

Biodiversity News

Issue 67
Winter Edition



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From the Editor



Welcome to the Winter edition of Biodiversity News!

A big thanks to all those who put their time and effort into these articles to keep Biodiversity News alive. Many thanks also to Lorne Gill, from Scottish Natural Heritage, for providing a great front cover. I would like to make all readers aware that this photo and many others are available to view on the SNH Flickr page (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/snhiyb2010/sets/>).

This edition contains articles ranging from '**The UK and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation**' to the '**Nectar Network**' project at Kielder Road Verge. I am pleased to say CIRIA's contribution to the newsletter will be an ongoing feature in Biodiversity News and will help show the work they do to implement **biodiversity in construction**.

There are various updates on policy and publications – including the recent publication of the **biodiversity indicators** and the review of the **Payments for Ecosystem Services**; encouraging investment in the environment.

Please take the time to read through the '**local and regional**' section as these projects illustrate the hard work that is being put into England's biodiversity – including the volunteers at Bat Conservation Trust who have spent 42,000 evenings monitoring bats!

Starting on page 23, we have a range of **events** to add to your 2015 calendars.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and I welcome any feedback you may have.
Please send any articles to **biodiversitynews@defra.gsi.gov.uk**

Happy 2015,

Katie Hawkins

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2014 Biodiversity Indicators show a mixed picture on biodiversity conservation and action

Biodiversity matters because it underpins many of the vital benefits we get from the natural environment. It contributes to our economy, our health and wellbeing, and it enriches our lives.

The UK is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and is committed to a set of biodiversity goals and targets, the 'Aichi targets', agreed in 2010. The UK and England Biodiversity Indicators have been developed to report on our progress towards meeting these targets. In addition, in 2011, the Government published *Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*. This ambitious strategy set the direction for biodiversity policy for the next decade, with the overarching ambition to halt overall loss of England's biodiversity by 2020. The [England Biodiversity 2020 indicators](#) show progress with the outcomes and priority actions set out in *Biodiversity 2020*.

Updates to the UK (see article on page 22) and England Biodiversity Indicators were published on 4 December 2014. The indicators provide a comprehensive assessment of progress with national and international commitments to slow or stem biodiversity loss. Together they cover a huge variety of data provided by Government, research bodies, and Non-Governmental Organisations. Many of the data sets used span impressive time periods, allowing for assessment of long-term and short-term change.

What's new for England this year?

There have been several key additions to the indicator set in 2014 – a significant step towards a more complete set of indicators that is better able to monitor progress against biodiversity targets. There are new indicators of the status of priority species; the status of pollinators; public engagement with the issue of biodiversity loss; the integration of biodiversity considerations into business activity; and a water quality.

Species trends are now shown along with the uncertainty around them, and every indicator has a rating that represents how confident we are in the trend it presents.

The year's results for England

The indicators show a mixed picture on biodiversity conservation and action. There has been progress (e.g. more protected areas on land and sea; more agricultural land under environmental schemes; better managed fish stocks; recoveries in some species). At the same time pressures on wildlife, from invasive species for example, are increasing and habitats and species present a mixed picture. Many species in farmland and woodland and priority species continue to decline.

We have a coherent strategy for biodiversity aimed at creating a more resilient and coherent ecological network and halting biodiversity loss by 2020. These are challenging ambitions that will not be achieved overnight but we are making progress. Natural England is conducting a delivery review into the Biodiversity 2020 outcomes; their initial analysis suggests they are achievable if effort is enhanced across the sector.

Crucially, Government will not create a better natural environment alone - we need individuals, businesses, farmers, land managers, community groups and NGOs to work with us to achieve our ambition.

Helen-Miller Bakewell, Defra



www.gov.uk/defra

Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services
Indicators
December 2014





Turning 20: Heritage Lottery Fund's ground-breaking Landscape Partnership celebrates two decades of The National Lottery supporting natural heritage

To date, 77 schemes have been supported with £128m of Lottery money and a further £20m birthday investment just announced!

To mark 20 years of The National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is celebrating the achievements of its innovative Landscape Partnership programme. This programme runs right across the UK with over 17,504 km² of landscapes – the combined size of Wales, Devon and Cornwall – being funded thanks to Lottery players. A further £20m has also been invested in nine new schemes in England and Scotland.

HLF's Landscape Partnership programme is the most significant grant scheme in existence for landscape-scale projects delivering conservation and sustainability for distinctive landscape projects.

Projects have:

- Funded the planting of over 5,500 trees
- Allowed more than 134 ha of grassland and heath sites to be expanded
- Restored over 936 ha of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh to favourable condition
- Repaired over 30 km of dry stone walls
- Engaged over 150,000 people in participation and learning activities
- Helped more than 14,000 volunteers get involved – the equivalent of 20,000 working days
- Helped 1,250 people attend 3,870 volunteer training days
- Benefited nearly 1,000 schools, colleges and universities with over 35,000 pupils/students learning about and getting involved in their local landscape



Secrets of the Sands, Bedfordshire 'l frosty
a cfbng"© @dU ?jb[fl@? D\chc[flD\nt"

Drew Bennellick, HLF Head of Landscape and Natural Heritage, said:

"On the eve of The National Lottery's 20th birthday, this is the perfect moment to thank Lottery players for helping make possible our Landscape Partnership programme. We couldn't have done it without them."

