

B-A2 Turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. Current status

- 1.1 In Wales, the turtle dove, as a regular breeding species, is confined to a small part of Monmouthshire, with only 4-7 singing males in 2005. It used to be widespread throughout Wales as recently as the 1970s. Throughout the UK, the population has fallen by 70% since 1970, probably because fewer seed sources are available on farmland. Turtle doves are summer visitors to the UK, arriving in late April and leaving at the end of August. In Wales, turtle dove is found in young conifer plantations especially where there is a high broadleaved scrub component and on arable and mixed farmland with suitable nesting habitat.
- 1.2 In Wales, the turtle dove is red-listed and is a species of Principle Importance (Section 42, NERC Act 2006). It is red-listed due to rapid contraction (>50%) in range and population in Wales in the previous 25 years. The turtle dove is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and is protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 1.3 Turtle doves occupy a very restricted geographic range in Wales and it is essential that action is effectively targeted to the sites where the birds are still present. The RSPB has used data from 1994 to 2004 to highlight the 'Key Areas' where action for turtle dove should be focussed. In Monmouthshire, there are two Key Areas:
 1. Trelleck Plateau, Llansoy and Rockfield, near Monmouth
 2. High Beeches, Abergavenny

2. Current factors likely to affect the species (In rank order of importance)

- 2.1 Changes in agricultural practice have led to a decline in seed sources and breeding sites. Both have affected the turtle dove.
- 2.2 Loss of potential nest sites through thinning and re-spacing of conifer plantations or removal of scrub.
- 2.3 As a long-distance migrant, the turtle dove faces threats from hunting outside of the UK, climate and food availability on migration and at wintering areas.
- 2.4 Long-term changes in climate may also be a factor in the eastward retreat of the species.
- 2.5 Pressure from built development.

3. Current action

- 3.1 The Turtle dove project coordinated by RSPB Cymru, Forestry Commission Wales, Gwent Ornithological Society, Monmouthshire County Council and the

Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) aims to determine current population, investigate foraging areas, undertake supplementary feeding and raise awareness.

- 3.2 Payments are available for farmers through the Tir Gofal and Tir Cynnal agri-environment schemes to create and maintain habitat with the potential to benefit turtle doves.
- 3.3 Breeding populations of turtle dove are a selection criterion for SINC designation.
- 3.4 Monmouthshire County Council has Biodiversity Grants available for improvement of habitat and species management e.g. supplementary feeding.
- 3.5 Hedgerow regulations control loss of countryside hedges in Monmouthshire and cross compliance ensures appropriate management.
- 3.6 Surveys for breeding turtle dove are required as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment of appropriate planning applications. Presence of breeding turtle doves in the vicinity of a development site will be a major consideration when screening applications for the need for statutory EIA.
- 3.7 Turtle dove records are reported to the county bird recorder.

4. Proposed targets

Monmouthshire holds the only known breeding population of turtle doves in Wales.

- 4.1 Establish a viable breeding population of >10 singing males by 2010.
- 4.2 Increase range from 2005 level to 2 occupied 10km squares by 2015.

These targets are based on the target for Wales and are not assigned by the Wales Biodiversity Partnership. There are also issues with cross boundary (England-Wales) considerations i.e. it is a Wye Valley population.

5. Proposed actions and key partners for turtle dove

Action	Key Partners		Timescale
	Lead	Partners	
1. Policy and legislation			
1.1 Ensure policies and strategies do not adversely affect the breeding	MCC	CCW, FCW	Ongoing

sites.			
1.2 Ensure turtle dove is fully considered when assessing any development, which may impact upon the breeding sites.	MCC	RSPB, CCW, GWT	Ongoing
1.3 When there is no alternative, ensure that appropriate mitigation measures for turtle dove are used during development.	MCC	CCW, RSPB	Ongoing
1.4 Ensure opportunities for enhancing habitat for turtle dove are used during the planning process	MCC	RSPB	Ongoing
1.5 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	GOS FCW	Ongoing
2. Site Protection and Designation			
2.1 Designate areas of recent turtle dove nesting and foraging habitat as SINC	MCC	SINC panel GWT	2005-09
3. Habitat and Site Management			
3.1 Ensure appropriate management of habitat suitable for turtle dove on Protected sites within Key Areas e.g. hedgerow management.	CCW	MCC GWT FCW Private Landowners	Ongoing
3.2 Encourage uptake of the following Tir Gofal prescriptions in Key Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance and creation of tall, thick hedgerows • Encouragement of scrub • Un-cropped fallow margins • Unsprayed cereal, rape and linseed crops • Establishment of wildlife cover crops • Development of a shrub layer on woodland track/ride edges. 	NAWAD	CCW RSPB Private Landowners	Ongoing
3.3 Ensure Forest Design Plans fully consider and accommodate turtle dove requirements.	FCW	RSPB MCC	Ongoing
3.4 Provide future potential nesting sites of mixed conifer / broadleaf scrub in the core area.	FCW	RSPB	Ongoing

3.5 Safeguard known breeding territories within forestry from felling.	FCW	RSPB	All known sites safeguarded from inappropriate management 2006
4. Species management			
4.1 Continue to supplementary feed at suitable sites if considered necessary.	FCW	RSPB	2006
5. Research			
5.1 Complete the turtle dove project and use the results to provide habitat for foraging in Monmouthshire.	RSPB	FCW, MCC, GOS, AONB	Recommendations from 2005/2006 to inform land managers/owners
6. Survey and monitoring			
6.1 Continue to collect records of turtle doves in Monmouthshire (6-figure grid references and activity).	GOS	RSPB, MCC, SEWBReC	Ongoing
6.2 Continue to undertake a project to survey and assess breeding turtle doves within the Key Areas in 2006.	RSPB	FCW, AONB, GOS	2005-06
6.3 Through the Recorders Newsletter, encourage recording of turtle dove and submission records in Monmouthshire.	MCC SEWBReC	GOS, Landowners	2005-09
6.4 Encourage the recording of turtle dove in Monmouthshire and the submission of records to GOS and SEWBReC.	SEWBReC	GOS, Landowners	2005-09
7. Communication -Advisory			
8.1 Provide further advice to land managers/owners of land within currently occupied squares and a 5km radius from these sites on management for turtle dove through (a) the distribution of a bilingual advisory sheet, (b) Developed links with Tir Gofal staff (c) Training course for Tir Gofal staff (d) Direct advice to landowners.	RSPB	FCW, AONB, CCW	2005-09
9. Communication - Publicity			
9.1 Through articles in the farming press (at least one per year), raise the profile, importance and	RSPB	CCW	2005-09

requirements of turtle doves.			
10. Action Plan Process / Links to other plans			
10.1 Write a Species Action Plan for farmland birds (Tranche 3), the actions of which will benefit turtle dove.	MCC	CCW	By 2007
10.2 Consider the requirements of turtle dove in the production of Habitat Actions Plans relating to arable farmland, woodland and heathland.	MCC		

6. Abbreviations

- AONB Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- FCW Forestry Commission Wales
- GOS Gwent Ornithological Society
- GWT Gwent Wildlife Trust
- MCC Monmouthshire County Council
- NAWAD National Assembly for Wales Agricultural Department
- RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- SEWBRcC South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre