nature is also inputting to the review through developing scheme targeting strategies and looking at the relationship with WES and setting payment levels appropriate for SSSIs. Key issues for English Nature at present are ensuring that the new higher level scheme:

- delivers favourable condition on eligible SSSIs (with a consequent changed role for WES);
- contributes significantly to the farmland bird PSA and BAP targets;
- addresses diffuse pollution issues;
- addresses key upland issues of grazing and burning management;
- fits with other policy initiatives like ‘national envelopes’, cross-compliance, and farm advisory systems.

We are also contributing to the Entry Level Scheme pilot evaluation and development: we need to ensure that resources for the ELS are secure, and that criticisms of the scheme are properly addressed without de-railing the roll-out.

### **Agri-environment Review by Bill Grayson**

We have been facing significant demands on the policy front. Defra's consultation on the CAP reforms and particularly the way in which the new Single Farm Payment should be calculated has now closed. GAP submitted a detailed response that sought to raise the main issues that will confront grazing managers at a practical level, arguing particularly that the payments should be based on a regional average that reflected the intrinsic productive potential of different classes of land. A decision from Defra on this question is expected before Christmas.

This has been followed hot-foot by the third consultation on the review of agri-environment schemes in England, with Defra seeking comments on the options that will be available to agreement holders once the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ESS) is opened in 2005. I would urge everyone with any involvement in practical delivery of conservation grazing to make time to look at this as the new scheme will almost certainly be the most widely applicable measure providing on-going funding for grazing projects in years to come. It proposes a number of specific support measures to benefit conservation grazing, such as provision of stock handling facilities, shepherding and enhanced payments for grazing small, remote and inaccessible sites; GAP has long been arguing the need for just these kind of agri-environment options. A supplementary payment for using 'native, locally adapted, distinctive, hardy and rare breeds of livestock' to improve the delivery of specific scheme objectives is another welcome inclusion. GAP will be responding positively to all of these proposals before the consultation period closes in early December.

One issue it raises, that may create problems, however, is the way that the new scheme is structured. The details of the relationship between the new Entry Level Scheme (ELS), the basic tier of whole farm agri-environment support and the Higher Level Scheme (HLS) which will offer more demanding prescriptions that equate with Countryside Stewardship and higher ESA tiers, have already been worked out. A commitment to joining ELS will be a prerequisite for admission to HLS so the two new schemes have been specifically designed not to overlap to avoid issues of double funding when both are applied to the same area. The potential problem, however, lies in the fact that both schemes will need to be owned by the same applicant and be linked together via the IACS system. Until now conservation organisations have not needed to grapple with the complexities of IACS in order to qualify for inclusion in agri-environment schemes, with the exception of those who already own their own livestock. Defra, however, appear keen to link the scheme payments with the new map-based Rural Land Register that is now evolving from the IACS system of field numbers and areas. This switch of emphasis will obviously impose an additional and presumably unwelcome burden of bureaucracy on any site managers who wish to continue benefiting from the AES annual payments once their existing agreements run out.

Worse, it seems likely to bring them into competition with their graziers who will almost certainly wish to register any land that they graze on their own IACS return, so that they can claim their Single Farm Payment entitlements against it. Without these basic support payments, currently paid on a headage basis, it is unlikely that any grazier would be able to provide the required grazing regime on an economically viable basis. Loss of this income would call into question the prospects for maintaining most grazing regimes in the long-term. As sustainability is normally a key factor in achieving ecological objectives, GAP is very keen to see all of the available economic support mechanisms being fully utilized on behalf of conservation grazing. Failure to gain access to any one of these three new tiers of

payment (SFP, ELS or HLS) could mean a significant shortfall of income, potentially causing an otherwise ideal grazing regime to fold. It will be important, therefore, to ensure that all the available resources are secured and fairly apportioned between the stakeholders according to the contributions they make to delivering the required grazing regime. Resolving the potential tensions that seem likely to arise between the competing interests of landlord and grazier will require a considerable degree of insight and understanding on both sides.

It is hard to make clear-cut recommendations that will reliably help GAP members to negotiate their way through these proposed reforms. As with the CAP reforms (described in GAP News 23) the best place to start could be through direct discussion with your graziers to see what land is currently being registered on their IACS returns. Obviously, if they have not registered the conservation sites that they graze with IACS then the potential economic disruption they face will be minimal; discussions about who will be best placed to take advantage of the new ESS and how best to apportion the benefits between the various stakeholders can then proceed with more flexibility and objectivity. Negotiations with graziers who are already including sites under IACS, on the other hand, could be more sensitive due to the potential for them to lose out financially. The prime objective in these circumstances must be to secure a fair and mutually beneficial agreement for all parties that will ensure the continuance of the best possible grazing regime.

