

BIODIVERSITY

NEWS ²⁰¹⁴



... for all the latest in biodiversity news

| *Issue 64* |

SPRING EDITION



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EDITORIAL

| 3

NEWS

Big Garden Birdwatch Results | 4

Second State of Natural Capital Report Published | 5

UK Schools to Become Polli:Nation Habitats | 6

£2.7 million Heritage Lottery Fund boost for Dorset wildlife | 7

MPA Partnership with the BCT to Benefit Bats | 8

News Update: RESTORE Project | 9

Ecosystem Services Approach to Quarry Restoration | 10

Multimillion pound boost to save UK's Magnificent Meadows | 11

Local Nature Partnership Ministerial Event | 12

More resonating, less reasoning | 14

FEATURES

British Puffins Caught Up In Biscay Storm | 15

An Ecosystems Approach for Isle of Wight | 16

North Pennines AONB Partnership's Nectarworks Project | 17

Get ready to find the British cicada! | 19

Get Fit Schemes Win Funds for London Biodiversity | 20

Biodiversity enhancement in the North York Moors National Park | 22

Scottish Juniper Day | 24

Moors for the Future sets sight on 2020 vision | 26

LOCAL AND REGIONAL

Reserve is a Stairway to Heather | 28

Rare Stonewort Back in Anglesey | 29

Wonderful Wildflowers Count! | 30

Marine engagement boost for Hebrides communities | 31

Spot Marine Life around Angus's Fantastic Coastline? | 32

UK FRAMEWORK

UK Biodiversity Framework Update | 33

PUBLICATIONS

Wood Wise: trees and woodland in water management | 34

Ecosystems News; Metropolitan matters | 34

The Lost Life Project | 35

EVENTS

Part-Time Ecological Survey Techniques Programme | 36

International Green Wall Conference 2014 | 37

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From *the* Editor

A warm welcome to the spring edition of Biodiversity News. We have received an incredible number, and variety, of articles for inclusion in the Newsletter this season. As ever, I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who has contributed— your interest in and commitment to this Newsletter continue to make it enjoyable to produce—I hope you find an article of interest to you whilst you browse.

A huge thank you to Ruth Star Keddle, Project Officer of the Nectarworks Project at the North Pennines AONB Partnership, whose stunning photo of a common carder bee feeding on Devil's-bit scabious features as this edition's front cover. If you are interested in seeing more beautiful pollinator-related photographs, please head to pages 16 and 17, which feature an article on the Partnerships admirable Nectarworks project. The project aims to conserve, enhance and create bumblebee-friendly habitats, whilst protecting those flower-rich upland hay meadows in danger of being damaged through lack of management or scrub over.

Another article similarly concerned with the preservation of our pollinators is Learning through Landscape's *UK Schools to Become Polli:Nation Habitats* - announcing the fantastic news that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will help fund the UK-wide biodiversity 'Polli:Nation' programme, which supports schools in helping to protect the future of our bee population.

I hope that you enjoy reading the Newsletter as much as I have enjoyed producing it!

Yours faithfully,

Rachel Coombe

To check out previous editions of Biodiversity News please select below



BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH RESULTS: *Goldfinch move up the rankings in Scotland*

RSPB

Nearly 40,000 Scots took part in this year's RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch and have discovered some interesting changes among our most recognisable garden birds, with one species that benefits from a bit of extra help creeping up the rankings.

House sparrows continued to occupy the top spot while chaffinch, starling, blackbird and blue tit all held on to their places rounding out the top five. Woodpigeons moved up the league table to number 6 while coal tits fell to number 10. Goldfinches, brightly coloured garden visitors, continued to creep up the rankings since last year, and now perch at number 7.



Nuthatch Sitta europaea, standing on moss covered branch, Co. Durham, February © John Bridges

Just 10 years ago, goldfinches were in 15th position in Scotland, and one possible explanation for their steady rise is the increasing number of people providing food such as nyjer seed and sunflower hearts in gardens. Alternatively, milder winters could be helping the birds to thrive. Meanwhile nuthatch continue to climb the table, hopping ahead nine places to number 31 this year. Nuthatch have been gradually spreading north into Scotland over the past decade and are now spotted in the Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway and throughout the Central Belt and Argyll.

However, the continuing declines of some species are of great concern. Numbers of starlings and song thrush continue to fall by an alarming 84 and 81 percent respectively across the UK since the Birdwatch began in 1979. Both species are on the UK 'red list' meaning they are of the highest conservation concern.

RSPB Scotland spokesperson Leianna Padgett said: "We know from the sheer number of people who take part in the Big Garden Birdwatch that garden birds are incredibly popular. They are a joy to watch and many people go to real efforts to provide extra food and water throughout the winter months.

"During winter, and at other times of the year, many garden birds benefit from extra food and water and a safe place to shelter and make their home. Gardens provide the ideal space for these visitors. It's fantastic to see goldfinches continue to climb the rankings. They are adaptable birds and a great example of a species that can flourish with our help. If we leave out some food or let our gardens grow a bit wild, they'll be among the first to take advantage."

This year, for the first time, participants were also asked to log some of the other wildlife they see in their gardens. The RSPB asked whether people ever see deer, squirrels, badgers, hedgehogs, frogs and toads in their gardens, to help build an overall picture of how important our gardens are for giving all types of wildlife a home. This information will be analysed and results will be revealed next month.

SECOND STATE OF NATURAL CAPITAL REPORT PUBLISHED

Gillian Smyth, Defra

The Natural Capital Committee (NCC) published its long awaited second State of Natural Capital Report on the 11th March. The report received strong support and praise from the NGO community for its proposition of how to meet the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper goal of not only maintaining, but improving the state of England's natural capital.

The first State of Natural Capital Report, published last year highlighted that better management of natural capital can produce wellbeing and economic benefits. Better management includes incorporating natural capital into both public and private decision-making processes

The second report builds on this by highlighting the benefits at risk from the current state of England's natural capital and highlighting the need for a long-term plan to improve it. The report has 3 key messages:

1. Some assets are currently not being used sustainably. The benefits we derive from them are at risk, which has significant economic implications;
2. There are substantial economic benefits to be gained from maintaining and improving natural assets. The benefits will be maximised if their full value is incorporated into decision-making; and,
3. A long-term plan is necessary to maintain and improve natural capital, thereby delivering wellbeing and economic growth.



The Natural Capital Committee at the launch of the second State of Natural Capital report © Defra

As Dieter Helm, Chairman of the Natural Capital Committee put it, 'Over the coming decades, there will be a major programme to develop the UK's infrastructure. There are ambitious plans - for new railways, roads, airport expansions, energy systems, water resources, sewerage investments, flood defences and a major increase in house building - to modernise the economy and accommodate a sharp rise in population. In taking forward this major investment, it is important not to lose sight of natural infrastructure and the integral part that natural capital plays in delivering sustainable economic growth'.

The Committee, therefore, makes a number of recommendations in this report aimed at improving our natural environment and highlights the need for a 25 year plan to restore these assets. It is envisaged that the 25 year plan would be the framework that would enable ours to be the first generation to leave our natural environment in a better state than we inherited.

The plan would build on existing initiatives, allowing for a more joined-up approach to natural environment policy. It would account for the full value of nature in all decision-making and would take a considered, long-term approach to investing in natural capital infrastructure.

The Government has said that it will respond to the report once it has had time to give full consideration to the Committee's recommendations. Over the coming year the Committee aims to work with Government, conservation groups, major landowners and other interested parties to explore and develop the framework for the plan.

To download the second State of Natural Capital report and find out more about the work of the Natural Capital Committee, please visit their new website: www.naturalcapitalcommittee.org.

UK Schools to Become Polli:Nation Habitats Thanks to £1.3m Heritage Lottery Funding

Learning through Landscapes

Learning through Landscapes to develop the Polli:Nation project enabling 260 schools help save the bee



Schools participating in encouraging bees and insects into their grounds © LtL

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced support for the UK-wide biodiversity project – Polli:Nation, a programme which supports schools in helping to protect the future of our seriously dwindling bee population.

The Polli:Nation project, developed by the school grounds charity, Learning through Landscapes, will receive the initial support of £1.3m, including a development grant of £26,000.

‘Free’ pollination by bees and other insects is worth over £400m to UK agriculture each year but their numbers are in severe decline. This innovative project will engage 260 schools to help transform their grounds into pollinator-friendly habitats. Data recording will monitor any changes in species diversity and numbers. A key driver is to increase awareness of nature and particularly insects. A network of young enthusiasts in the 260 schools will help by spreading knowledge and creating green ‘stepping stones’ such as bug hotels and bee houses to enable insects to move with ease between different areas.

