# SUFFOLK LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

## Reed Bunting
## (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

**1 Definition**

Small seeding eating bunting generally nesting on open and semi open habitats with tall vegetation, attachment to fens bogs and marshes riversides etc occurs indirectly and is linked to vegetation type rather than any special need for water.

**2 Current status**

**National:**

Numbers declined by 41% on farmland between 1968 and 1999 (based on data collected as part of the BTO's Common Bird Census). However most of this decline was in the 1970's and there has been general stability on population at this lower level in the 1990's The UK range has undergone some contraction from Scotland and the North and south west of England between the two Atlas periods. The UK population was estimated at 192 - 211.000 pairs in 2000 (1988-91 Atlas updated using CBC/BBS & WBS trends). The long term national trend is a 48% decline 1968 – 1999. The decline over this period has been even more severe on wetlands than on farmland

**Regional:**

The BBS report produced by the BTO suggests in the E of England that the trend for Reed Bunting has seen a 20% increase in numbers between 1994-2005, recorded from a mean of 64 squares per year (although to 2004 this species was at –3%).

**Local:**

Anecdotal evidence indicates the species is increasingly present in Oilseed Rape. The Suffolk bird survey 07 will begin to inform this.

**3 Current factors affecting Reed Bunting**

It appears that the first Atlas period was associated with a peak in population as the species was moving into drier areas such as scrub and farmland. This expansion was then curtailed by the agricultural changes that have taken place since 1970. Data indicates falling productivity and recovery may have been being hampered by increasing nest losses.

Oilseed Rape is one of the most important breeding season habitats for Reed Buntings in lowland Britain, providing a relatively rich source of seed and invertebrate food and possibly protection from nest predators. Breeding in Oilseed Rape (OSR) reduces the dependence of Reed Buntings on nearby wet features. [Gruar et al 2006]

In addition tall vegetation on ditch banks provides important nesting and foraging habitat (as it is insecticide free). The management of this semi natural habitat and the

adjacent crop of OSR is key to improving breeding outcomes for this species on farmland

## 4 Current action

The importance of the management choices for oil seed rape cannot be stressed enough, desiccation will generally destroy broods prior to fledging whereas desiccation or natural ripening allow sufficient time for clutches to have fledged prior to harvest.

In addition sympathetic management of riparian and ditch side vegetation is vital to provide additional feeding and breeding opportunities on arable farms. The ditch management options of the entry level scheme are central to this.

There is a continuing need to highlight the importance of farmland for what is perceived as a "wetland" species

## 5 Targets

As a minimum, maintain existing 2007 population and exiting range of reed bunting which will be derived from 2007/2008 planned survey.

Propose the setting of expansion targets after the first year of the survey is complete in 2008.

## 6 Actions

| Action | Date | Partners |
|---|---|---|
| **Policy & Legislation** | | |
| Ensure reed bunting as an LBAP species is recognised and protected in LDFs in accordance with PPS9. | 2006-2010 Annual | **NE,** LAs, SWT**.** |
| Promote the uptake of agri-environment schemes which benefit this species, and consider the habitat and food requirements of this species within the scheme options. | Annual 2006-2010 | **NE**, FWAG, RSPB, SWT |
| **Species management and protection** | | |
| **Research and monitoring** | | |
| | | |
| Further determine Suffolk bird population by undertaking detailed winter and breeding surveys of 10km squares, 8 tetrads in each to develop detailed baseline data in Suffolk. | 2007 and 2008 | **SOG**, BTO |
| **Advisory** | | |
| Promote sympathetic management of crops and vegetation on farm for this species i.e. the use of desiccates instead of swathing. | Annual 2006-2010 | **FWAG**, RSPB, SWT |
| Promote this species as a farmland species as well as wetland, highlight in advice and farmland walks. | Annual 2006-2010 | **FWAG,** RSPB**.,** SWT |
| Promote the importance of thick vegetation, especially on ditch banks and in set-aside, as nesting habitat for this species | Annual 2006-2010 | **FWAG,** RSPB**.,** SWT |
| Ensure that all LBAP partners have copies of the RSPB Farming for Birds and Farming for Wildlife leaflets which include reed bunting. | 2006 | **RSPB** |
| Encourage the longer retention of game covers and the provision of supplementary feeding in areas where the species is or may be present. | Annual 2006-2010 | **FWAG**, NE, RSPB, SWT |
| | | |
| Encourage the sympathetic management of wet habitats and waterside vegetation | Annual 2006-2010 | **FWAG**, NE, RSPB, SWT, LAs |
| **Communications and publicity** | | |
| Promote the Reed Bunting as a species in need of conservation assistance and produce at least one LBAP press release per year that draws attention to this species. | Annual 2006-2010 | **FWAG**, SWT NE, RSPB, SWT, LAs |

**Monitoring of progress:**

Reported annually on the UK BAP reporting system BARS Biodiversity Action Reporting system.

**Current constraints:**

Identify opportunities for energy crop potential that may benefit reed bunting (corporate opportunities).

**Consultation: Organisations that have been consulted regarding this plan and have agreed to aim to deliver their organisations commitments:**

**RSPB Kirsty Coutts**
**FWAG Phil Watson and Diane Ling**
**Natural England Monica O'Donnell and Alison Collins**
**Suffolk County Council Andrew Murray-Wood**
**SWT Dorothy Casey**
**Suffolk Biological Records Centre (SBRC) Martin Sanford**
**Robin Harvey Wetland LBAP lead for this species**
**Suffolk Ornithologists Group Steve Piotrowski**