We still don't know all of the operational detail of these new schemes so it may not be as significant a problem in practice as it would appear from the consultation. Defra have stated, in the current proposals, that special arrangements will be made for single sites where there is no link with a farm holding or the IACS system. This could allow a conservation body to enter a single site into the HLS independently of IACS, although organisations that manage several sites across national, regional, or county-wide areas would probably have more difficulty escaping an IACS obligation.

#### **Recent articles and publications:**

##### **Conserving the Coastal Slopes 1999-2002 : A niche scheme tackling the decline of traditional management on Pembrokeshire's cliff-tops and coastal slopes**

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park has produced a free colour booklet to report on this recent project. Reintroducing grazing to neglected coastal grassland and heathland was the main element of the scheme, and the booklet gives details on how to go about this, as well as how to deal with all the undergrowth that may have developed after years of abandonment. Although aimed primarily at other coastal land managers, the booklet will be of use to anyone involved with grazing semi-natural land, particularly where this has to be combined with public access. For a free copy, please contact Julie Webber on 01437 764636 or [juliew@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk](mailto:juliew@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)



Conference:

**Suffolk Agricultural Association Spring Conference**  
**'Meating your Needs'**  
**The Economic and Environmental Importance of Livestock in the Eastern Region**

The theme of the Suffolk Agricultural Association's spring conference is "The Economic and Environmental Importance of Livestock to the Eastern Region". Its purpose is to highlight the interdependence of livestock, arable farming and the environment. **It will take place on Tuesday 24 February in the Suffolk Trinity Rooms at the Suffolk Showground**, near Ipswich. The event is sponsored by Bidwells and Ensors.

Speakers are **Dennis Turner, Chief Economist at HSBC Bank plc**, who will concentrate on the economic importance of livestock; **Sir Martin Doughty, Chairman of English Nature**, who will be explaining the importance of livestock to the environment; and **Sheila Dillon**, the **BBC Food Programme** presenter, who will be debating "Do we need local food? Does local food need meat?"

Three entrepreneurial case studies will complete the line up of speakers. **Jane James** runs the **Welsh Meat Company**, a farmers' co-operative, which sells premium beef, lamb and a range of value-added products under the brand name Celtic Pride. **James and George Strachan** of **Marybelle Dairy Farm**, Rendham, Suffolk, have installed an on-farm milk-bottling plant and have diversified into direct sales of milk, yoghurts and ice-creams to multiples and to independent retailers. **Ian Whitehead** of **Lane Farm Country Foods**, Brundish, Suffolk, is a pig farmer who has an EC-registered cutting plant and sells his own sausages, ham and oven-ready pork dishes to independent catering outlets and at farmers markets. Between them they will demonstrate the importance of partnerships, product-branding, adding value and taking control of the supply chain.

The conference theme, the economic and environmental importance of livestock in the eastern region, is significant because East Anglia is seen as a predominantly arable area. Livestock, particularly pigs and chickens, are important to arable farmers economically as consumers of grain. Sheep, beef cattle and dairy cows provide the grazed environment, which includes most of the region's wildlife reserves, environmentally sensitive areas and areas of outstanding natural beauty. East Anglian livestock are also central to the region's lively local food economy with its high quality meat and dairy products. The conference will highlight the diversity of the region's agriculture, the interdependence of arable and grassland farming and the importance of locality, regionality, speciality and quality for future meat production, now and in the future.

The conference will be chaired by **Lady Cranbrook, President of the Suffolk Agricultural Association**, and summed up by the **Hon. Nicholas Soames, MP**.

Tickets are £30 inc VAT or £25 inc VAT for SAA members, which includes tea and a buffet supper of local food. If you would like further information or would like to purchase tickets, please contact Hannah Williams on 01473 707118 or [hannah.williams@suffolkshow.co.uk](mailto:hannah.williams@suffolkshow.co.uk)

## Grazelots

At the same time as submitting your Grazelots advert to GAP News we suggest you also submit it direct to Ecolots for additional coverage. Please see Ecolots contact details below.

For those unfamiliar to this new definition of the classified ads this is your opportunity to buy, sell or exchange stock, machinery, hay, grazing, services and anything else needed to aid your grazing programme.

To place a 'grazelot' in the GAP Newsletter please provide the following information to the editor by the submission date:

- ◆ brief description of the item(s) available for sale, exchange or wanted
- ◆ when they are available or wanted
- ◆ your name, organisation and all contact information
- ◆ any financial information that may be relevant

Please note that the Grazing Animals Project can take no responsibility for the accuracy of the information supplied by the advertisers.