All schools in the UK will be able to apply to participate in the programme, which will be delivered by Learning through Landscapes and will enable teachers, children and volunteers to be trained to make the necessary changes to their school grounds to create habitats. They will be supported by biodiversity and landscape experts from the charity to develop their environments by planting insect pollinator friendly areas using pollinator friendly plants, building bug hotels and bee houses, planting night-blooming flowers to draw in moths, constructing bee-hives, as well as promoting changes to maintenance schedules, reducing pesticides and letting areas of the school grounds become wild.

The programme will also promote and encourage the development of existing provisions in schools such as orchards and wild meadow areas, green walls and ivy growth to attract the bees and other insects.

Juno Hollyhock, the Executive Director of Learning through Landscapes explains, “We are delighted that the Polli:nation project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and that 260 schools can now transform their grounds to become pollinator-friendly habitats. We believe that this important and inspiring project will help children and young people to learn about the development of their natural environments , both in and out of their school grounds, teaching them that the changes we make to our environment can have a profound effect on critical issues such as our declining bee population.”



@LtL

Learning through Landscapes will be developing the Polli:Nation project along with other sector partners including The Field Studies Council, Buglife, Butterfly Conservation and the OPAL Network.

For any enquiries or information about how to get involved, send your emails to pollination@ltl.org.uk and follow [@ltl_outdoors](https://twitter.com/ltl_outdoors) for further announcements.

SPRING 2014 BIODIVERSITYNEWS | 6

£2.7 million Heritage Lottery Fund boost for Dorset wildlife

Dorset Wildlife Trust

Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT) and its partners are delighted to announce the award of a grant of £2.7 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards The Great Heath Living Landscape project.

The Great Heath Living Landscape is one of the largest conservation projects in the UK. The project, which will total £4.7 million, will secure the protection and management of almost 1,500 acres of wildlife rich heathland, grassland, woods and wetland for the benefit of people and wildlife in Poole, Bournemouth, Christchurch and East Dorset. The HLF grant will enable the purchase of nationally and internationally important habitats at Holes Bay and Lytchett Bay in Poole Harbour and heathlands at Parley Common, Ferndown Common, Dunyeats Hill and Upton Heath.

The project aims to link two outstanding areas of natural heritage – the New Forest National Park and the Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area – with high quality access and interpretation connecting dozens of sites across the area. This will create thousands of opportunities for people to learn about, enjoy and play an active role in the conservation of this special area.



Orange tip butterfly on Ladysmock © Linda Tillotson

Heathland sites, such as Upton Heath, provide a home for many rare and threatened species, including the Dartford Warbler which is now thriving after numbers plummeted to just eleven breeding pairs nationally in the 1960s, 4 of which were in Dorset, following severe winter weather. All 6 of the UK reptiles can be found on our heathland, including the nationally rare smooth snake and sand lizard which can only be seen in a few places in the UK.

DWT Director of Operations, Brian Bleese, said, “Buying this land from the Canford Estate was a once in a lifetime opportunity, and thanks to the HLF funding, generous donations from the public, local businesses and funding from our partners, we can now develop an urban Living Landscape which is rich in wildlife, highly valued, enjoyed and nurtured by people. We aim to provide high quality access networks and interpretation, to allow everyone to learn about and experience the stunning wildlife on their doorstep. ”

Nerys Watts, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: “Not only will The Great Heath Living Landscape project secure, protect and conserve vital parts of Dorset’s natural heritage, it will also create a varied and exciting range of opportunities for people of all ages to get involved. Volunteers and visitors will have great fun while learning about the sites and their role in our biodiversity and how we can all work together to make sure they exist for future generations.

“It’s also fantastic to see that some of these sites fall into our priority areas, meaning historically these places have had less HLF funding than others. This project will provide local people with much improved access to the natural heritage and help drive local tourism.” >

The first stage of the project established by DWT, Borough of Poole, Poole Harbour Commissioners, Countryside Service, The Erica Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Dorset County Council was called the Urban Wildlink project, which received an initial £85,900 from HLF in April 2013, to help DWT and its partners to consult the local community, stakeholders and prospective new partners about the development of The Great Heath Living Landscape.

The Urban Wildlink consultation phase revealed overwhelming support for the project from all sections of the community, who placed huge importance on their natural heritage and felt it would contribute to the local environment and their everyday lives.

We still need to raise £50,000 by the end of March 2014 to match the HLF grant and secure The Great Heath for generations to come. To donate, and for more information about The Great Heath Living Landscape project, including a video about the wildlife and the areas it will benefit, please visit: www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/the_great_heath.html

MPA Partnership with the BCT to Benefit Bats

Mineral Products Association

A new chapter in the Mineral Products Association's (MPA) history of partnership working to further the outcomes of biodiversity enhancement has taken place. In early March, Dr Carol Williams, Director of Conservation at the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), was invited as a guest speaker to the MPA meeting of its Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Group and new ways to work together were examined.



Carol introduced the group to the world of bats and the threats and opportunities to their future conservation. She then presented the group with a wide range of ways in which MPA and its members could support this vital conservation work to reverse the serious decline all UK bats have undergone.

A great deal of interest was shown by the group and a number of possibilities were explored, heralding a promising start to future partnerships. BCT and MPA are looking forward to exploring further how future collaborations will work.

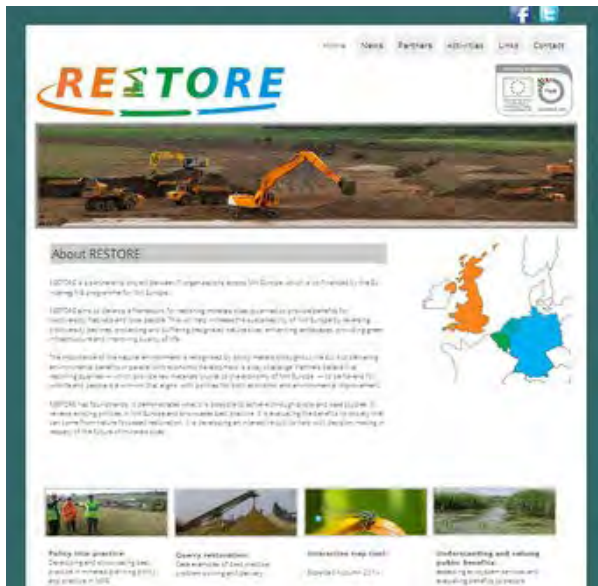
Carol Williams commented: "I would be delighted to see shared aims bringing our working relationship closer together to the benefit of all involved - and who knows, maybe bats will be a feature of future MPA biodiversity awards."

David Payne, Senior Planning Advisor MPA, said, "We are delighted to be working with the BCT and, with our members, will be exploring opportunities to deliver practical measures to help conserve and enhance bats on both working and restored sites."



News Update: RESTORE Project

RSPB



New website unveiled: The trans-national RESTORE project has just unveiled a new website <http://www.restorequarries.eu/>, providing news and updates for all stakeholders with an interest in minerals restoration for biodiversity. A new Mapping Tool to highlight biodiversity resources to inform future minerals planning, is also currently under development and will be added to the website in due course.

RESTORE is the partnership project funded by the European Regional Development Fund, through the Interreg IVB NWE programme, with seven partners working together to share lessons learned around best practice in minerals restoration for biodiversity, people and the economy, across northwest Europe. See this new website resource for more details.

Mid-term conference Dortmund 4th June 2014: Following on from the project's first policy seminar in Surrey last September, there will be a follow-on conference hosted by RESTORE partner ILS – Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development, in Dortmund, on 4th June.

An overview of the conference is available [here](#). RESTORE partners are inviting stakeholders to participate and share experience and innovative ideas on the key topics which the project addresses e.g. - planning policy, ecosystem services economic benefits, communicating best practice and stakeholder engagement - through a range of workshops and discussion groups, held on the day. Full details of the day's agenda will be released imminently but please contact Karsten Rusche karsten.rusche@ils-research.de in the meantime, to reserve a place.

2014 Demonstration Events: Under the project's objective to promote stakeholder engagement and share best practice in appropriate and sustainable minerals restoration, Nature After Minerals (NAM) (the RSPB/Natural England partnership) will be co-ordinating a series of demonstration events later in the year, as part of lead partner RSPB's input to the RESTORE project.

A programme of nine events is scheduled to take place in the UK and near-Continent. Topics covered will include the design, creation and management of priority habitat (floodplain forest); partnership working; landscape-scale conservation; biodiversity enhancements within operation quarries and agricultural restorations; funding long-term aftercare and using gravel extraction for flood management.

Keep an eye on the NAM website (www.afterminerals.com) and RESTORE website, for full details of the events programme, in due course. For any further information relating to the RESTORE project, contact:

Bea Ayling, RESTORE Project Co-ordinator at bea.ayling@rspb.org.uk



MPA Examines an Ecosystem Services Approach to Quarry Restoration

Mineral Products Association

From fresh air and water to food, nature works overtime to provide us with life's essentials, and there is a growing belief that it should be recognised and rewarded accordingly. What are now being termed "ecosystems services" look set to be of increasing significance for mineral products operators in the years ahead.

