

# Supporting Document LEA3

## Wildlife Summary

Benenden's rural environment provides a favourable habitat for several rare species of animal and plant. Notable recorded sightings are listed below. The parish is also part of the Linkhill Turtle Dove Friendly Zone which is an important initiative to reverse the catastrophic decline in the species.

**Birds:** The parish of Benenden is fortunate in having the habitat to support a high number of bird species. The area has arable, pasture, and woodlands plus both hop and fruit areas. This diverse landscape has attracted breeding birds, overwintering birds and birds re-fuelling on migration elsewhere. Several species of note are present in the area amongst which is the Turtle Dove. This bird has declined by over 94% since 1995 and is now Red Listed. Where once the purring of the Turtle Dove was a background sound of summer it is now rare. This area is recognised by the RSPB as an important site for the conservation of Turtle Doves and is one of only five initiatives in Kent to save this species. Turtle Doves are breeding in Standen Street and calling in Scullsgate and in Moor Wood, Iden Green. At present these sites are contiguous which is important as fragmentation of sites is a factor in the success or failure of such initiatives (see Project 1). Other birds of note are the Nightingale, also Red Listed and in sharp decline; down by 59% since 1995 and suffering from loss of habitat. This parish used to hold 70 pairs in the 1990s and we are now reduced to a small, and critical, population where once we were a stronghold. Benenden provides good habitat for other Red Listed birds such as Marsh Tits and Spotted Flycatchers. The Nightjar population in Hemsted Forest is under acute stress due to increased footfall in their woodland habitat. The Green in Benenden retains a small population of Amber Listed House Martin. Occasionally a Barn Owl can be seen floating over the fields. In total 93 species have been recorded more than once in the parish including 20 Red and 18 Amber Listed species.

**Butterflies and Moths:** 3 species of butterfly and 3 species of Moth which are recognised as conservation priorities in the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan have been recorded in the parish.

**Mammals:** Of the 7 species of bat recorded as roosting in Benenden, 3 are classed as vulnerable and 1 as rare in the Kent Red Data Book (KRDB). Other mammals recorded in the parish are the Hazel Dormouse and Eurasian Water Shrew which also appear in the KRDB.

**Pollinating insects:** Pollinating insects depend on species-rich meadows which are in significant decline. Several notable species of bees, wasps and flies which appear in the KRDB have been recorded in Benenden parish.

**Flowering Plants:** There are 35 species of flowering plants listed in the KRDB to be found in Benenden parish. A significant number of these are to be found at the Benenden Hospital Local Wildlife Site (LWS). This area of almost 5 hectares of unimproved neutral grassland does not receive, and may have never received, treatment with weedkiller or artificial fertilizers.