***For Sale:** 10 Pedigree registered yearling Highland heifers for sale. Born and reared in north-west Islay. A very quiet group of heifers that I would like to stay together if possible. Also a small number of pedigree Icelandic ewe lambs, fleece colours include white, black and grey mouflon. Eric Bignal, Kindrochaid, Bridgend, Isle of Islay PA44 7PT Tel / fax 01496850330 email:ericbignal@cali.co.uk*

***For Sale:** Shetland (ewes and rams) and North Ronaldsay (rams only) sheep. Excellent hardy conservation grazers and browsers. Reared to organic standards but not certified. Please contact Mike Sandison, Essex Wildlife Trust. Tel.: 01621 741351, e-mail: mikesandis@aol.com.*

### **The free ECO-LOTS advertising service:**

The Ecolots advertising service has been improved again – any new adverts are now put on twice a week. So the service is even more responsive. Adverts can be submitted on line but if you need to speak to Mike Bentley who runs the Ecolots contract then the full contacts are:

**Contact:** Through the Web site at: [WWW.ecolots.co.uk](http://WWW.ecolots.co.uk) or direct (and for the 'flyer') to Beacon Forestry, at Broombush House, Venlaw High Road Peebles. EH45 8RL. Tel: 01721 724788. Fax: 01721 724798. E-mail: mb@ecolots.co.uk.

There are currently nearly 400 live adverts aimed at being relevant and helpful to the environmentally sensitive and sustainable management of land, trees and wildlife. So, why not go on line and search for what you want? If its not there place a request to see if any one responds, or place your own advert proclaiming the services or commodities you are offering.

Please continue to use and publicise the Eco-Lots advertising service. Log on to the website - [WWW.ecolots.co.uk](http://WWW.ecolots.co.uk) - the more people who use it the more valuable the service will become - and it's still free!

John Bacon



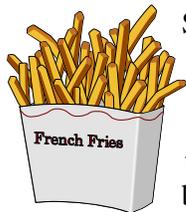
# From the field

**Eurosite Workshop – Sustainable Grazing for Biodiversity, Hungary 5-9 November  
by Claire Weaver, who attended as the GAP representative**

Foreign travel is not something that I am accustomed to. There is all that work to arrange an animal-sitter before we even leave the house, let alone the country. This time I was leaving husband Graham at home with the animals whilst I flew to Hungary armed only with the phrases “please”, “thank you” and “where is the train station”. This was the only Magyar I could acquire over the telephone from a friend of a friend as, despite Gabor’s best efforts, I was unable to learn how to pronounce “please drive me to Kiskunsági Nemzeti national park in middle of puszta” (steppe grassland). There were simply too many sz’s and a general lack of vowels.

Flying in to Budapest airport over the puszta (pronounced poos-tah) I felt strangely at home – it looked just like the fens of Lincolnshire, only brown not black. There were vast flat areas without a fence, hedge or wall to be seen and some was obviously arable, the ‘stubble’ of maize still standing in places. Unlike the fens, much was either grassland or looked to have tumbled-down to rough grass, although I could see no grazing animals. I thought this was strange for a country which has not yet joined the EU, does not have access to EU subsidies for cereals and which appears to have retained a balance of pasture and plough-land. I expected central- and eastern European countries still to have a viable livestock industry. I was wrong.

Most of the delegates attending the workshop were from central Europe: Croatia, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Turkey as well as Hungary. There were impressive presentations, all given in English, showing the situation in several of these countries. I learned two important things in the first two days: firstly, all the delegates were facing the problems associated with a declining livestock industry – they couldn’t get enough grazing to manage their wildlife sites.



Secondly, the Hungarian for ‘bon appetite’ sounds like “You Ate Why-dj’yott” (although the spelling may vary). Hungarian lunch consists of soup followed by meat, meat and carbohydrate (rice and chips seemed popular – together). Hungarian dinner follows the same blueprint. I missed the vegetable course, which consisted of tomato, lettuce and cucumber, because it was served at breakfast. So why, I asked, is livestock farming suffering? The answers were many but included several common themes.

Most of the countries represented at the workshop have strong pastoral traditions, indeed I saw, for the very first time, a shepherd tending his flock in the unfenced landscape. Alas this is a system falling into the history books and with it goes the knowledge, skill and experience that most western European countries lost long ago. Experience that could be very useful if the scenario of abandoned British uplands comes to pass when headage subsidies become area-based payments. Experience that could help us provide truly extensive grazing on upland wildlife sites, perhaps even funded by contract grazing on

upland farms that need to be kept in 'good agricultural condition' if the 'retired' farmers are to receive their area payments?