The ecosystem services approach is already an emerging trend in policy, academia and land management, as seen by its inclusion in the National Planning Policy Framework, Natural Environment White Paper and UK Sustainability Development Strategy. DEFRA (along with Governments across the world) is now starting to think differently about how all these "ecosystems services" should be valued and communicated. What would it cost us if nature didn't perform such vital services for us? The thinking is that if we value them more greatly then we will also protect them more effectively.

Minerals quarrying can have significant impacts on natural and social environments, and subsequently extraction is highly regulated. MPA recognised the benefit to the industry of better understanding its relationship with ecosystem services. This is the reason why in 2013 a project was undertaken by Dr. Helen King of Cranfield University on behalf of MPA and the 'Nature After Minerals' (NAM) initiative, funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), to improve the industry's consideration and appreciation of ecosystem services.

David Payne, Senior Planning Advisor MPA, said, "We recognised that the concept of "ecosystem services" has gained currency and use, notably amongst local authority planners. Dr. King's study helped provide a better understanding of which services are most relevant to the industry in terms of opportunity and threat. Our job is to translate the scientific concept into meaningful language for our members – to help them understand what it means and demonstrate how they are contributing to delivering ecosystem services every day."



Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits - Hanson UK: Overall Winner - Landscape Scale Restoration category, in association with Natural England, in the MPA Biodiversity Awards © MPA

The outputs of Dr. King's internship with MPA were consolidated into an eighty page report for minerals companies, minerals planning authorities, NGOs and policymakers, which outlines and provides practical guidance on how to introduce an ecosystem services into quarry restoration. Findings included the types of ecosystem services that restored quarries can (potentially) generate, associated public benefits, and ways of valuing these. Business opportunities and threats were considered in relation to ecosystem service trends.

The industry's response to ecosystems services is an important one given that it is now widely recognised for its quarry restoration work. The evolution of the new approach could move the partnership with nature on to a new level and influence local decision-making.

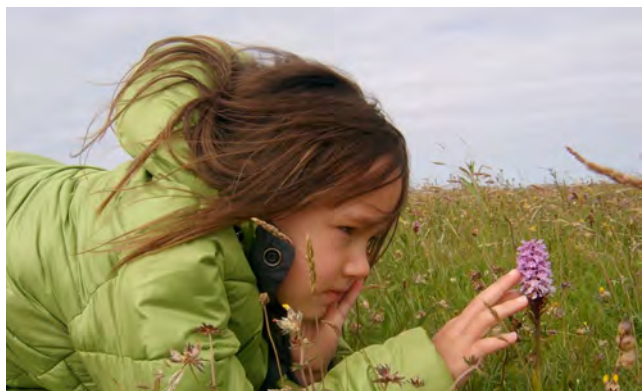
Multimillion pound boost to save UK's *Magnificent Meadows*

Plantlife

For the first time in its history, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded a unique partnership of conservation organisations and local councils - led by Plantlife – a significant sum for a national project to save the UK's remaining fragments of meadow. There were once natural wild flower meadows in every parish – today only 2% of the meadows that existed in the 1930's remain. Nearly 7.5 million acres of wildflower meadow have been lost so far and they are still being destroyed.

The Save our Magnificent Meadows Project:

- A £3 million project which will transform the fortunes of our vanishing meadows and grasslands
- Over the next four years, over 74,000 acres across the UK will be targeted
- Over 500,000 members of the public will be involved
- Save our Magnificent Meadows is led by Plantlife working in close partnership with ten organisations including county Wildlife Trusts, The National Trust, the RSPB, Cotswold Conservation Board and Medway Valley Countryside Partnership.



The Magnificent Meadows national project will help save the UK's remaining fragments of meadow. © Matilda Scharsach, Plantlife

What is a meadow?

Wildflower meadow planting is enjoying a huge vogue in gardening; they look beautiful and attract wildlife, particularly threatened pollinators. But real *wildflower* meadows are vanishing – and with them native flowers such as green-winged orchid, oxlip, dyer's greenweed, and meadow saffron. Meadows and other grasslands are an intrinsic part of the UK's natural and cultural heritage: rich in landscape character, farming, folklore and history, they are as much a part of our heritage as the works of Shakespeare.

The Save our Magnificent Meadows project will protect, conserve and restore wildflower meadows and other grasslands across the UK, and will focus on the Fermanagh grasslands of Northern Ireland, the pastures of west Wales, Scottish grasslands from Edinburgh to Aberdeenshire, the calaminarian and whin grasslands of Northumberland and traditional meadows and pastures in southern England

Nicola Hutchinson from Plantlife said: “For the conservation of grassland plants and other wildlife this is incredible news. Our aim all along has been to establish a programme and a profile for the 'Cinderella of the conservation world'. There has never been a grassland programme of this scale or ambition before and it is an amazing opportunity for Plantlife, for the project partners, for all the beneficiaries of the project and for grassland wildlife.”

Drew Bennelick, HLF's Head of Landscape and Natural Heritage, said: “The Heritage Lottery Fund is proud to be supporting this project to help protect and sustain one of our most precious yet disappearing habitats. ‘Saving our Magnificent Meadows’ is brilliant in its simplicity, its partnership approach and its ability to harness the power of hundreds of volunteers. The project will deliver a landscape-scale ecological impact working across 55 sites from Scotland to the West Country. It is projects like this that HLF is so keen to support to ensure we continue to benefit from the free ecosystem services these habitats provide and that they continue to survive for future generations to enjoy.”

LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIPS MINISTERIAL EVENT

Chris Hussey, Defra

A productive 2nd annual Ministerial event for Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) was held at the Emmanuel Centre in London on 12 March 2014. Holding this event, where LNPs come together to share best practice, discuss implementation issues and celebrate success, is a commitment in the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP).

The aim of the event was to use the wealth of LNP experience, knowledge and innovation to help individual LNPs and the group to develop and grow in order to achieve the ambitions in the NEWP. LNPs and Defra planned the day together and settled on a mix of speakers and interactive sessions to enable networking and discuss opportunities and challenges common across the whole group.

Alex Pratt OBE, Chair of the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership delivered the keynote speech. He spoke about Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), about how the LNP/LEP relationship is working in his area and shared his thoughts on the ingredients for success.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Natural Environment and Science, Lord de Mauley, spoke about his admiration and appreciation for the work of LNPs, emphasising that they had an extremely important role in setting the strategic direction for enhancing, protecting and valuing the natural environment on their patch. He also recognised the challenges LNPs faced and was in awe of what was being achieved in the face of such tests.

The Minister also set out three key priority areas for Defra where he thought LNPs might make a real difference. First on the list, and of greatest interest to Biodiversity Newsletter readers, was taking account of Biodiversity 2020 outcomes in their strategic plans to help facilitate local delivery.

Other priorities were innovative thinking on the value of the natural environment and working across sectors to demonstrate the true value of the natural environment to local decision makers.



Photo of the 2nd annual Ministerial event for Local Nature Partnerships © Defra

In response to questions the Minister said that he planned to meet with his Department for Business Innovation and Skills counterpart, Michael Fallon, in order to make a strong economic case for LEPs to invest in the natural environment and engage with LNPs. He wanted to hear about tangible examples from LNPs to help make this case and planned to get out and visit more LNPs on the ground.

It was also great to hear some short but very interesting soapbox presentations from five different LNPs who set out a range of their current activities, the successes they've had and the challenges they've faced. ▶

Those kind enough to talk were: Dr Simon Cripps from the Dorset LNP on facilitating a biodiversity gain from appropriate development; Dr Colin Studholme of the Gloucestershire LNP on recognising Locally-determined NIAs in Gloucestershire; Chris Woodley-Stewart of the Northern Upland Chain LNP on Environmental Investment Strategies for LNPs; Dr Bevis Watts of the West of England Nature Partnership on a Natural Capital Trust and Darren Clarke of the Humber Nature Partnership on enhancing the environment and growing the economy. An excellent set of examples of what LNPs can achieve and were set up to do.

Interactive brainstorming and roundtable discussions were held in the afternoon. These lively and open sessions provided LNPs with an opportunity to share their experiences and the challenges they faced on issues such as growing the economy and improving the environment; bringing about landscape-scale delivery for biodiversity; reconnecting people with nature and resourcing and sustaining LNPs in the future.

Using this format LNPs were able to collaboratively set out what they are uniquely able to offer; what Government could do to support them; what they can do to support each other and to suggest a series of specific actions. Defra's LNP team will continue to analyse the findings and agree an action plan for LNPs going forward, building on the notable successes thus far.

Feedback so far suggests that the day was a success, with over 100 delegates attending. The vast majority of the 48 LNPs were represented and a good turn-out too from Defra policy colleagues and the wider Defra family. Many thanks to all who attended, particularly those who were involved in shaping the day, speaking and facilitating the workshops.