"Ten years ago we developed Landscape Partnerships so that we could deliver conservation on a truly landscape scale. With so many habitats and species in decline and people becoming less and less connected to nature and the land, the programme was the first of its kind to allow conservationists to work at a cross-landscape scale. The programme has grown rapidly and is now leading the way in allowing many of our most treasured landscapes, as well as some of our most damaged, to be managed for the future in a sustainable way."

"Involving people as volunteers, training them as guides or helping them learn new skills has enabled local people to appreciate, value and speak up for the countryside. Our funding has led to new strategic partnerships between private, public, charitable and community bodies. It has also ensured that the UK's most precious resource, our landscape, will be protected for future generations. Thank you, Lottery players!"

Dr Tom Tew, HLF Trustee and CEO of the Environment Bank, added:

"Protecting our special wildlife sites is critical but not enough - we absolutely need to restore whole landscapes as best we can. Though that takes a lot of effort and a lot of money, our Landscape Partnership programme brings together Heritage Lottery Fund support and whole communities that, together, make a big difference – for people and for wildlife – from marshes to moors, forests to fens. This is real conservation in action and there is so much here for our country to celebrate and be proud of, and all made possible by The National Lottery."



To mark the 20th birthday of The National Lottery, HLF is today announcing £20m of Landscape Partnership funding to nine projects in England and Scotland.

The successful projects are:

- Secrets of the Sands - the Greensand Ridge Landscape Partnership – earmarked grant of £1.8m, including £133,400 development funding
- The Fifth Continent – Romney Marsh Landscape Partnership – earmarked grant of £1.9m, including £230,300 development funding
- Samuel Palmer's Earthly Paradise: The Darent Valley Landscape Partnership – earmarked grant of £2.2m, including £123,500 development funding
- From Miner to Major: The Real Sherwood Forest – earmarked grant of £2.6m, including £119,700 development funding
- Land of the Fanns, Essex – earmarked grant of £1.4m, including £94,800 development funding
- The Carbon Landscape – Restoring Great Manchester Wetlands to the community – earmarked grant of £2.2m, including £212,800 development funding
- The Forester's Forest – Our Land Between Two Rivers (The Forest of Dean Landscape Partnership Programme) – earmarked grant of £2.9m, including £405,500 development funding
- South West Peak – A Landscape at a Crossroads – earmarked grant of £2.6m, including £154,300 development funding
- Tomintoul and Glenlivet Hidden Histories Landscape Partnership – earmarked grant of £2.5m, including £171,600 development funding

Examples of successful Landscape Partnerships include:

- ◆ Lagan Valley Regional Park, Belfast (HLF grant: £1.6m)

The first Landscape Partnership scheme in Northern Ireland is located within a 4,000 acre amenity parkland area, stretching 11 miles along both sides of the River Lagan, located on the outskirts of Belfast city centre. Managed by a broad partnership, the scheme implemented a number of projects which including the development of interpretation and education materials, species surveys and conservation, habitat management and enhancement and volunteer and community participation.

- Medway Gap 'Valley of Visions', Kent (HLF grant: £1.8m)

'Valley of Visions' is a partnership of national, regional and local organisations led by Kent County Council. The scheme focusses on 63km² of the Medway Gap area, conserving important chalk grassland and marshland in addition to exploring the cultural and industrial heritage of the landscape. A programme of training and volunteering opportunities for local people was also delivered, enhancing their ability to manage the landscape in the future.



A young volunteer uses a photographic guide at Strawberry Heath Nature Reserve, Rainworth. © Notts Wildlife Trust"



Payments for Ecosystem Services Review

The Biodiversity and Ecosystems Evidence Team at Defra has recently published a review of 11 pilots testing PES approaches which ran from 2011 to 2013 across the UK. Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) is a new method of encouraging investment in the environment. Under PES the beneficiaries of services provided by the ecosystem pay the providers. These 'ecosystem services' include water quality, carbon sequestration, recreation and flood mitigation. When land managers (the providers) are rewarded for the ecosystem services their land provides this incentivises better land management. For more information on PES click [here](#).

Following commitments set out in Defra's Natural Environment White Paper, the Ecosystems Evidence team has funded 3 rounds of pilot projects which aim to promote PES. We funded projects which would be easily replicable, demonstrate strong proof of concept and develop innovative PES methods. Pilot examples included; water companies paying farmers to improve water quality in a catchment, visitors donating to recreational areas and water treatment companies paying for wetland restoration to enhance natural waste management.

Water catchment PES shows the most promise as it provides cost effective water quality improvements. Promising innovations include the use of reverse auctions, which delivered cost savings of 20–40%, and an app where visitors can donate to recreational areas. Importantly, the work of a pilot on valuing carbon sequestration in peatland has motivated the IUCN to run a pilot peatland code. Interest in PES has been shown in a range of new contexts.