In central European countries many of the landholdings are very small. In the ex-communist countries, governments have been trying to hand back land to those who owned it before the Russians took over. But the former agricultural system was based on peasant farming and the surviving heirs often moved to the city and now have little interest in farming a couple of acres. There is wide-scale abandonment of land where farmers and their children have adopted other occupations or the government simply cannot find the original landowner. If this land is in a national park it poses real problems for management. The economics of grazing little plots might add up if a village adopted the traditional way and employed a shared shepherd to tend every one's stock. But co-operation is now associated with communism and seen as retrograde. In Croatia most farmers in the karst limestone country still have one or two cattle or sheep, but they cut forage and take it to the livestock so that they are free to do other farm jobs, rather than spend the whole day tending their stock whilst it grazes floriferous but unfenced grasslands.

Inherent in most of the national preparations for accession to the EU is some form of Agri-environment scheme which offers limited support for grazing management. Although these are currently small, over-subscribed schemes that tend to focus on agricultural improvement, there is hope that 75% EU funding will make them more effective in delivering management for biodiversity. Hungary and several other countries have developed flexible schemes that avoid the problems of rigid, prescriptive systems and allow farmers to consider variables like season, soil type etc. More flexible environmental 'prescriptions', than our schemes mean that judgement needs to be exercised and many of the people I spoke to told of the low level of ecological experience that their Agri-environment scheme advisors have at present. In Hungary the NGOs are running training events for both government advisors and farmers to teach environmental management skills.

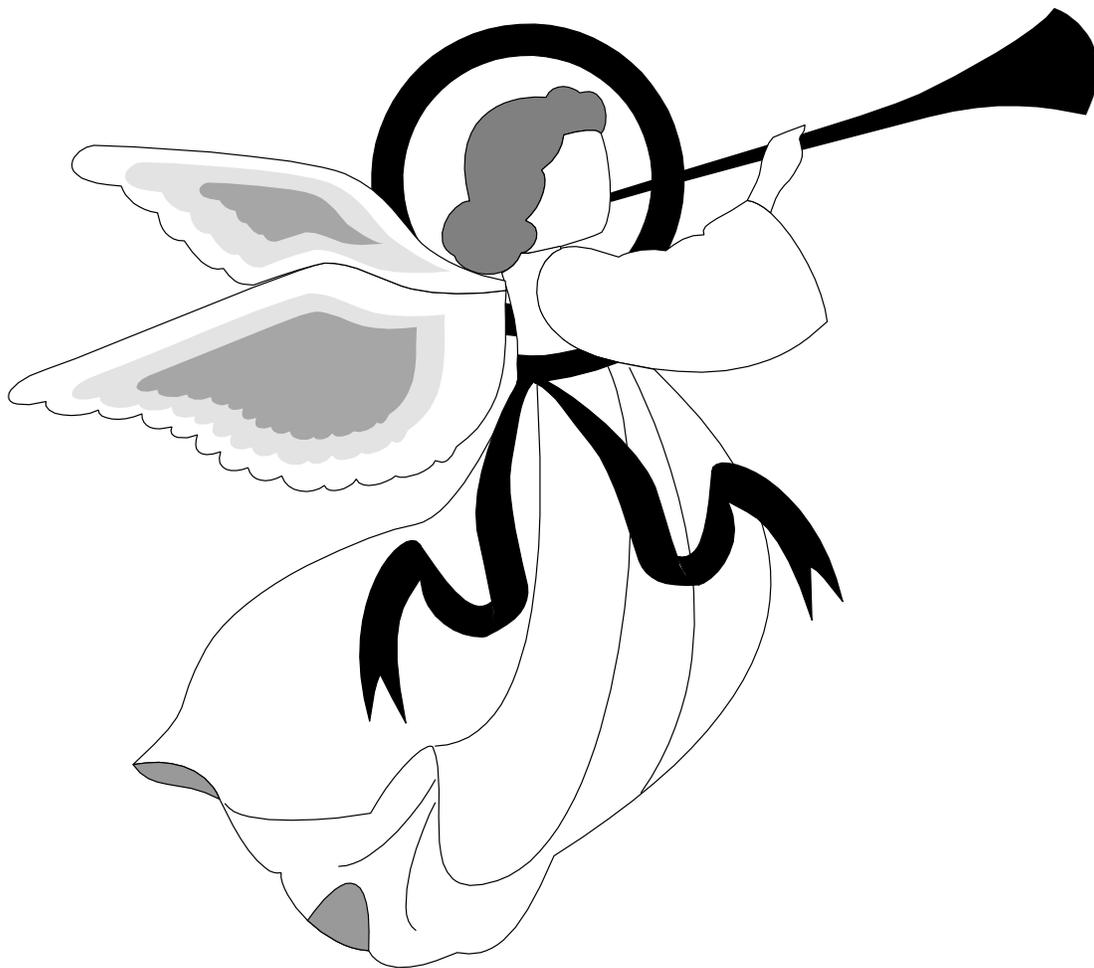
Lastly there is the poor price for red meat. I had an interesting conversation with an Estonian who wanted to know where the sense was in subsidising farmers to produce food that nobody wanted, food that just piled up in intervention mountains. I, on the other hand, still could not understand how I had eaten more meat in one meal than I would usually eat in 2 days whilst they said there was no market for meat. It seems that many farmers are looking to modernise their techniques and go in to intensive poultry farming rather than have capital tied up in large animals that take longer to reach a marketable weight.