Dr Alan Knight of the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Environment Partnership brought the day to a close with a short but uplifting talk on the potential of LNPs and their future. He asked everyone to think about what success would look like for LNPs and what might be discussed at the third annual event and many more after. Finally Alan commented on the amazing energy, commitment and intellectual capacity within LNPs and finished with a message that struck a chord with many in the room: There are 48 LNPs, possibly with 10 board members each, which means there are the best part of 500 influential people across the country championing the natural environment. **Please remember that if anybody ever asks you "what's the point of LNPs?"**

You can find out more about the role of LNPs on the Gov.uk website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-biodiversity-and-ecosystems-at-home-and-abroad/supporting-pages/local-nature-partnerships>

More resonating, less reasoning – latest research in engaging people in biodiversity issues

Mary Jeavans, Defra

A [new guide to help organisations to engage people with biodiversity issues](#) has been launched this month. The guide is based on the findings of a recent major research project and was developed by Defra's People Engagement Group (PEG) in association with over 100 environmental communications professionals.



A key conclusion of the research was that too often organisations communicate about biodiversity to people in a way that fails to take account of their existing understanding about nature. As a result, our messages fail to resonate with them and we end up doing more and more explaining to try to convince people.

The research identifies four big stories that exist in people's heads about nature: Nature finds a way, Nature can't keep up, Humanity finds a way and Humanity can't keep up, and develops five key principles for talking about biodiversity that work with these stories. More resonating and less reasoning!

The guide sets out the five key principles in easy to download one page cards.

Reframing Biodiversity Principles



Each card includes:

- An explanation of the principle
- Some key questions to ask yourself to help you to apply the principle
- A case study example of how an organisation has used the principle in their work.

The guide also includes a video of the main researcher, Simon Christmas, delivering a presentation on the research findings at the [Communicate conference 2013](#)

In talking to environmental communicators across a range of organisations, the PEG also gained some insights into the needs of the sector to build its capacity to engage people more effectively. These insights have been published in a short [report](#).

Features

BRITISH PUFFINS CAUGHT UP IN BISCAY STORM

British Trust for Ornithology

The sight of a Puffin, beak full of sandeels, might be a little harder to come by this summer as they struggle to survive the recent storms that have wracked the Bay of Biscay.

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) have received a record number of reports of Puffins, wearing uniquely-numbered metal rings, being washed up dead on the coasts of France and Spain.

In a normal winter, the BTO would expect two or three ringed Puffins to be found in France and Spain, but during the last few weeks, over 35 have been reported. The previous highest number of ringed birds found was back in 1979 when 17 dead Puffins were reported.

It is well known that British Puffins head out into the Atlantic for the winter months, riding out the worst that the weather can throw at them. As the winter progresses, our Puffins make their way into the Bay of Biscay before heading back to their breeding colonies and the burrows that they used the previous summer. Birds found in this current wreck have come from colonies in west Wales, northern Scotland, Orkney and Shetland.

Mark Grantham, Ringing Officer at the BTO, commented, "Up until the last couple of weeks it seemed that our Puffins might have survived the worst of the winter. However, from the reports of ringed birds that are being washed-up on the Biscay beaches it would seem that the recent storms were just too much for many of the birds."

He added, "It is still early days and the number of ringed birds found is likely to rise further, but we must remember that if over 35 ringed birds have been found, many un-ringed birds must have been affected too."

Bird ringing in the UK is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology and is carried out by licensed volunteers, who ring over a million birds of a wide variety of different species every year. It is the information received from these rings, when found and reported to the BTO, that enables scientists at the Trust to chart events such as this.

*For more information and to report a ring number to the BTO, **please visit** www.bto.org*



© Edmund Fellowes, British Trust for Ornithology

Working jointly to embed an Ecosystem Approach for the Isle of Wight AONB management plan review

Natural England

Isle of Wight (IOW) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit have recently reviewed their statutory management plan covering approximately half of the island. The IOW National Character Area (NCA), which covers the whole of the island, was written alongside the management plan. The AONB looked to the IOW NCA profile to provide a key mechanism for promoting an island-wide ecosystem approach.



In developing the NCA profile, Natural England worked alongside Defra and other Arms Length Bodies including the Environment Agency to create a common approach with AONB, IOW Council and other key Island partners. This involved working collaboratively to offer consistent advice to the AONB to develop an ecosystem approach for the review. As well as demonstrating how we can encompass a catchment based approach within this landscape and to determine how the AONB management plan and IOW NCA can inform future reviews of the Island's local plan.

In order to further assist the AONB with this work, Natural England led on a workshop with the aim of providing IOW AONB with a clear uniformed steer on developing an ecosystem approach. It provided an opportunity to talk them through Natural England's Ecosystem Approach Tool Kit and Partnership Assessment Criteria to explore how it enables partners to capture and reflect how an ecosystem approach allows them to contribute to Biodiversity 2020 Outcome 1C. The aim being that the Ecosystem Approach Tool Kit, and work to develop the IOW NCA profile, would afford partners an increased understanding of ecosystem services at the landscape scale. This knowledge will be reflected within the management plan, allowing AONB to demonstrate the crucial role that this designated landscape plays within the economy of the island as a whole.

During the workshop, Defra's representative relayed to partners what an ecosystem approach could mean against the island's river systems catchment framework. A number of academics who are instrumental within National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) 2, shared understanding around Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) and provided a range of best practice case studies. This understanding was shared with ourselves, Defra, the AONB Unit and the IOW Council's Head Planner, Ecologist and Archaeologist.

Dialogue between national specialists and local partners allowed us to explore what some of the Island's key ecosystem services are and the natural processes on the Island which affect them. This understanding will be reflected within the AONB management plan and IOW NCA profile. The workshop also focused on a range of community engagement tools, equipping AONB partners with clear messages to put before local communities around the ecosystem approach.

Together the IOW AONB management plan and IOW NCA highlight the many benefits for applying an Island wide ecosystem approach, which will improve the value of the environment for both the Island's people and wildlife. The documents will also link with the various IOW catchment plans and River Basin Management plans, securing further join up with Defra and the Environment Agency (EA). As a result of this work, IOW AONB are planning to undertake an Ecosystem Assessments by water-body catchments in 2014/15, which has stemmed from the management plan work. IOW council are also looking to build upon this understanding in the longer term and embed within the future IOW local plan. Analysis of the Island's ecosystem services within the NCA profile will be an invaluable resource in informing the Assessments and for further developing this vision.

[NCA 127: Isle of Wight Key Facts & Data](#) | [Wight AONB Website](#)

North Pennines AONB Partnership's Nectarworks Project

North Pennines AONB

Nectarworks is an AONB Partnership project that aims to enthuse, educate and enable communities to take action for bumblebees and other pollinators by restoring and increasing flower-rich habitats across the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Nectarworks began in May 2013 and will run until March 2017. There are three main strands within Nectarworks that together will help to rebuild the network of bumblebee friendly habitats across the North Pennines.



Knapweed is an important source of food for bees in uncut parts of meadows © Ruth Star-Keddle

Rich banks!

The North Pennines boasts some of the most beautiful flower-rich upland hay meadows in the United Kingdom. In times past, every hay field was a mix of colourful flowers and nodding grasses. Over the years our countryside has changed and once commonplace plants have now retreated to field edges, uncut steep banks, river banks and roadside verges. Largely ignored, we are in danger of losing these flower-rich areas as they scrub over or are damaged through lack of management. To help look after and enhance these valuable habitats we are:

- Locating and surveying flower-rich banks in the North Pennines.
- Talking to farmers to agree and instigate appropriate management of these bumblebee-friendly places.
- Using specially-designed and manufactured machinery to harvest seed in 'green hay' from suitable sites and spreading it on nearby meadows.
- Establishing a monitoring regime to assess the impact of management.

Willing partners in smallholders

Many people in the North Pennines live and work on small plots of land. Some of these smallholders look after the best remaining flower and nectar rich hay meadows in the area. Others are really keen to restore their meadows to their former glory and make them more wildlife-friendly. To support these enthusiastic and willing partners we are:

- Running workshops to help identify the needs of smallholders and facilitate their resolution.
- Establishing a community network especially for smallholders in the North Pennines area.
- Working with scythers to enable management of grasslands that are inaccessible to machinery and to reinvigorate this useful, ancient skill.

Gardens and communities

Even in rural areas, gardens can play an important part in the lifecycle of bumblebees. A bumblebee-friendly garden will supply pollen and nectar at times when there is less around in the surrounding countryside, such as in early spring or after the hay is cut. People can genuinely help to support and increase bumblebee populations in their area by planting a succession of bumblebee friendly flowers.