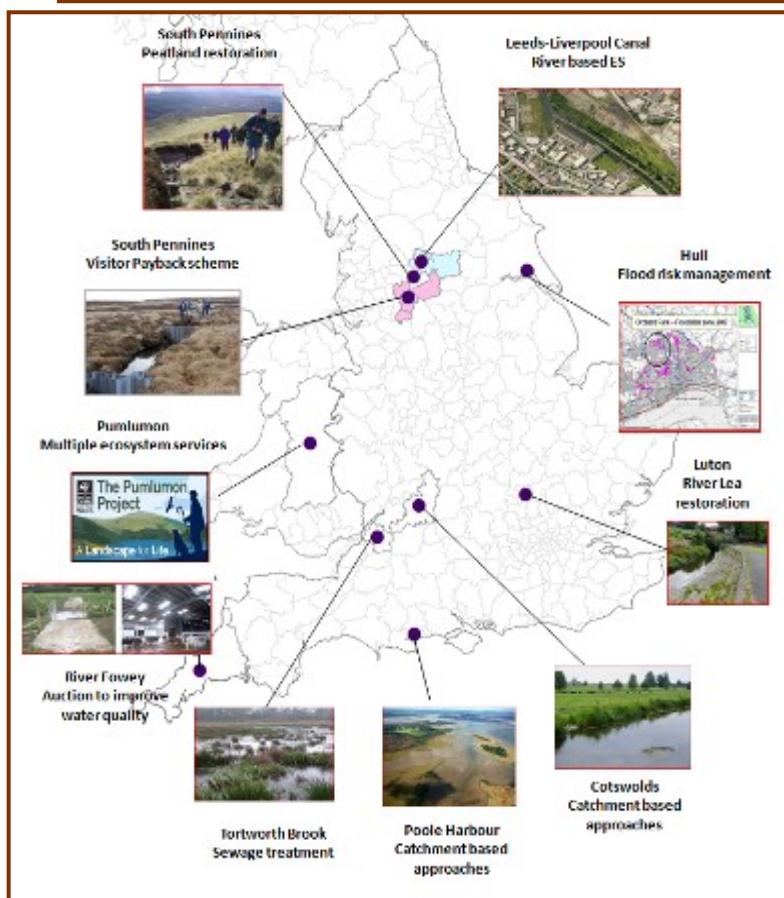
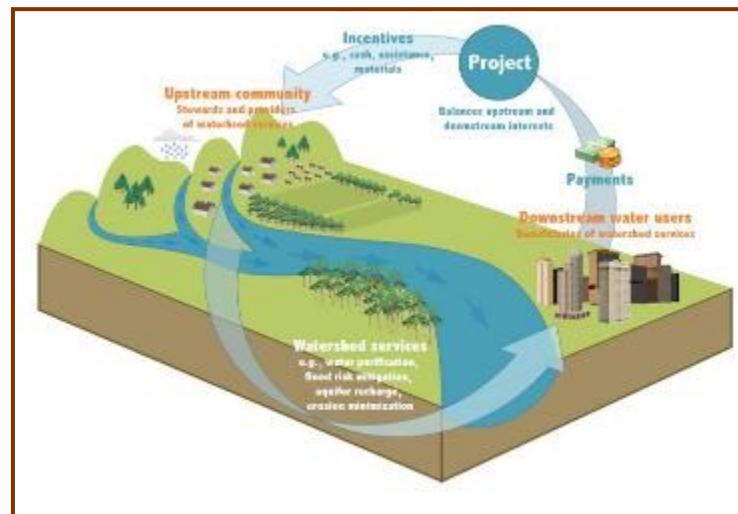
The majority of pilots were in the early stages of research and implementation. We found challenges and barriers to PES in the areas of regulation, co-ordination, awareness and financing. Our 3rd round of PES pilots have begun and are due to be completed in March 2015.

For further information on the pilot projects please contact [Helen Dunn](#).

The review can be found [here](#)

Separate reviews of each pilot project can be found [here](#) under the payments for ecosystems heading

Jessica Barnaby, Defra



Rounds 1 and 2 PES pilots



Pollinator Strategy for England

The [National Pollinator Strategy](#) was launched in November 2014, to protect the country's 1,500 or so insect species that fulfil a pollination role in England.

The Strategy recognises that pollinators face a wide range of environmental pressures (e.g. intensification of land use, pests and diseases, invasive species, pesticides) and some species are threatened. It also recognises that pollinators are vital to the diversity of our environment, our food production, and are valued by the public.

The Strategy is a shared plan between Government and stakeholders and sets out a framework for working together. It builds on current policies across Defra which support pollinators including habitat and species conservation, honeybee disease control programme, biodiversity, pesticides and environmental stewardship as well as initiatives and campaigns in many other organisations.

Evidence has shown that habitat and food source loss are key pressures influencing pollinator populations. As a result, many of the Strategy's priority actions are focused on increasing habitat, shelter and food sources.

The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England
November 2014

The Strategy aims to deliver across 5 key areas: (1) Supporting pollinators on farmland, (2) Supporting pollinators across towns, cities and the countryside, (3) Enhancing the response to pest and disease risks, (4) Raising awareness of what pollinators need to survive and thrive, (5) Improving evidence on the status of pollinators and the service they provide.

In taking action across these five areas, we want to achieve the following outcomes:

- ◆ More, bigger, better, joined-up, diverse and high-quality flower-rich habitats (including nesting places and shelter) supporting our pollinators across the country.
- ◆ Healthy bees and other pollinators which are more resilient to climate change and severe weather events.
- ◆ No further extinctions of known threatened pollinator species.
- ◆ Enhanced awareness across a wide range of businesses, other organisations and the public of the essential needs of pollinators
- ◆ Evidence of actions taken to support pollinators.

To accompany the Strategy, Defra also launched a 'Bees' Needs: Food and a Home' campaign in July 2014. This call to action is a simple message for all land managers on the essential needs of pollinators and how to best fulfil them. It outlines how a few simple changes to land management practices, such as leaving patches of land to grow wild and cutting grass less often, can result in a substantial difference for pollinators. To learn more about the call to action, please visit the Bees' Needs website at www.beesneeds.org.uk. We urge everyone to spread the Bees' Needs message and take up the call to action!

