

# Redwood Business Solutions

Making complex processes easy to manage.

## At A Glance

### Industry

- Nature Conservation Charity

### Environment

- Proprietary Unix based contacts database
- Moving to Microsoft SQL Server environment

### Key Challenges

- Inefficient manual control
- Need to move to unattended operations
- Unpredictable process completion times

### The Solution

- Cronacle Event-Driven Job Scheduling

### Key Benefits

- Reduced administrative overhead
- Dynamic scheduling environment able to respond to changing daily requirements
- Increased end user visibility of scheduled tasks



## Event-Driven Job Scheduling keeps RSPB Workload Flowing

When the RSPB was looking for an up to date, flexible job scheduling solution, Cronacle was selected for its ease of use and event-driven scheduling capability. Since it was implemented, the RSPB has seen reductions in administrative overhead, increased integration across platforms and improved flexibility in meeting dynamic scheduling demands.



The RSPB was founded in 1889 as the Royal Society for Protection of Birds. Since then it has grown into Europe's largest wildlife conservation charity with more than a million members. From its initial stance against the trade in wild bird plumage the issues which the Society tackles now embrace all aspects of conservation policy, education, wildlife law enforcement and environmental concerns.

Based in Sandy, Bedfordshire in England, the RSPB today employs some 1500 people and manages over 100 wildlife reserves across the United Kingdom.

The IT department provides the essential support required to manage the database of over 1 million members and about 4.5 million contacts.

### The Need for Flexible Job Scheduling

As part of a move from a proprietary contact management database to a SQL Server based solution, the RSPB took the opportunity to review their existing job scheduling product. Keith Blomerley, Project Manager for IT Support Systems comments: "We were running an old version of a scheduling product which was

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**Keith Blomerley**  
Project Manager for IT Support, RSPB

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not flexible and would not support the platforms required by the new database system. As upgrading this product would involve major effort and cost we decided it made sense to conduct a wider review of alternative solutions that would meet our requirements for both a flexible scheduling environment and cost effectiveness.”

Scheduling requirements at the RSPB are very dynamic, with each day’s workload typically differing from the day before in an unpredictable way. The solution had to be easy to use and also easily adaptable to the dynamic requirements. In addition the RSPB were looking for flexibility in automated handling of multiple completion or return codes, such that different actions are taken depending on various possible job outcomes.

## An Event-Driven Solution

The RSPB evaluated Redwood Software’s Cronacle, Orsyp’s Dollar Universe and Computer Associates AutoSys product. The key factor in the RSPB’s decision to select Cronacle was its ability to run workload on the basis of business related events rather than rigid time based scheduling. Blomerley continues: “We very rarely need to schedule work on a timed basis. Our real concern is dependencies between tasks rather than the time that they run. Time based scheduling imposes artificial restrictions that do not reflect our real scheduling needs. Cronacle enables us to use events to define these dependencies, which means that our schedules are much more focused on the tasks themselves than arbitrary start times. The ease with which we could modify each day’s schedules using a simple drag and drop interface, depending on user demands, also helped us to make our decision.”

Choosing Cronacle involved more than simply satisfying technical feasibility. The IT department had to follow strict budgetary guidelines and submit full business proposals from the three vendors. Existing Cronacle customers provided added assurance for both technical aspects

and Redwood Software’s status as a long term business partner.

## Cronacle at the RSPB

Implementation of the Cronacle solution was very smooth. Chris Temple, Systems Support Technician at the RSPB comments that: “The implementation was very quick. Instead of migrating existing schedules from the old system as we could have done, we found it was easier and quicker to simply re-define them to Cronacle. This also gave us the opportunity to review how we approached the workload. It took less than 10 days for us to be up and running on Cronacle. Of particular note was the quality of the Redwood consultants, who were excellent.”

The RSPB’s daily workload is more about complexity than sheer numbers of individual tasks. Core daily tasks are supplemented by various additional jobs required by end users who manipulate the contacts database. The differing requirements are largely triggered by frequent and changing publicity campaigns, wildlife survey responses, membership awareness campaigns and renewal promotions. Daily changes to the schedules are easily made using the Cronacle graphical interface designed to make alterations to schedules easy and intuitive.

Of increasing importance is the ability Cronacle has to deal with the different ways in which a job can complete. Temple continues: “It is not always a simple case of a job succeeding or failing. Some of our jobs can successfully complete but with different outcomes. Each outcome might require a different series of subsequent actions. For example, the contacts database system requires exclusive access for batch processing. Cronacle ensures that if exclusive access is not available then a different type of backup is taken than would otherwise be the case.” Cronacle has also enabled integration across systems with automatic detection of data files being used as events to trigger processing.

One particularly useful service now

provided for end users is the automatic notification by email when a set of jobs completes. The users know immediately that the relevant reports and output are available for inspection. This was not previously possible and has helped to improve the overall level of service.

## Measurable Benefits

Since the implementation of Cronacle the overhead of setting up and managing the daily workload has reduced. One member of staff is involved every day in this work and typically completes the required administration over an hour more quickly than with the previous scheduling solution, freeing up time for other activities. Attributed to the simplicity of setting up new jobs and the use of parameters to enable job definitions to be used multiple times for different tasks, this has also led to a reduction in the overall number of jobs and a resultant decrease in housekeeping overhead.

Keith Blomerley concludes: “Cronacle has improved the flexibility and responsiveness of our batch scheduling environment and has enabled us to integrate tasks that we previously could not, such as database synchronisation jobs across differing Unix and Windows environments. We are beginning to reap the benefits of the automation that Cronacle provides and are looking forward to exploring more of its capabilities as we move to our new database environment.”