This not only provides a plentiful source of nectar and pollen from early spring to late summer, but also creates colourful and beautiful gardens that are buzzing with life. Over the four years of the Nectarworks project we are:

- Working with local primary schools, establishing bumblebee-friendly nectar gardens in their grounds and designing and delivering associated educational activities linked to the National Curriculum.
- Informing and inspiring local residents and community groups to take action for bumblebees in their gardens and community spaces.
- Working with care homes and their residents in the North Pennines to establish nectar gardens in their grounds.

Why bees?

Imagine a world without strawberries, apples, pears, plums, raspberries, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots and onions. Many of our everyday fruit and vegetables depend on bumblebees and other pollinators for their production. Flowers rely on bees to pollinate them and enable them to set seed. In turn, bees depend upon flowers to provide the nectar and pollen on which they feed. Wildflowers and bumblebees are of immense importance to us all as they are intimately bound to the production of our own food.



Garden bumblebee pollinating runner bean flowers © Rebecca Barrett

A bee's-eye view

Bumblebees and other insect pollinators need a constant supply of nectar and pollen from early spring, through the summer to early autumn. But wildflowers in our natural environment are steadily disappearing and so are the bees and other nectar-feeders. Nectarworks aims to reverse this trend in the North Pennines by actively working with local communities to conserve, enhance and create bumblebee-friendly habitats. To a bumblebee, areas rich in wildflowers and school or community nectar gardens are the same—jam-packed full of fabulous food! The rare moss carder bee (*Bombus muscorum*) is closely associated with the most flower-rich hay meadows in the North Pennines.

To find out more about the project, please visit: <http://www.northpennines.org.uk/Pages/Nectarworks.aspx>

Get ready to find the British cicada!

Daide Zilli, University of Southampton

After a summer of searching for the only cicada living in the UK, and a winter spent analysing sound recordings and improving the detection algorithm, the New Forest Cicada Project and its thousands of contributors are ready to gear up for the upcoming season—possibly the most favourable of the decade.



The cicada in Slovenia in 2013 © University of Southampton

The New Forest cicada (*Cicadetta montana s. str.*) is a critically endangered insect that may (or may not) still live in the UK. Belonging to the Hemiptera order, it's the only representative of *Cicadidae* in Great Britain and it was only ever found in the New Forest National Park, on the south coast. Since its first discovery in 1862 (this is the date of the earliest written testimony we have), it has been recorded many times, but always in very small numbers. Often in the past entomologists have struggled to find specimens for long periods of time—even 20 years between the 40's and the 60's, and the cicada had been considered extinct to then reappear again.

Today the cicada hasn't been seen for at least 10 years, with the only recordings at the beginning of this century being unconfirmed. The last confirmed report dates back to 1993; shortly after the death of its most recent passionate follower, the entomologist Jim Grant, who was actively seeking to restore its population to a sustainable number.



All the reports submitted by Citizen Scientists (in blue) and entomologists (in red) in the New Forest in 2013

The New Forest Cicada Project, featured last year in Biodiversity News #61, is an initiative started at University of Southampton to involve the many workers, residents and especially visitors to the New Forest National Park (13 million day visits every year!) in the search for this endangered insect.

The project has developed an app that can detect the sound of different insects that live in the New Forest, classify the call in real-time and report to the user immediately if they found a cicada or not. In summer 2013, in the first season after the app's release, hundreds of users have contributed over 6000 reports all around the forest. The app was also used in the Slovenian hills, where this *mountain* cicada lives in abundance. Entomologists there have now started to use it regularly to monitor the presence of their cicadas, as it not only collects recordings, which they can listen to from their computer, but also time stamps and GPS location, automating the reporting process previously done by hand. >



The Cicada Hunt app on an iPhone 5

Over the course of the winter, while the cicada sleeps underground, researchers at Southampton have been busy improving the app's performance on older phones and tweaking the algorithm that distinguishes between different species of insect, and are now ready for the next season. Based on an analysis of historical data and on the fact that the New Forest cicada sees more abundant hatching every 7-8 years, entomologists from BugLife speculate that the summer of 2014 may be the most favourable of this decade. They are therefore urging volunteers, bug lovers and passionate visitors to download the app and help them rediscover this endangered insect. The algorithm for insect detection is also being integrated in an Orthoptera field guide developed by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, due to be released before the end of the year.

The New Forest cicada is active between mid-May and early July.

Head to the project's website <http://newforestcicada.info> to download the app for your iOS (iPhone, iPad and iPod) or Android device, or search your app store for 'Cicada Hunt'. Then go out to the New Forest, point your phone to the trees and make the biodiversity discovery of the decade.

Get Fit Schemes Win Funds for London Biodiversity

John Bark, The Conservation Volunteers

Mayor of London Boris Johnson declared himself thrilled when Team London awarded £10,000 to new fitness schemes in Camden managed by The Conservation Volunteers. Knowing the money will have a double impact no doubt enhanced Mayoral pleasure. Not only is it helping people get fitter and healthier (easing pressure on the NHS and social services) – it also helps meet the requirements of the Borough's Biodiversity Action Plan!

One of the schemes is a Green Gym® set up by The Conservation Volunteers in accordance with the Camden BAP for 2013-18 (which also specifically tasked the charity with carrying out regular conservation activity through its existing Camden Green Gym). The new Gym, which is free to attend, is a partnership with London Borough of Camden, based at social enterprise GLL's Oasis Sports Centre in Holborn. >



Members of Camden Green Gym, part of the Borough's Biodiversity Action Plan. © Laurence Clapdorp, The Conservation Volunteers

The emphasis on health in the BAP recognises that what's good for the environment can be good for people: an hour's Green Gym® can burn more calories than a step-aerobics class, with a session usually lasting 3 hours. Locally there is a prevalence of health issues that could be alleviated by regular outdoor exercise, particularly among groups where 'going to the gym' is not an appealing or realistic option. At least 40% of the borough's population is reckoned not to engage in physical activity, with wide disparities in health between the richest and poorest sections of the community.



This lovely green space was made by Oasis Garden Green Gym members. © Michele Taylor, The Conservation Volunteers

Since January 2013, TCV volunteers have contributed over 1000 hours to creating the Oasis Garden, an attractive community garden incorporating raised beds to grow food and edible flowers and extra seating areas to sit and relax inside the sport centre.

The volunteers worked throughout a harsh winter to get everything ready for spring planting and there is a target to recruit 40 new volunteers by July 2014. The Oasis Garden Green Gym now runs free horticultural sessions every Saturday.

Camden Green Gym's value to the BAP and local people is reflected by a plan to increase membership by 10% per annum from 170 in 2012/13 and volunteer hours by 10% from 3,700 in 2012/13. Running every Tuesday and Thursday, it helps manage Camden's parks, local nature reserves and green spaces to improve biodiversity and to ensure access to nature for the community. Belsize and Adelaide Community Green Gym runs every Sunday in the Local Nature Reserves after which it is named. All sessions are free and run from 11am to 2pm.



This lovely green space was made by Oasis Garden Green Gym members. © Michele Taylor, The Conservation Volunteers

Since the Green Gyms cost nothing to attend, further external funding is being sought; but with each £1 working hard for both people's health and the Borough Biodiversity Action Plan, future funders will definitely share the delight of London's Mayor!

Join in. *Feel Good.*

To find out more about Green Gyms in Camden please contact:

- Oasis Green Gym Michele Taylor: gg-oasis@tcv.org.uk/ 07717494476
- Belsize and Adelaide Green Gym: belsizeadelaidegg@gmail.com
- Camden Green Gym Laurence Clapdorp: gg-camden@tcv.org.uk/ 07769642395

Biodiversity enhancement in the North York Moors National Park

North York Moors National Park Authority

2013 saw the North York Moors National Park Authority launch two ambitious new grant programmes available to land managers to support work that will maintain and enhance biodiversity in the National Park.

Restoration of PAWS

This programme focuses on the restoration of ancient woodlands, in particular the conversion of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to site-appropriate native broadleaved woodland. So far, the project has offered support in various ways: -

- Grants to support access to difficult to reach PAWS, on condition that the woodland is appropriately restored
- Grants to ensure that PAWS restoration will be cost neutral to owners, which is often not the case on hard to reach sites or where growth of the conifer crop has been poor
- Grants to carry out control of non-native invasive species in ancient woodland, especially rhododendron control
- Free advice on economic and effective conversion of PAWS, including assistance in accessing national grant schemes
- Project management support where appropriate

Enhancing habitat connectivity

2013 saw the end of the North York Moors Farm Scheme. The National Park had been running this Scheme since 1990 and had supported whole farm agreements on over 115 farms, funding habitat management as well as restoring traditional boundary features and buildings. The scheme was a huge success and demonstrated the enthusiasm that farmers have for working with us in addressing some of the challenges facing nature in the farmed environment.