The Bees' Needs site mentioned above also has 'information sheets', which are detailed web-based advice for land managers on how to best implement the Bees' Needs advice on their land types. Current information sheets published on the site are: Gardens, Agriculture, Transport Corridors, Woodlands, and Industrial and Post-Industrial spaces. Additional sheets are being developed as part of our implementation plan.

Next Steps

Defra are currently working with Natural England and the Pollinator Advisory Steering Group (PASG), Defra's core stakeholder advisory forum, to develop an implementation plan for the Strategy. The implementation plan is expected to be published in 2015.



Continued...

The first implementation planning meeting with the Pollinator Advisory Steering Group (PASG), the core stakeholder advisory forum, was held on 8 December 2014.

PASG is the same group of stakeholders with whom we worked during development of the Strategy.

A central focus of the programme will be developing a coordinated communications plan in collaboration with the Pollinator Advisory Steering Group (PASG) by the end of January, including key events and opportunities for joint activities.

Pollinator colleagues will be providing input to Defra's emerging plans for the Milan Expo and the UK Pavilion's pollinator theme.



A European honey bee collects nectar, while pollen collects on its body.

Tasha Niesen, Policy Officer Defra

Features

Winter



Citizen Science Scheme celebrates 15 years of bat surveys with latest trends

Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) volunteers from across the UK have spent over 42,000 evenings monitoring bats, providing experts with essential data to build up a picture of populations, and the results do look promising for some species.

During the latter half of the 20th century, bat populations in the United Kingdom have been falling as a result of the impacts of humans on the environment, but the knowledge of the scale at which this has occurred is limited. In the effort to halt this decline, information on how bat populations change over time is vital. Established in 1996 as a partnership project between the Bat Conservation Trust, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales, with funding from the UK government and additional funding from Natural England, the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) aims to provide exactly that.

A recently published paper provides an overview of what has been achieved in the programme to date. Using data collected by over 3,500 volunteers following standardised survey methods, the NBMP is a long term citizen science scheme, which is designed to estimate bat population changes in the UK. Most NBMP surveys began in 1997, so we are now able to assess changes in bat populations over more than 15 years. We can now demonstrate how citizen science programmes, using trained volunteers to collect data in a standardised way, can successfully provide robust information that helps us to track changes in species populations across the UK.

In addition to bat data, NBMP volunteers are asked to record other information on variables that can influence the numbers and species of bats recorded, such as weather conditions, model of bat detector used, and the recorder's level of skill and experience; the impact of which was assessed, with the trends being adjusted to minimise any bias resulting from these factors. In order to help ensure more consistency between different volunteers, training workshops, online tutorials and other resources have been developed to give volunteers the necessary skills to carry out NBMP surveys. Recent analysis of the "power" of the trends to accurately detect change in populations has revealed that all trends calculated, with the exception of one species, have the ability to detect "Red Alert" declines, defined as declines of at least 50% over a 25 year period.

Results from the NBMP reveal a generally favourable picture for bats over the monitoring period; all species showed a stable or increasing trend from at least one survey type, although for four species where there

Summer roost counts of the common pipistrelle have seen decreases of over 50% since 1999. © Hugh Clark



were multiple trends from different survey types, the trend directions did not agree. This highlights the need for further analysis to aid interpretation of the trends. These recent increases in bat populations do need to be put into the context of the significant losses in bat populations experienced in the past and particularly in the latter half of twentieth century history.

Data from the NBMP also enable bats to be included in the UK government biodiversity indicators. Bat populations are considered to be a good indicator of the broad state of wildlife and landscape quality because they utilise a range of habitats across the landscape and are sensitive to pressures in the urban, suburban and rural environment.

Future directions for the NBMP include developing surveillance methods that will enable trends to be produced for rare or difficult to detect species such as barbastelle, Bechstein's bat and the grey long-eared bat. Currently the NBMP mainly focuses on species that are widespread and



Summer roost counts and winter hibernation counts of the lesser horseshoe bat have both revealed population increases between 1999 and 2012. © Janice Whittington"



Continued...

relatively common and can therefore be fairly easily detected and identified. Whilst the positive results from the programme indicate some signs of recovery among these more generalist bat species, we still need to find out more about the status of other bat species that have more specialist habitat needs.

More data are always needed by the NBMP in order to paint a clearer picture of trends in bat populations across the UK and at different scales including country and region. Anyone can take part in NBMP surveys, giving the opportunity to beginners and experts alike to contribute towards valuable datasets. This means that not only does the NBMP provide a statistically valid measure of the UK's bats, but it offers a way of connecting the public with wildlife, and raising awareness of conservation issues.

To find out more about the National Bat Monitoring Programme and how you can get involved please visit <http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/nbmp.html>

Demonstrating best-practice in mineral site restoration for nature

As 2014 drew to a chilly close, the team at Nature After Minerals (NAM) – the RSPB/Natural England partnership – took time to take stock and remember the wonderfully warm and busy Summer months with stakeholders galore out and about and reflecting on biodiversity-gain potential, during mineral site visits up and down the country (and overseas!).

These visits were part and parcel of a series of events NAM (under the INTERREG IVB NWE Programme-funded RESTORE project) ran in order to share and promote best practice in mineral site restoration for a nature conservation outcome. Sites which are quarried, then restored in the right way, have great potential to deliver priority habitat creation to enhance biodiversity and provide valuable resources for people to re-connect with and support nature on their doorsteps.

There were 8 best-practice demonstration events, altogether; run throughout July, September and the beginning of October. They enabled NAM to engage directly with 210+ individuals from the minerals industry, ecological and planning consultancies, mineral planning authorities, eNGOs, local communities and statutory bodies.