I came home with some lasting images of the púszta and Hungarian Grey cattle, a better view of the difficulties facing the rest of Europe and a lot of requests for GAP literature. I am beginning to realise how valuable GAP's practical guides are in an international context. We seem to be one of the few organisations that has found some way of tackling under-grazing and some new ways of delivering grazing management on wildlife sites in the face of a collapsing livestock industry. Our agricultural background is very different from central European countries and only some of our ideas will be applicable abroad, but colleagues at the Hungary workshop were very keen to winnow the wheat from the chaff to find what suits them. We, in turn, have a lot to learn from their extant pastoral systems. Eastern Europe still retains, just, the potential to deliver much of its conservation grazing through traditional farming techniques. Finding experts for the Husbandry Handbook would be less difficult, if only I spoke more Magyar than "cheers"!

The representatives at the workshop proposed the re-establishment of Eurograzer, to share solutions with other practitioners and to bring pressure to bear on European policy. There is a real need to shape EU Agri-environment payments so that accession countries can make the transition without the wildlife losses that western countries have experienced. Perhaps in central Europe we will learn from our history, perhaps it will be possible to support livestock farming through Agri-environment schemes, avoid food mountains, establish viable markets for meat ...

... and import Palinker\* to Lincolnshire? “Heggis Shegg-edd-rah” (hic!)

\* Hungarian plum or apricot brandy



The picture over the page was devised as part of a stress test developed by researchers at St. Mary's Hospital in London.

It is the final picture of a series of stress determinators to gauge the amount of stress a patient has built up over a short time.

Look at the picture over the page of two dolphins jumping out of the water in tandem. The research has shown that the more differences you notice in the two dolphins, the more stressed you are. This is attributed to the concentration and recognition influences intensifying when stressed.

The two are very similar, so if you can tell the difference without looking hard, you should pack up work and go home immediately!



## **Grazing in the Suffolk Coast and Heaths - problems and solutions**

**By (sadly) A.Non**

An evening devoted to grazing was held on 12 June 2003, at the White Lion Hotel in Aldeburgh. The aim of the event was to find out what needs to be done to improve grazing within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB so that areas that are important for wildlife can be managed to bring about long-term benefits for both people and wildlife. It was organised in partnership by the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Unit and English Nature's Lifescapes Project.

Livestock farming in the East of England has been in decline for many years for a multitude of reasons, including increasing intensification and regional specialisation of agriculture, the impact of cheaper imports and animal diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy. As a result of the decline in the local availability of grazing animals, the condition of many sites of high nature conservation value that require grazing is declining. The consequence of this is that the intimate mosaic of varying vegetation heights that is so beneficial to wildlife, and which can only be achieved through grazing, is degraded either by neglect to tall, tussocky species-poor vegetation or by mowing to a uniform sward height. The other important wildlife-friendly effect that is lost along with the grazing animals are the flies that are attracted to dung, which are an important food source for many birds.

Because modern breeds of livestock need greater quantities of better quality grazing than slower-maturing traditional breeds, they are generally less suitable for grazing sites of high conservation value. There is therefore a mismatch between the needs of a modern grazier and the needs of sites of high nature conservation value for particular management. If these problems are to be overcome, there needs to be an increased level of understanding and co-operation between local graziers and conservation organisations.

The event combined a series of presentations with several lively discussions to achieve a balance of information and feedback from people at the "sharp end".

Speakers came from near and far - Simon Fisher came all the way from the Chilterns to tell us about "Chilterns Choice" - a local marketing scheme based in the Chilterns AONB, Pauline Oliver came from Hertfordshire to give us some insight into the work of the Grazing Animals Project, Alex Nichols of Defra brought us up-to-date with forthcoming changes to agri-environment schemes and Peter Page of Adnams gave us a customer's eye view of what people really want from a meal out at one of the Adnams hotels.

The evening was structured so that we first identified the problems and then progressed on to identify possible solutions.

Some of the problems are that:

- Prices are low for animals sold on the open market
- Modern-day breeds are often not the best type to graze the vegetation that is characteristic of wildlife habitats
- There are not enough local markets, hauliers and abattoirs
- There are fewer large animal vets to look after livestock
- The future is uncertain for farmers

- There is a need for more publicity to sell local products
- There are not enough stock and stockmen

This complex web of problems needs addressing in a variety of ways before long-term solutions can be found for the wildlife and landscape of this very special area.