Linking Landscapes location—near Lockton ©NYMNP

Following on the success of the Farm Scheme, a new 'Linking Landscapes' initiative has been launched which aims to take a targeted approach, using existing data wherever possible, to identify the existing and potential biodiversity interest of landscapes within the National Park and work with land managers to draw up a programme of works that builds on that. The scheme was the National Park's response to the publication of the Government's review 'Making Space for Nature' which outlined how the principles of landscape ecology should be employed to target habitat enhancements.

The initiative has the following ambitions: -

- Identify the best places for nature in the National Park and ensure that they are managed as well as possible
- Look for opportunities to enlarge or buffer the best sites
- Look for opportunities to improve habitat connectivity and allow wildlife to move through the landscape >

Most of the work so far has been achieved by National Park Authority officers working directly with landowners. However, where possible support has been offered to partner organisations where their project aims have matched those of the initiative, for instance providing grant to Butterfly Conservation to support work on habitat enhancement for Duke of Burgundy Butterfly and Pearl-bordered Fritillary in the south of the Park ([Dukes and Pearls Project](#)).

Inevitably the scope of the scheme is limited by budgetary constraints and is having to be rolled out gradually, targeting those areas where grant support can have the greatest impact. Access to the scheme is currently by invitation but the response of land managers has been very encouraging.

Next steps

The Authority sees great value in the ability to influence land management through grant provision and has identified budget for continuing both of these schemes through the next financial year.

National Park grant budgets are relatively small and under increasing pressure. Grants offered by the National Park Authority will always be designed to complement, rather than replace, those available nationally. Officers will be working with colleagues in Natural England and other partners like the Forestry Commission to ensure that local grant programmes work alongside whatever becomes available through the new Environmental Land Management Scheme to achieve the greatest gains for nature in the North York Moors National Park.



Linking Landscape—planting connecting hedgerows in the North York Moors
©NYMNPA

For further updates on the National Park Authority's work please see their conservation blog:
<http://northyorkmoorsnationalpark.wordpress.com/>

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SCOTTISH JUNIPER DAY

Plantlife

Scotland's juniper is in a critical state. Over the last two years a deadly fungal disease (*Phytophthora austrocedrae*) has been having a potentially devastating effect on the ancient gin-giving bush, and it continues to face a number of other significant threats. Juniper has been lost from a quarter of areas where it was previously found across the UK and Plantlife are deeply concerned about its future.



Juniper, Scotland © Plantlife

On the 15th of March - National Juniper Day, Plantlife Scotland began looking for volunteers to help them record the health of juniper throughout Scotland over the coming months:

Deborah Long from Plantlife Scotland says “Juniper with its blueish green needles and green or black berries is easy to identify. Today is National juniper day and we are asking people to help us from now until September to complete a survey form every time they see juniper in Scotland. If you are planning to go out walking then this is the ideal opportunity for you to take part. We are especially interested in any orange or brown bushes, which could indicate infection by *Phytophthora austrocedrae* – although other causes, such as frost or grazing animals, could be to blame. If such symptoms are seen people should document this on their survey form but ensure they either keep out of the area altogether or, if that is not possible, keep well away from such bushes. We would also ask people to avoid wet areas and clean mud thoroughly from their boots, equipment and animals when they leave,”

Juniper's decline in Scotland is also due to combination of ageing bushes, many are over 100 years old, so produce few viable seeds. Unsuitable grazing regimes prevent germination and suppress seedlings while the locally booming rabbit and vole populations devour juvenile plants.

Recent juniper studies in Scotland show:

- 40% of surveyed juniper sites in Scotland had fewer than 10 plants. Small populations are more likely to go extinct.
- Seedlings were recorded at only 15% of sites for common juniper. Without seedlings, populations will die out.
- 67% of recorded plants were mature / old or dead. Unless the surrounding land is managed in a way to enable these mature plants to set seed, these populations will die out.

Plantlife are able to carry out this survey thanks to funding from Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage. Juniper is the key contributor to the flavour of gin, so the charity is hoping people will also raise a G&T to their combined efforts today! And, appropriately enough, a gin firm has also stepped in to support the survey. No.3 London Dry Gin will be offering a complimentary bottle to the senders of the first twenty survey forms received.

Mike Mackenzie from No.3's Stirling-based distributor Maxxium UK, said:

“Juniper is very much at the heart of No.3, so it's entirely appropriate that we support this crucial project.” >

Juniper is an important part of Scotland's landscape and culture:

- The fragrant wood was used as firewood as it burns well. It is also said to burn with less smoke and therefore was the preferred fuel for illegal whisky stills.
- Juniper's aromatic berries give gin its distinctive flavour, and are regularly used as an ingredient in game dishes.
- In March, juniper produces pollen. If you knock a branch and it produces lots of yellow dust, it's a male. If it has berries, it's female.
- The prickly boughs were once used as a substitute for barbed wire.
- In the Highlands, juniper was used to treat almost every ailment. Oil extracted from juniper has an ancient reputation as an abortifacient – which perhaps explains another of its names, bastard's bane.



Juniper © Andrew Gagg, Plantlife

Last year as part of an initiative to protect threatened species in Scotland, MSP's offered their political support by becoming "Species Champions". Murdo Fraser is the species champion for juniper and hopes people will help Plantlife protect juniper by carrying out a survey.

Murdo Fraser commented; 'For me, it was a natural choice to become 'species champion' for Juniper. Familiar to Scots for millennia, juniper, and its survival within Scotland, represents the spirit and determination of Scots who throughout the ages have helped develop and shape many features of the modern world. In April, I visited a key juniper testing site in my constituency of Mid-Scotland and Fife. We discussed current efforts to protect and sustain wild juniper in Scotland. As a vital component of the biodiversity of Scotland's native woodlands it is important that we continue with our current efforts to ensure its survival.

JUNIPER NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Take part and help record the health of juniper: a simple downloadable form is available from:

www.plantlife.org.uk/scotland

The first 10 postal forms and the first 10 on-line forms received after the 15th March will win a bottle of No.3 gin!

Moors for the Future sets sight on 2020 vision

Louise Turner, Moors for the Future



*Brash hooking on rope bags during a brash heather airlift
© Moors for the Future*

The Peak District-based Moors for the Future Partnership – a global leader in large-scale moorland restoration – has set out ambitious plans for development up to 2020.

The not-for-profit partnership, whose current members include the Peak District National Park Authority, Environment Agency, Natural England, National Trust, RSPB, Severn Trent Water, United Utilities and Yorkshire Water, has launched a new Business Plan to offer its services to a wider market in 2015-2020.

Set up in 2003, the partnership operates in the South Pennine Moors – 650 sq km of moorland renowned for their valuable habitats and birdlife, and protected by Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection

Area designations. Over the past 10 years the partnership has developed the experience and capacity to undertake large-scale regeneration of these globally-rare moorland habitats, collaborating with multiple land-owners.

Using innovative techniques led by scientific research, the partnership has transformed almost 27sq km (10.5 square miles) of black degraded peat in the South Pennines and Dark Peak with a new green skin of vegetation to halt further erosion and decline.

Cotton grass, heather, bilberry and other upland plants are taking root on areas such as Bleaklow and Black Hill whose vegetation had been devastated by two centuries of industrial smoke pollution, wildfires and erosion. Sphagnum, a key peat-building moss, is being cultivated in specially-developed gel beads and then spread on the moors, woodland and shrubs are being re-introduced, drainage gullies blocked, and wildlife is returning.

More pleasant as it is for walkers, the work has many other benefits for people and place – including drinking water improvement for millions, enhancement of river water quality, flood risk management and carbon retention to help combat climate change.

The new vegetation reduces peat, silt and pollution draining into reservoirs, slows the flow of water into downstream communities, and keeps carbon in the soil. Increasing flora and fauna on blanket bog is also a key part of the work as well as an EU priority. >



Heather brash bags to be airlifted onto site © Moors for the Future

In addition, an awareness-raising programme has involved thousands of residents, visitors and students in moorland research, collecting memories for an oral history project, or helping create audio trails. One award-winning campaign reminds walkers to keep their dogs on a lead to protect wildlife and farm animals.



Partnership steering group © Moors for the Future

Geoff Nickolds, chair of the Moors for the Future Partnership, said:

“We want to use the huge achievements of the first 10 years as a platform to build on for 2020. We have an unbeatable track-record of managing landscape-scale projects, innovation and specialist advice based on scientific evidence, and we can offer that to a wider market.

“Over the next six years we want to increase the resilience of our moorlands against climate change and spread our work by supporting habitats such as clough woodlands and upland

hay meadows. We also want to widen our citizen science programme across the South Pennines, inspire more volunteers and communities, raise fire awareness and expand the improvement of drinking water and flood reduction.

“When Professor Sir John Lawton, author of the groundbreaking ‘Making Space for Nature’ report, visited one of our projects, he said: ‘You win in terms of water quality, you win on carbon, you win on landscape, and you win on wildlife conservation.’ What better endorsement could we have to carry on this globally-important work?”