Feedback received suggested attendees appreciated the opportunity to network with colleagues from complimentary sectors and take on board practical advice and experience-sharing on minerals restoration for biodiversity, from experts and practitioners in the field. They also welcomed the means to visit mineral sites which they might not have otherwise been able to see, to view techniques and restoration options, up close.

Topics covered at the events ranged from practical advice on habitat creation and management – such as floodplain forest and a consideration of the biodiversity features which can be incorporated within agricultural restorations – through to the merits of natural regeneration of sites on the one hand and the planning and liaison required – on the other – to restore mineral sites for nature conservation on a possible landscape scale.

One of the key objectives of the RESTORE project is to share best-practice in minerals restoration, across northwest Europe. With this in mind, attendees were most interested to visit a number of sites in the wider Maastricht conurbation during the last demonstration event, to see how minerals extraction and restoration



© Debra Royal"



Continued...

is handled in the Netherlands. Given the town's proximity to the River Maas (Meuse), minerals extraction and restoration play a big part in providing a flood alleviation service to the local communities in the area, as well as creating valuable habitats for wildlife.

Plans are underway to hold some additional events next Spring, most notably to include visits to a number of sites in Northern Ireland where RESTORE's Minerals Restoration Adviser is based. This event will take place in Cookstown and will aim to bring together representatives from the minerals industry, planning, conservation sector and other key stakeholders, in the area. Details for this event will be released in due course on the NAM website www.afterminerals.com and the RESTORE website www.restorequarries.eu

For any further information on NAM events, contact: Debra Royal, NAM Events & Communications Officer at debra.royal@rspb.org.uk.

Please check the events page (25) for more information on RESTORES event.



Debra Royal, Events and Communications Officer

Green (Shoots) and Red (Squirrels)

BASC's Green Shoots North Wales project has been running since 2006 and involves working with the shooting community and partners to target conservation effort on land which is shot over, in order to achieve public conservation targets. It has been extremely successful in linking shooters and non-shooting conservation organisations for the benefit of all wildlife, delivering practical habitat creation and management.

One strand of the project has been to help conserve the remaining red squirrel populations in North Wales through targeted control of grey squirrels in key areas and endeavoring to find evidence of reds where we think they still exist.

Grey squirrels are one of the most common wild mammals that the public see. Many woodlands and public parks have a population and many people like to see them visit their gardens. Having been first introduced to the UK from the USA in 1876 as a novelty by Cheshire banker Thomas Brocklehurst they have been extremely successful in spreading throughout the country, causing a range of problems. They cause damage to timber crops by ring barking and killing trees, they eat bird's eggs and damage both domestic and game bird feeders. However, more emotively, they are responsible for the spread of Squirrel Pox – a virus that does not affect greys but kills red squirrels. Where there are grey squirrels present, young reds have difficulty in setting up new territories and expanding the population.

What are BASC doing?

Greys have no real predators (although recent research in Ireland suggests that pine marten might have an impact!). While desperate foxes will eat them, generally they seem to be unpalatable to most predators and so the most effective method of control is by human intervention.

In North Wales, BASC are working with the Red Squirrels Trust Wales and the Mammals in Sustainable Environment Project to help conserve the remaining red squirrel populations. MISE have installed bait feeders and cameras to try to find evidence that there are still red squirrel populations in a couple of our forests. RSTW have worked closely with us training members and others to expand the grey squirrel control net-



© Audrey Watson, BASC, setting up a remote camera over a bait feeder"



Continued...



Dr Craig Shuttleworth of RSTW on a joint training day demonstrating a live capture trap"

work around red squirrel areas.

Where BASC do know there are reds, we are training members in how to trap and legally despatch grey squirrels. BASC also loan live capture traps to those wishing to take part.

The main areas being focused on at present are around Clocaenog and Cynwyd and Corwen Forests, and on the mainland side of the Menai Strait to protect the population of reds on Anglesey, which are now making their way over to the mainland and spreading into neighbouring valleys.

Over the last 18 months, more than 40 traps have been installed in these key areas and more than 350 grey squirrels culled by members and volunteers, with additional culls of nearly 70 by contractors in state-owned forests. Greys are controlled in other areas but we hope that a co-ordinated effort around our remaining populations will help to conserve the red squirrels that are trying to hang on and spread in North Wales.

Audrey Watson
North Wales Biodiversity Officer

BASC are looking to expand this work in continued partnership with Natural Resources Wales.

Biodiversity in the construction sector - BIG Challenge Awards

Launched in October 2013, the BIG Biodiversity Challenge 'do one thing' invites organisations to add one new biodiversity enhancement to their construction site, development or existing building. It is an initiative from CIRIA*, the construction industry research and information association.

Following submission of 119 case studies the judging process took place on 3 October 2014 at CIRIA's offices. Members of the CIRIA Biodiversity Interest Group formed the judging panel and had the difficult task of choosing the winner from across each of the seven categories.

On 14 October 2014 the inaugural BIG Challenge Awards took place at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. Tony Juniper, leading British campaigner and environmentalist provided a key note address highlighting that "There is an increasing realisation that biodiversity has to be conserved in the built environment as it is predicted more of us will be living in an urban setting in the future. Many of the benefits associated with biodiversity come from it being close to people, adding to our quality of life. That interaction with nature is only going to be possible to maintain if we conserve and increase biodiversity in our towns and cities"

Seven category winners were highlighted and awarded on the evening, with the biodiversity scheme for the new Pirbright Institute complex in Surrey receiving the overall prize. The judging committee referred to the great variety and truly bio-diverse enhancements on site, reuse of materials, long-term management and staff engagement, and simple yet effective ideas.