The following were suggested as possible ways of addressing the problems:

- Influence Government and European policy
- Improve matching graziers to sites
- Improve communication and knowledge transfer between farmers and conservationists
- Set up a local branding initiative the makes the link between maintaining a good quality landscape, has benefits for wildlife and has high welfare standards for grazing animals.

### **Conservation grazing research at IGER**

by **Andrew Rook and Jerry Tallwin**  
 Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research,  
 North Wyke, Okehampton, Devon EX20 2SB

#### **Introduction to IGER**

The Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER) is one of the research institutes of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. IGER has 4 research stations, three in Wales and one at North Wyke, near Okehampton in Devon.

IGER's mission is to undertake an integrated, cross-disciplinary programme of basic, strategic and applied research on grassland-related and extensive agricultural systems. The aim of our research is to generate knowledge of the means to enhance economic and environmental sustainability of livestock farming systems and managed landscapes.

In this article we describe some of the work of the Behavioural and Community Ecology team based at North Wyke. Our research aims to deliver sustainable management options for agriculturally improved and unimproved semi-natural grassland ecosystems. Our particular focus is the role of the grazing animal in these different ecosystems. We are studying the ways in which the grazing animal and the grazed plant communities interact. How the animal makes its dietary choice, what plant (and animal) traits influences this choice and what effects grazing choice has on subsequent plant growth and community composition in the longer term are important objectives of our work. We aim to establish mechanisms for enhancing and maintaining biodiversity in extensively managed grasslands. The following provides a brief description of a number of our research projects.

#### **Sustainable lowland grazing (the SUSGRAZ project)**

This Defra funded project is carried out on a farm near Bab Cary in Somerset. The aim of the project is to identify sward based criteria for grazing unimproved neutral grasslands that provide optimal conditions for enhancing/maintaining the wildlife interests of the grassland and to quantify the agronomic value of the unimproved grassland.

To do this we quantify the impact of different severities of grazing unimproved neutral grasslands on cattle growth rate and intake, botanical composition, vegetation canopy structure, invertebrate populations and soil nutrient status. There are 3 different severities of grazing intensity on lowland species-rich neutral grassland. The different grazing intensities are designed to create different spatial/structural heterogeneity in the grassland. Fertilised paddocks provide a “control” for estimating potential agronomic output for the site. After 4 years, there have been no significant changes in botanical diversity between the grazing severity treatments. However, it is early days. Plant community responses to these managements are likely to be slow to develop, as indicated by other long-term studies. Individual animal growth rates on SUSGRAZ were similar across grazing intensity treatments and were comparable to those on the fertilised control. The different grazing treatments have created significantly different sward structures, with increasing amounts of ungrazed or lightly grazed sward as grazing intensity decreases. Colleagues at CABI Biosciences are quantifying the benefits for invertebrates such as bumblebees and other plant feeding insects of creating patches of undisturbed sward in grazed grassland.

2004 is the final year of the existing 5 year SUSGRAZ project but we hope to use the site subsequently for a new project looking at meat quality from unimproved grasslands including the introduction of rare breeds.

#### **Grazing intensity and breed effects (the FORBIOBEN project)**

This project is part funded by the EU and part by Defra. This is an integrated experimental programme at 5 sites (UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain) that examines the effects of grazing intensity (stocking rate) and breed of grazing animal on natural and semi-natural grassland systems. Integrated measurements of animal foraging behaviour, agronomy, animal production, botanical diversity, structural heterogeneity (patchiness), invertebrate and vertebrate biodiversity and socio-economic outcomes will allow a mechanistic and thus generalisable understanding of the effects of these factors within a wider systems context. In the UK we are comparing grazing of permanent pasture by yearling steers of either North Devon or Charolais x Friesian breeds. Initial results after 1 year suggest little effect of breed on foraging behaviour or agronomic and biodiversity outcomes but that there is a stocking rate effect. Socio-economic analysis suggests that there is more resistance by farmers to changing breed than to reducing stocking rate.

#### **Separating breed and rearing effects (the BEFORBIO project)**

This Defra funded project builds on the FORBIOBEN project. The idea is to test to what extent the grazing abilities of cattle are due to their genetic makeup (i.e. the true breed effect) and to what extent they are learned during the animal’s early experience. To do this we are carrying out a cross-fostering experiment in which calves of one breed are raised either by their own mother or cross-fostered onto a cow of a different breed at birth. The suckler cows are either Hereford x Friesian or North Devon with spring-born calves sired by Simmental or North Devon bulls respectively. During their first summer all calves graze with their natural or foster-mother. Those with the Hereford x Friesian cows experience only fertilised, ryegrass-dominated pastures, while those with North Devon cows also graze on a fen-meadow community on a national nature reserve in North Devon for approximately 3 months from July. In their second summer all calves graze on the fen meadow community in separate breed x rearing groups and we record their grazing

behaviour, diet selection and their impact on the sward. The first set of calves were born in 2003 and will be studied in summer 2004. The study will continue with further sets for another 3 years.