To make that happen, the partnership’s financial planning for 2020 includes strengthening its support-base of partner-organisations, seeking further grants from sources such as the Government and EU Life+ Fund, delivering more special projects for landowners, marketing its expertise, and benefiting from possible new funding streams.



Measuring the pH of moorland water © Moors for the Future

Local and Regional

Reserve is a Stairway to Heather



The Wildlife Trust of Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside

Volunteers are helping to extend areas of heather on a Local Nature Reserve less than a mile from a Lancashire town centre. Lancashire Wildlife Trust officers and volunteers are looking to increase the heathland habitat at River Darwen Parkway, near to Blackburn. This will boost native plants and encourage insects and birds back onto the site, which climbs to 130 metres overlooking Ewood Park, home of Blackburn Rovers. Wildlife Trust Community Projects Officer Rebecca Witcombe said:

“Previous wildlife surveys have shown that the heather covered a much larger area. People who knew the site from 20 years ago remember heather being across much of the top of the site.

“We will be trialling different ways to regenerate the heather back to these areas. We won’t see the results immediately, but will monitor the site in the future for signs of regeneration, and will be able to see which method works best.”

Volunteers have been cutting down scrub and removing trees throughout winter and work will begin again in autumn. >

They have also carried out coppicing and improved footpaths in the woodland on the 31 hectare site.

Funding for the project has come from The Veolia Environmental Trust, which has awarded a grant of £21,031 through the Landfill Communities Fund.

The reserve has a rich industrial heritage including a sand quarry, the site of Lower Darwen Engine Sheds and railway siding with trains serving the cotton industry in Blackburn, but it is now busy with wildlife. More than 50 species of bird, including peregrine falcon, snipe and yellowhammer, have been recorded there. Sand martins are due to arrive on the river in the coming weeks.



As well as heather, around 160 plants species have been spotted with harebell, meadow cranesbill and great water dock being significant. Smooth and palmate newts live in ponds on the reserve, which is owned by Blackburn with Darwen Council.

Volunteers have been the major factor in the restoration of the reserve and work parties involve a variety of tasks which can be carried out by a wide range of people. Anyone interested in volunteering for the Wildlife Trust can contact:

volunteer@lancswt.org.uk or ring 01772 318374.

RARE STONEWORT BACK IN ANGLESEY

Tristan Hatton-Ellis, Freshwater Ecologist, Natural Resources Wales



Llyn yr Wyth Eidion, Anglesey. This and the very similar Llyn Cadarn are small but relatively deep 'kettle hole' lakes. They are the only known locations in Wales for *Chara rudis*.

During lake monitoring work for NRW in 2013, surveyors from ENSIS Ltd found a few plants of the rare stonewort *Chara rudis* in Llyn Cadarn, a small lake in Cors Goch National Nature Reserve.

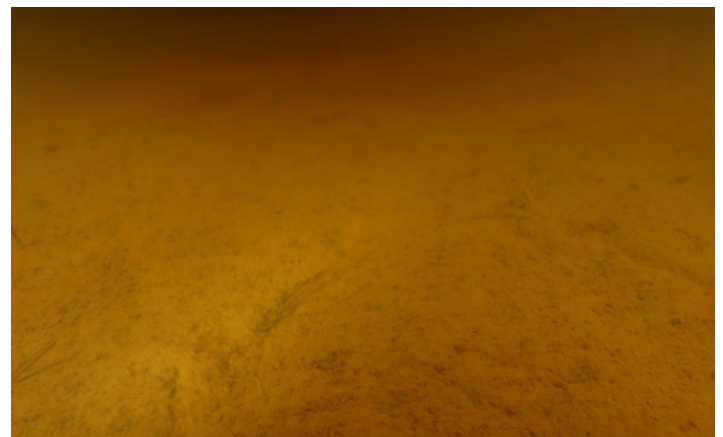
Chara rudis is a deep water species that is very sensitive to deterioration in water quality and was thought to be extinct in Wales, so its reappearance here after an absence of 75 years is encouraging. The identification has been confirmed by national expert Nick Stewart. *Chara rudis* (Rugged stonewort) is classed as Nationally Rare and Near Threatened in the UK Red Data Book of Stoneworts.

In Wales it has only ever been recorded from two locations, Llyn Cadarn and the nearby Llyn yr Wyth Eidion, both of which are in the Anglesey Fens SAC. Although welcome, this re-establishment remains fragile and is not likely to lead to Llyn Cadarn reaching favourable condition in the near future. The targets for this type of lake require that the majority of the vegetation consists of dense *Chara* meadows. Further monitoring and careful management of nutrient inputs to the lake will be necessary to ensure recovery.

This rediscovery raises the possibility that nearby Llyn yr Wyth Eidion could also be rehabilitated.



Shallow waters are dominated by the nutrient tolerant willow moss (*Fontinalis antipyretica*), seen here growing around the emerging leaves of yellow water-lily.



Under the surface there are clues as to why *Chara rudis* has declined. In deep water there are no plants. The sediments are loose and peaty, thought to be the result of an attempt to drain the fen 150 years ago.

WONDERFUL WILDFLOWERS COUNT!

Celebrate spring by helping Plantlife count Britain's wonderful wildflowers.

Plantlife

Do you know your cowslip from your cow parsley? Or your buttercup from your butterbur? Plantlife are calling on people to spring into action and join the UK's only annual wild flowers survey which will give nature a health check!

Sue Southway, who is leading Plantlife's *Wildflowers Count* survey says:

"Our survey is really simple and all our volunteers get a free colour guide of the wildflowers included. If you enjoy being outside, whether walking the dog, exercising children, or just for the pure enjoyment of seeing the seasonal changes around you, please get in touch. The survey runs from the first day of spring right through to September and helps us to find out more about the flowers on YOUR doorstep!"

"In the UK, we know lots about the really rare and threatened species but much less about how our more common wildflowers are doing. Last year our survey showed that creeping buttercup and cowslip were among the UK's most common wildflowers where as stinking iris and alpine lady's mantle were the least recorded. Our wild flowers aren't just gorgeous they are vital to the survival of our wildlife; by tracking them we can see if they are increasing or decreasing in numbers, which, in turn, shows us how healthy our countryside is. You may be surprised by how many you know!"

Just some of the fascinating wild flowers that could be on your doorstep:



Wood anemone – the delicate white stars of wood anemones can carpet the woodland floor in early spring. On warm days they often fill the air with a sharp, musky smell which in ancient times led locals to name the flower "smell foxes", it's also known as the windflower or grandmother's nightcap.



Meadow buttercup – the glossy gold of buttercup flowers are known to every child; hold them under your chin and see the gold reflected by all those who love butter! In certain meadows buttercups are so dense their colour it's dazzling under the May sunshine. In folklore beggars squeezed the juice from buttercups and applied it to their skin so it looked like blisters and would help them gain sympathy.



Foxglove – the pinky purple spires of our native foxglove are found on woodland edges, in hedgerows and waysides. The inside of the bells are freckled with darker purple and are often bobbing with bees looking for pollen. Despite its high toxicity, foxgloves became famous for the treatment of heart failure. Its leaves were used to slow the heart beat and help it grow stronger which in turn stimulated the kidneys to clear the body and lungs of excess fluid. However the dosage was critical and if it was a fraction too high it could stop the heart all together!

To take part, simply log on to: www.plantlife.org.uk/thingstodo/wildflowerscount.

Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust (HWDT)...

..Marine engagement boost for Hebrides communities as Sea Change project wins funding

Scottish Natural Heritage

Conservation charity Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT) has been awarded £120,000 through the UK Government's Coastal Communities Fund – enabling it to launch an innovative project, to strengthen people's connections to the sea in 15 remote island communities across the Hebrides, including by creating sustainable eco-tourism employment opportunities.



Volunteers onboard Silurian © G Leaper

HWDT's ambitious Sea Change project will strengthen conservation of whales, dolphins and porpoises – collectively known as cetaceans – and develop the region's appeal as a major destination for wildlife tourism.

Key to this will be engaging coastal communities in learning, training and volunteering – so that they can develop stronger links with and understanding of their marine environment, and invest in its sustainable use for the long-term benefit of local people.

The scheme will support local people by developing skills and creating work opportunities through an extended Community Sightings Network. It is planned that the Sea Change project will be carried out in Mull, Coll and Tiree, Islay and Jura, Colonsay, Barra, Small Isles (Eigg, Muck, Rum, Canna), in two locations on Skye and in Mallaig and Arisaig on the mainland. Each of these communities attracts tourism and has seen an increase in wildlife tourism in recent years.

The importance of white-tailed eagles to the local economy of Mull and Skye is well-documented. HWDT believes developing sustainable marine wildlife eco-tourism could have similar or greater success. The Sea Change project will directly create two new jobs, and potentially safeguard and indirectly create many more employment opportunities in the region.