The full list of winners and submitted case studies is available to view on the BIG Biodiversity Challenge website.

www.bigchallenge.info



Enhancements at Pirbright Institute"

Features

Winter



Continued...

Overall Winner/Large Scale Permanent

Project name: Populating and pollinating Pirbright's pastures

Location: Pirbright, Surrey

Company: The Pirbright Institute

Populating and pollinating Pirbright's pastures is a project that has shown extensive consideration beyond normal business practice through a variety of features. This includes designated areas for wildlife, biodiversity enhancement and encouragement along with several mini biodiversity projects.

As part of enhancement management plans a native planting policy has been implemented with over 3,000 native plant species included with the construction and landscaping plans. Further enhancement measures include maintaining field margins, less frequent mowing of meadows and opening up woodland with the removal of dense scrub. Longer term plans include the creation of a five acre wild flower meadow upon completion of construction works in 2020.



"Enhancements at Pirbright Institute"

The provision of grounds for wildlife alongside this major built development, and the long-term management plan to ensure a lasting impact has demonstrated The Pirbright Institute's commitment and investment in biodiversity.

*CIRIA is the construction industry research and information association, and independent and not-for-profit organisation promoting best practice and sustainability in the built environment and construction sectors.

www.ciria.org

Ruth Hynes, Network Manager CIRIA



CIRIA's biodiversity interest group & Tony Juniper"



Features

Winter



£725,200 for Natural Networks



© The Conservation Volunteers

The Conservation Volunteers have received a grant of £725,200 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for their Natural Networks project. Launched in Autumn 2014, the project aims to develop skills to facilitate the 'green network' of sites considered essential for the effective conservation of biodiversity, creating a UK wide web of expertise in managing and engaging people in ecological networks.

The project will develop the skills of 32 trainees and help hundreds of communities across the UK to understand, value, protect and increase the biodiversity of their local green places.

The first group of 15 trainees with a passion for environmental conservation have now been recruited and are gaining practical experience, skills and knowledge with The Conservation Volunteers and/or a range of local authority and environmental sector partners at locations around the UK. Eight are based in England, five in Scotland and two in Northern Ireland. In England, the trainees are helping local people to "join in, feel good" at green spaces around Ashford in Kent, London Borough of Haringey, Birmingham, Leeds, Greater Manchester, South Gloucestershire, York and The National Forest Visitor Centre. Each receives a non-taxable bursary of £11,900.

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in Scotland, said: "Our natural heritage is one of our greatest national assets. Through supporting these work-based placements, we are not only giving people the experience and skills to pursue a career in its conservation but also helping communities across the UK to understand, value, and protect the biodiversity on their doorstep. It is no surprise that our Skills for the Future programme is ex-

tremely popular and we congratulate The Conservation Volunteers for developing a project which is sure to ignite a passion for our natural world in communities across the country."

For further information, contact: a.morrow@tcv.org.uk



The UK and... The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation

A new report looks at how we're measuring up against our targets.

**'All wildlife – bees, birds, butterflies, bats and bugs – relies on plants. End of.
The GSPC is the route map to conserving not only this heritage but our future'**
Ben McCarthy, Head of Conservation, Plantlife

WHAT?

Adopted by the UK government in 2002, The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) lays down 16 targets to achieve by 2020. Published on the eve of their 25th anniversary, Plantlife's new report analyses the progress: not doing too badly is the encouraging answer... but (of course) some major hurdles to overcome.

Features

Winter



Continued...



© Rachel De Thame.

Who?

The work is being done through the Plant Link network, chaired by Plant-life. This extraordinary partnership ranges from big guns such as the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Natural England, through to dedicated work done by tiny botanical societies.

ON TARGET

The UK probably has the best documented flora in the world, with nearly 6,000 species of flowers, mosses and lichens mapped and monitored. This is an incredible conservation achievement; there are just 557 butterflies, birds and bees in the whole of Britain.

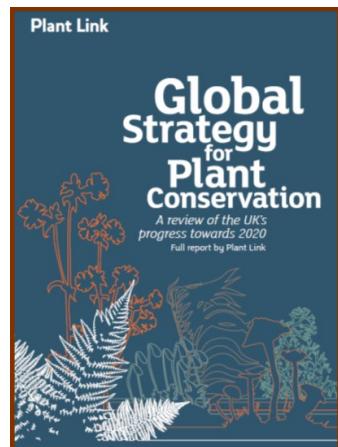
Over 75% of our threatened flora is stored in seed banks and seeds and plants are being used to restore populations in the wild.

96% of our globally significant Important Plant Areas (IPAs) such as the New Forest IPA, are covered by statutory protection.

BELOW TARGET

Major habitats are not being managed well enough. Just 4% of our woodland, 8% of heathland and 11% of grasslands are in 'favourable' conservation condition.

95% of threatened plants in England and Wales are found on farmland and in woodland, yet current agri-environment schemes are largely failing these species



Threatened species continue to decline: 72 species, including golden-eye lichen and corn marigold, are not prioritised for action. Some that are, like spreading bellflower and field gentian, continue on the path towards extinction.



© Rachel De Thame and Peter Ainsworth, Plantlife's president.

Occurrences of invasive non-natives such as American skunk-cabbage have doubled in the wild, piling pressure on wildlife sites. And they are still on sale...