**Mechanisms of natural colonisation** (the NATREC project)

This Defra funded project is based on both lowland and upland fringe pastures near Aberystwyth. Previous projects on this site have shown that even after 5 years of consistent application of treatments (various hay cutting and/or grazing regimes) the vegetation was still in a highly dynamic state. Species indicative of agriculturally improved grassland were still common in all plots including those that showed greatest increase in species-richness. Semi-natural grassland species were establishing in plots at both sites, but the rate of natural recolonisation and botanical change varied between the two sites and between the different managements. The current project aims not only to identify extensive management regimes that will result in significant increases in botanical diversity of grasslands through natural colonization, but also some of the mechanisms involved. For example we will establish whether soil nutrient status and/or microbial composition are useful indicators of plant diversity restoration potential and identify whether further species recruitment to extensification sites is limited by lack of availability of germination-establishment niches within plots and/or due to lack of dispersal of seed/propagules of new species to the sites. We are particularly interested in the role of the grazing animal in dispersion, either through the gut or by transfer on the coat and feet. Our ultimate aim is to produce a ‘decision toolbox’ for site managers.

**Contact:** If you would like to discuss any aspect of our work in more detail or visit one of our sites please contact Andrew Rook on 01837 883548 or email at [aj.rook@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:aj.rook@bbsrc.ac.uk).



## Wild Space by Keith Kirby

Dear Colleagues

English Nature is just starting a project to explore Frans Vera's and others ideas on the role of large herbivores in the former natural forests, but also their potential for creating and maintaining mixed landscapes, rich in wildlife, under present conditions.

We think this is an exciting project that could attract a lot of interest. We would welcome any views you have on the scientific background to the concept, the practicality of taking it forward, policy issues, or how it might be perceived by the public. The attached note gives some information about the project and details of web discussion forum to which you are invited to contribute.

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact myself or one of the other English Nature nominated officers.

If you are not interested at all in the project let me know and I will not send you anything more on it.

Keith Kirby

Forestry and woodland officer, Northminster House, PE1 1UA,  
Tel 01733455245, email [keith.kirby@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:keith.kirby@english-nature.org.uk)

GAP Editors Note: "Clearly this paper will look at current grazing systems in the UK where free ranging stock are used. GAP is pleased to note that the contract includes a requirement for animal welfare and public access issues to be considered and this will be linked to the re-convening of the Animal Welfare Organisations/GAP's Welfare (and Ethics) Working Group which has its first meeting in January."



## *Fresh woods and pastures new*

English Nature is starting an exciting project to see how free-ranging cattle and other large herbivores could be used to create and maintain wildlife-rich mixed landscapes of woodland, scrub and open grassland or heath (see discussion forum at <http://forums.ceh.ac.uk:8080/~naturalised-grazing> ).

### **Background**

Wood-pastures and parkland such as the New Forest or Windsor Great Park, have long been recognised as important for nature conservation because of their veteran trees, rich fungal and insect communities. Their distinctive mixture of habitats is a consequence



of centuries of management - the trees were generally pollarded and the ground between them was grazed by mixtures of stock, such as cattle or ponies, or by various species of deer.

White park cattle at Savernake. Patrick Cashman / English Nature



As part of the wood-pasture and parkland Habitat Action Plan English Nature is encouraging the restoration of grazing in sites where it formerly occurred - for example at Epping Forest (Essex), Savernake Forest (Wiltshire) and Sherwood Forest (Nottinghamshire). However is this just maintaining an artificial system, albeit for sound nature conservation and historical reasons?

Recently Frans Vera, a Dutch ecologist, has challenged our ideas of what the natural forest was like: he proposes that the wildwood that once covered much of western Europe may actually have been rather open, not unlike wood-pastures in fact. There is little doubt that the role of large animals such the (now extinct) wild ox in shaping forests has been under-estimated, but whether

much of Britain would really have been open parkland is debateable.

Irrespective, however, of what the former landscape was like the work of Vera and his colleagues has shown that rich mixed landscapes can be created and maintained now on a big scale by using free-ranging cattle and other large herbivores. The 5000 ha reserve at Oostvaardersplassen in the Netherlands is an example of this. Could such an approach be adopted under British conditions?



