

# Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group



## Manhood Ecological Network

**The Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group (MWHG) is starting to work on a joint project<sup>1</sup> to map and record key wildlife species and their habitats, and to develop a network of well connected wildlife-friendly sites across the parishes of the Manhood Peninsula.**

**In the light of changes in our climate, rising sea levels and development pressure, both wildlife and people can benefit from such a network.**

**Whether you are a landowner, parish council, a local resident or visitor to this lovely area we hope you will join us and be a part of this exciting project.**

**Joe Savill (MWHG chairman)**

### What is an ecological network?

Like the road network that links villages and farms across the peninsula, our hedgerows, ponds, ditches and other wild areas function as an ecological network of habitats and route-ways for wildlife. Just like our road network, this ecological network has room for improvement.



Photo © Sarah Hughes

Well developed green infrastructure is also very important for people, providing open space for recreation, and exercise such as walking, cycling or jogging, and helping provide such basic needs as clean air and water.

Local examples are the footpaths and cycle routes across the Peninsula such as the Bill Way, Salterns Way, and the Chichester Ship Canal towpath.

In more urban areas public parks, allotments, churchyards and gardens can all form the basis of an ecological network.

### Opening communication channels

It can be hard for wildlife species to move from place to place. One of the rare species on the Peninsula, the water vole, can be isolated in different water courses and unable to find other suitable places to live. This makes them vulnerable and more likely to die out.

MWHG members have been completing water vole surveys for the past few years at various sites around the peninsula which confirm that the area is a stronghold for this rare species. Clearing overgrown vegetation and rubbish, and habitat improvement work at sites such as Bracklesham Park and East Beach Pond, Selsey is helping these animals re-establish healthy populations. Further work to identify and remove barriers between isolated colonies will help them to move around in safety, and find enough food, shelter and a mate.

By managing sites for water voles other species in the same habitat can also thrive.



Photo © Caroline French

<sup>1</sup>Manhood Ecological Network – steering group includes Manhood Wildlife & Heritage Group (includes Manhood Wildlife Project), the Environment Agency, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre, West Sussex County Council, Chichester District Council

## Ecological network - Green Infrastructure - Wildlife corridors.....

they all mean pretty much the same thing –  
a landscape (or urban area) where wildlife has the space to adapt and flourish.

### Night Flights

The MWHG project is based on The Wildlife Trusts' approach for 'A Living Landscape' 2006<sup>2</sup>. A successful example is the West Weald Landscape Project, which is working with landowners to improve the West Weald for people and wildlife. One aspect of the project has been the study of Barbastelle bats as they leave their roosts in the woodland to forage in the wider countryside by night. Trees and hedgerows provide safe routes for bats to fly alongside to reach their feeding grounds. In one instance the route they used became more risky following the removal of trees. The bats had to wait and then dash across the open space. Restoration of the hedgerows and tree planting has made this route safer for them - and as a result numbers are increasing. Find out more about the West Weald Landscape Project from their website: [www.westweald.org.uk](http://www.westweald.org.uk)



Rare  
Photograph  
of a  
Barbastelle  
Bat

Photo©Hugh Clark/Sussex Wildlife Trust

Wildlife friendly management of developed or farmed land around and within the network will improve the ecological network's effectiveness. Further habitat creation opportunities may also extend the network.



### Steps to creating an Ecological Network

The MWHG want to work with parish councils, landowners, local organisations and, of course, our volunteers, to find out where the green places already exist, identify which can be enhanced and how they could be linked. Having good information about the local area, its existing habitats, species and landscape types is a vital first step.

#### 1 Map existing habitats and key species.

We started by looking at maps provided by the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre showing existing designated sites such as Chichester and Pagham Harbours and adding our survey results.

#### 2 Identify clusters of habitats/sites.

We hope the maps will identify opportunities for environmental improvements and where resources and training are needed.

#### 3 Identify future network links

Surveys will follow the mapping exercise, concentrating on hedgerows, ponds, rifees and ditches. This will influence where nature conservation efforts should be directed, including the future work of volunteers.

#### 4 Extend and link habitats where possible.

This is the ecological network. We plan to extend our current habitat improvement and restoration activities, already underway in some parishes, such as Bracklesham, Sidlesham and Selsey, to produce a truly joined up landscape which respects its character and distinctiveness.

### How you or your organisation can get involved.

Contact Sarah Hughes,  
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The MWHG is a local charity whose aim is 'to research and enhance the landscape, biodiversity and heritage of the Manhood Peninsula through community involvement and foster its care, enjoyment and understanding for the benefit of the public'.