Our experts are as threatened as the plants and fungi they work hard to conserve. There are more Pandas in British zoos than there are lichenologists employed by agencies, museums and botanic gardens.

Dr Trevor Dines, one of the report authors explains, "Our wild plants – from the known and beloved to the secret and slimy – are nature's building blocks and we ignore them at our peril. The UK has the knowledge and expertise, so why aren't we seeing a recovery in our flora? The clear message from this report is management, management, management – protection is not enough. The support of Government is vital in helping the myriad organisations working towards GSPC achieving success."

Justina Simpson
Publicity Manager

Local & Regional

Winter



Monitoring a changing landscape

In the middle of Hertfordshire just north of St Albans the Woodland Trust has embarked on Heartwood – the largest native woodland creation scheme in England. Since 2009 350ha of arable farmland is being converted to woodland and open habitats, linking three existing ancient woodlands. Planting and site maintenance is largely carried out by volunteers and, in this highly populated part of south east England, the site is already attracting over 185,000 visitors per year.

Coordinated by the Hertfordshire Natural History Society (HNHS), a small team of enthusiasts has set about monitoring the impacts of these changes on the site's biodiversity. Starting before any planting, we have monitored birds using BTO Breeding Bird Survey and BirdTrack methods and butterflies using Butterfly Conservation transects. Teams led by the University of Hertfordshire are also looking at other invertebrates, small mammals and flora. In collaboration with nearby Rothamsted Research we have collected baseline soil samples and set up some really long term plots for monitoring over the next century or so. We are also monitoring how the planted trees are developing and how the different planting methods have worked out.

Although still early days, with only around 3/4 of the site planted by 2014, the biodiversity changes are already remarkable. Breeding birds and butterfly numbers have more or less doubled in the six years we have been monitoring and there are signs small mammal populations are doing well. The site is still very open, with small saplings, grassland and weed rich areas, so ironically it is now a county hotspot for farmland birds. The butterflies that have so far done well are those associated with grasslands. All this is likely to change as the site becomes more mature but we are now in a good position to monitor these changes.

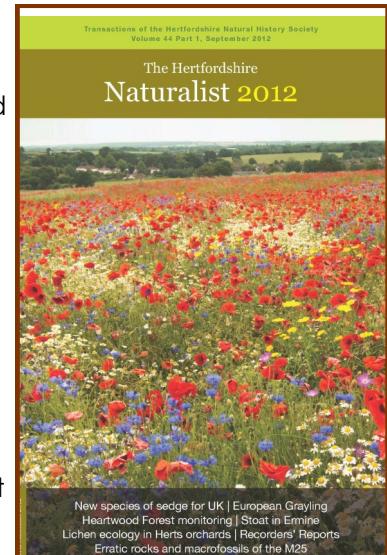
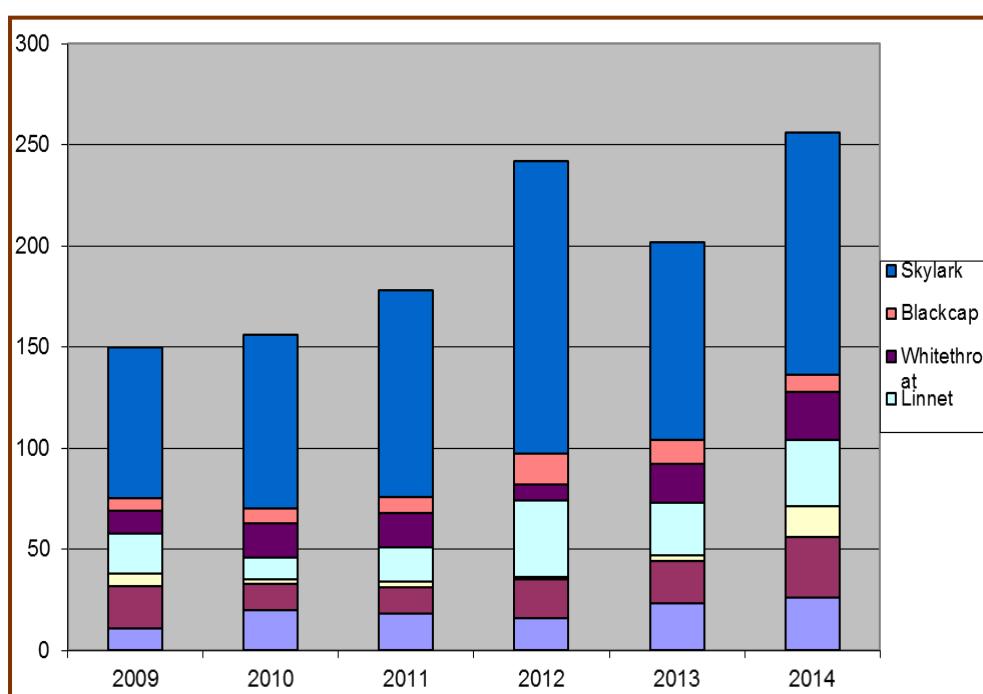
Details of the monitoring programme were published in the *Hertfordshire Naturalist* (Smith et al. 2012) and can also be found on the HNHS website (www.hnhs.org).

This programme has only been possible because of the strong support and encouragement from the Woodland Trust and their staff but we should also thank the volunteers who do most of the work. The Woodland Trust Heartwood project is supported by individual donors, Disney Store UK, charitable trusts, Biffa Award, Veolia and the Forestry Commission

Linda Smith, Ken Smith & Brian Legg

Smith, L, Gravestock, L, Legg, B, Moss, J, Mowe, J, Shortall, C, Smith, K, Steele, A & Wright, T, (2012). Long-term monitoring at Heartwood Forest. *Trans HNHS (The Hertfordshire Naturalist 2012)* 44(1), 56-67.