Veteran Tree Chatsworth House. Keith Kirby / English Nature

**Project Aims**

The project we have established has two aims. The first is to look back into the past: to explore the evidence for and against much of Britain having a relatively open forest cover some 7,000 - 10,000 yrs ago. This will be done primarily through an analysis, by Professor Paul Buckland of Bournemouth University and ECUS Ltd, of the remains of fossil insects. By comparing for example the proportions of dung beetle remains to those of species that



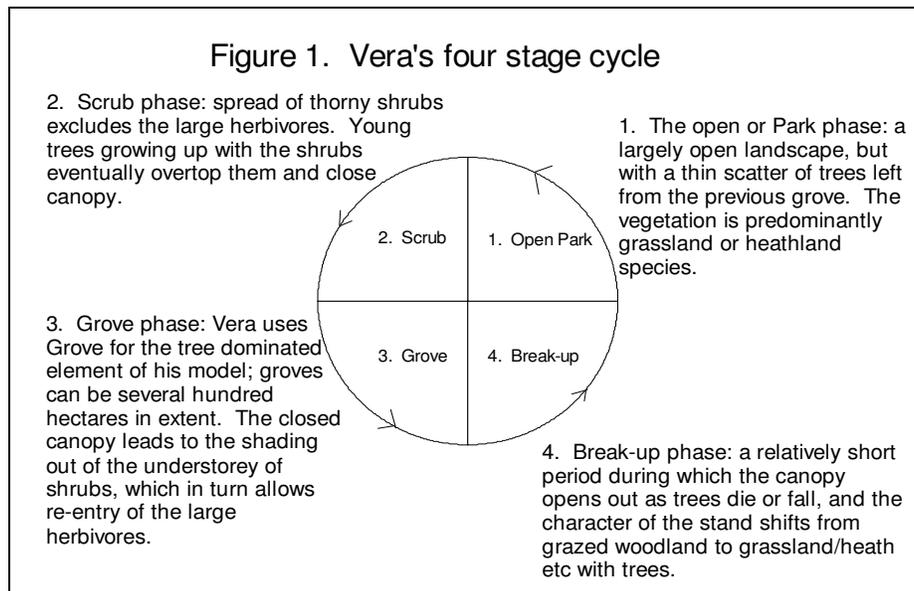
Deer at Parham Park. Keith Kirby / English Nature

need dead wood we may be able judge what the surrounding landscape was like.

The second part of the project is more concerned with the future use of large grazing animals as part of

conservation management of existing wood-pastures but also of new mixed landscapes. This will be led by Dr James Bullock from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. They will be looking at questions such as what types of animals are best, at what densities and such like, building on the work of the Grazing Animals Project. They will also consider what are the animal welfare and public safety issues.

An important difference between this and many other conservation grazing studies is that we are not just looking at how to keep open grass or heath open: we expect under the sorts of grazing regimes considered (and this is a key part of Frans Vera's hypothesis) that open areas will go to scrub and trees, but sufficient tree-ed areas will open up to keep a dynamic mosaic present (see Figure 1).



### **But is it practical?**

The conservation agencies have been exploring the idea of less intensive forms of forestry - 'new wildwoods' - as part of the response to changing social and economic conditions (CAP reform, depressed timber markets, increased interest in environmental benefits of woodland). New thinking on conservation objectives and approaches may also become necessary because of climate change. There are landowners, both private and state, who are seriously interested in looking at free-ranging grazing systems as an option in the management of large sites, and there are potential sources of funds. Hence English Nature wants to ensure that the scientific and practical issues are properly explored.



Moccas Park. Keith Kirby / English Nature

### **We want your views**

Our contractors are just starting their work. In the summer of 2004 we will organise a seminar at which their ideas will be presented. In the meantime, we would be interested in hearing people's views on the project, on the scientific basis of Vera's hypothesis, from people with practical experience of free-ranging grazing of the sort envisaged, of places where this approach is being considered or may be appropriate. We have a web based discussion forum for the project at: <http://forums.ceh.ac.uk:8080/~naturalised-grazing> and look forward to hearing from you.

### **Background reading**

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VERA, F 2000 *Grazing ecology and forest history*. Wallingford, CABI publishing.

WORRELL, R., PETERKEN, G.F., SCOTT, A., PRYOR, S., TAYLOR, K., KNIGHTBRIDGE, R. & BROWN, N. 2002. *New wildwoods: developing the role of large-scale new native woodlands in the uplands*. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (LUPG report).

For more information about the project in the first instance please contact:

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**Postscript: what do we call these new landscapes?**

What do we call these large-scale mosaics: the obvious word is Forest in its medieval sense, but the term now has connotations of dense stands of conifers. 'New wildwoods' was used as a working term in an earlier report, but both wildwood and wood-pasture may seem inappropriate if the proportion of trees turns out to be low. 'New commons' may imply rights of general access that will not necessarily apply. We are developing a new idea and as yet haven't come up with a snappy new name. So if anyone has any brilliant ideas we would like to hear from you. Keith Kirby offers a couple of bottles of wine for the best suggestion.