HWDT will recruit a new full-time Sightings and Strandings Officer, to train volunteers, organise school visits and support 15 community-based hubs on the islands, which will then run the project from their own community. The new employee will also liaise with boat operators, local people and tourists on reporting marine animal sightings and strandings.

HWDT plans to work collaboratively with community enterprises, trusts, wildlife groups, businesses, schools and individuals, so that the project is tailored to each of the 15 communities and to encourage as many volunteers as possible to get involved. Engagement with local communities and education work are key parts of HWDT's pioneering work to secure the future of western Scotland's cetaceans and basking sharks, as well as the Hebrides' globally important marine environment. A new Visitor Centre Manager at HWDT will ensure that the charity's headquarters in Tobermory becomes the project base and a community resource for learning, training and volunteering. >



© HWDT

The Coastal Communities Fund was created to direct regeneration investment to seaside towns and villages to help rebalance their local economies, reduce unemployment and create new work opportunities for young people from the local area. Announcing the Coastal Community Fund winners, Chief Secretary to the Treasury Rt Hon Danny Alexander said: "The Coastal Communities Fund is supporting some of the most fragile communities. It is a great way to make sure that people living around our coastline can share in the benefits of the increased returns for the Crown Estate's marine activities."

Over 50 projects across the UK have been awarded a share of £27.7 million through the Coastal Communities Fund. Details of the project winners are at: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/uk-wide/coastal-communities.

HWDT also carries out scientific surveys, and is currently recruiting volunteers to take part in its 2014 expeditions onboard its research yacht Silurian, working alongside marine scientists. For details call 01688 302620 or visit www.hwdt.org.

Spot Marine Life around Angus's Fantastic Coastline?

Angus Council



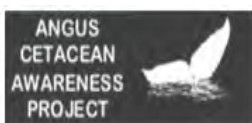
©montroseimages.co.uk

The www.marinelifeangus.co.uk website and the Angus Cetacean Awareness Project (ACAP), an Angus based project recording cetaceans in Angus waters, continues to reach out to a wider audience. The website which offers the chance to report whale and dolphin sightings is now on the Visitscotland Angus and Dundee and coasts sections reaching UK and international audiences.

Angus Council are also to have it added to the new Angus Ahead website. The website hosts a wealth of information on local coastal sites, great for land based viewing and also aims to publicise other local recording schemes which record local butterflies, maritime plants and marine non native species.

Since recording began in 2011 sightings of bottlenose dolphins, minke whale, harbour porpoise, common dolphin and even humpback whales have occurred at many locations along the coastline of Angus.

A second print run of small business card size cards in 2013 which went to a wide range of visitor attractions etc along the Angus and Aberdeenshire coasts; this will be distributed again in 2014. If you would like to receive some please email info@marinelifeangus.co.uk





UK Framework

UK Biodiversity Framework Update

JNCC

5th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Back in Issue 63 of Biodiversity News (Autumn 2013), we mentioned that the 5th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) would shortly be available for consultation on the JNCC website. The consultation ran from December 2013 until early February 2014, and a number of helpful comments were received.

The report provides evidence of the UK's progress towards the aims of the CBD. The [UK biodiversity indicators](#) have been used as an important evidence source, as well as the [UK National Ecosystem Assessment](#), published in 2011, the UK [Biodiversity Framework](#) and its associated implementation plan and annual reports, and the country biodiversity strategies of the four UK countries – [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

The report includes information on biodiversity status and trends, threats and pressures, and the implications for human well-being; as well as evidence from the national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and their implementation. The report also includes information on the UK's progress towards achieving the five goals of the CBD's *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020*.

The report is now in its final stages, and will be submitted to the CBD soon.



Wood Wise: trees and woodland in water management

The Woodland Trust

Trees and woodland offer key benefits for water management. Organisations around the UK are working to improve the quality and sustainable use of water. Wood Wise looks at the opportunities trees and woodland can offer and a variety of projects using them. Benefits include alleviating flooding, reducing soil erosion, providing food and habitat for aquatic life, trapping toxins, and reducing the temperature of rivers.

All issues of Wood Wise can be viewed freely via the Woodland Trust website:

<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/learn/publications/wood-wise/>



Ecosystems News; Metropolitan matters: An Ecosystems approach to our cities

The Ecosystems Knowledge Network

An ecosystems approach is a holistic approach to managing the environment for the benefit of both nature and people. This newsletter focuses on how an ecosystems approach is being applied in some of the UK's largest population centres. Cities featured include Birmingham, where a new approach to mapping has helped residents to draw down £1.5million of funding, and Glasgow, where an integrated green infrastructure approach is being developed to ensure green spaces are considered at the very beginning of planning processes.

The newsletter, and a range of resources that show how an ecosystems approach can be applied in practice, are available at:

www.ecosystemsknowledge.net

THE LOST LIFE PROJECT

The Species Recovery Trust



Saxifraga rosacea © Katsuji Ohkouchi

The Species Recovery Trust have launched an online portal called the Lost Life Project. Building on Natural England's ground-breaking 2010 report the portal has images of over 200 species that have gone extinct in England in the last 200 years.

There is also a short film highlighting these species and the work of the trust <http://bit.ly/1fwdai1>

"Sometimes the list of extinct species names can seem rather dry and scientific so this project aimed to find as many pictures as still existed of these species, to give a fitting testament to the role they played in lighting up our countryside, and highlighting the tragedy that these lights have now gone out"

- Dominic Price, Director



University of Oxford Part-Time Ecological Survey Techniques Programme

Enrolment is now open for the University of Oxford part-time Ecological Survey Techniques Programme.



This Programme offers a range of Masters-level short courses that cover the skills needed to carry out ecological surveys of a variety of different taxa, and a dedicated data analysis course that gives a hands-on introduction to the key statistical methods and tools used to analyse field survey data.

The Programme is designed for ecological consultants, environmental managers and rangers, researchers and postgraduate students, and those making a career change that are seeking flexible study combined with expert tutoring.

Each course can be taken on a standalone basis. As dates do not conflict, students can take 2 or more courses to suit individual needs. Each course is delivered online:

- **Field Techniques for Surveying Vegetation** www.conted.ox.ac.uk/vegetation starting 17 September 2014
- **Data Analysis in Ecology** www.conted.ox.ac.uk/dataanalysis starting 29 October 2014 and 25 February 2015
- **Field Techniques for Surveying Mammals and Reptiles** www.conted.ox.ac.uk/mammals starting 07 January 2015
- **Field Techniques for Surveying Birds** www.conted.ox.ac.uk/birds starting 11 February 2015
- **Field Techniques for Surveying Fish and Amphibians** www.conted.ox.ac.uk/fish starting 25 March 2015
- **Field Techniques for Surveying Invertebrates** www.conted.ox.ac.uk/invertebrates starting 29 April 2015 (spaces still available for 30 April 2014)

Students on each course benefit from 5 weeks part-time learning, roughly comparable to 1 week full-time study, taught online by an expert in their respective field. >

Each course is delivered via a virtual learning environment where students interact with one another, and their tutor, to ask questions, solve problems, and share experiences and ideas.

Each course offers a for credit option depending on individual CPD requirements. A special student rate is now available for non-accredited study for currently registered postgraduate students. To find out more, please get in touch using the details below.

Postgraduate Certificate in Ecological Survey Techniques:

At the heart of the Programme sits a Postgraduate Certificate for those wishing to take their professional development to the next level with a University of Oxford qualification.

Combining selected modules from the online study series outlined above, the PGCert also includes a week-long face-to-face introductory module in Oxford during September and a Field Project assignment with individual tutor support. Applications are invited now for entry in **September 2014**, for further information visit www.conted.ox.ac.uk/PGCertEST

For further details please get in touch on **+44 (0)1865 286952** or est@conted.ox.ac.uk

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Meeting the Challenge of a sustainable urban future: the contribution of green walls

International Green Wall Conference 4-5th September 2014

Call for papers and notice of the International Conference on Green Walls '**Meeting the Challenge of a sustainable urban future: the contribution of green walls**' to be held at the Green Wall Centre, Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent, UK. **4-5 September 2014.**

Green walls are an important component of Green Infrastructure – possibly the only cost effective approach to coping with some of the immense challenges currently facing urban areas: climate change (coping with extreme events e.g. heat-waves, flooding), pollution (including health impacts), lack of wildlife habitat, social problems (including mental health) resulting from high-density urban living. The green wall sector is exceptionally dynamic with new product developments and insights constantly emerging. For this reason we have convened this meeting to bring together researchers, manufacturers, installers, planners, architects, consultants, and developers to exchange information and learn of new developments in this exciting technology.

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/research/greenwall/conferences/index.jsp>

Further information is available at <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/research/greenwall/conferences/index.jsp> or from the organisers: Caroline Chiquet c.chiquet@staffs.ac.uk and Prof. John Dover j.w.dover@staffs.ac.uk.