Ken Smith and Louise Neicho,
Woodland Trust





Kielder Road Verge 'Nectar Network' project

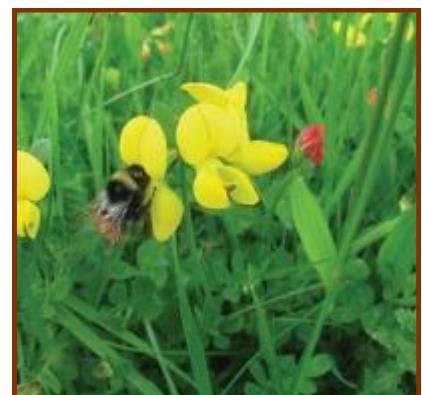
The Border Uplands is a landscape-scale partnership and a near-miss Nature Improvement Area. It is a massive area of the Northumberland uplands including the North Tyne valley, Redesdale and upper Coquetdale – all of which border on to Scotland. About half the area is inside Northumberland National Park.

The landscape is heather moorland, blanket bog, hay meadows, woodland and upland streams. Farm-land is grazed with sheep, the odd alpaca, and cattle. Parts of the area are conifer plantation. Thinking about a landscape-scale, pollinators are a perfect example of where man-made organisational or political boundaries shouldn't matter. Partnerships can help nature be resilient.

A survey of the road verge around Kielder Water, which is acting as a wildlife corridor for bees and other invertebrates, has been carried out as part of the project. Many people mentioned to us the importance of this verge and the fact it was getting taken over by scrub. We wanted to know which parts of the verge may need practical work to keep the corridor intact.

Kielder Water is Europe's largest man-made lake, constructed in the 1970s and completed in 1981. The road, built at the same time, needed turves in places to form the side of the verge. People say that soil was taken from good quality meadows in the area now underwater, so there are some good verges with an interesting history.

The verge runs between Kielder and Falstone and is 19 miles long (or 43 hectares!). It makes an excellent corridor to help species move about the uplands and fill any "hungry gaps" in the nectar calendar. In Northumberland National Park, one particularly iconic species is the mountain bumblebee (*bombus monticola*) – which uses the nectar of moorland plants (bilberry and heather) in season, but at other times looks for upland hay meadows and – in the early or late season – will look for willow scrub or ivy.



© Abi Mansley.



© Abi Mansley.

The survey took place three times between April and August in 2014, assessing each parcel of verge for its species-interest, and made recommendations aimed at keeping them that way. A local botanist with a previous long career in conservation work was employed for the survey. Areas where scrub-control is needed was mapped and the amount of practical work required was estimated, together if it would be suitable for volunteers or for contractors. The best areas were highlighted as possible "seed banks" where volunteers could collect seed in summer for scattering or growing-on.

We divided the 19 miles of verge into 140 parcels. We needed a way of assessing the quality of each verge parcel. For this, we combined two sources of information:

- ◆ a range of plant species that are known to be good for nectar and
- ◆ plant species that are either early or late flowering, to help pollinators at 'hungry' times of year.

Initially drawing together a list of flowers that are good for nectar was difficult (as there seemed to be no existing list published and through talking to various people, the list grew and grew!) So, we built up our own basic list of nectar-species that would actually be found on this upland verge habitat – which was mostly similar to NVC MG3, a typical upland grassland type for Northern England.

We selected from this list a combination of early and late flowering species, as well as some from the middle of the season. We ended up with a list of 14 species that we wanted to use to assess the quality of

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Winter



each parcel. Our list of species was: Angelica, Bugle, Cats' Ear, Lesser Celandine, Red Clover, White Clover, Ox-Eye Daisy, Ling Heather, Knapweed, Ladies' Smock, Meadowsweet, Self-Heal, Marsh Thistle, Birds' Foot Trefoil, Meadow Vetchling, Willow.

As the surveyor was noting down the abundance of species within each parcel, we used this as a weighted scoring system – in fact quality scores ranged from 2 at the lowest to 39 at the highest.

This quality score was then used to see which verges were already relatively good –where to ask the council for a later cut of the first metre. Having an overview of the verge scores, through looking on summary maps, may also highlight where two neighbouring reasonable-quality verges are near from a poorer area that has recommended scrub-control works.

We have already asked the council to mark this stretch of road as suitable for later cuts. The next step is to agree on the priority areas for scrub removal work and secure permission from the relevant landowners, then to find the funding for that work to happen.

We were also interested in working with local communities where they care about their own verges. We thought about developing a survey technique where quiet country lanes could be surveyed by bicycle. Most local people seem to prefer surveying during summer evening dog walks. Some of the best flowers for bees and butterflies are ones which are sometimes overlooked because they are common, such as red clover, yellow rattle, bird's foot trefoil and the early pollen on shrubs like goat willow, or autumn flowers on ivy. We'd like to be able to delay the cutting of verges (apart from the safety metre) that communities identify as their priorities.



As a result of publicising this survey, colleagues from as far afield as Northern Ireland and Jersey have got in touch to ask for more information. It is great to share news about the project.

Also more history of the verges has come to light, thanks to members of the public getting in touch. This all adds to the picture. Some of the people who worked on the Kielder road and dam still live locally. It turns out that some verges were seeded as well as turfed. We contacted the original contracting company, who still had one of the original employees. He believed that turves would also have been created as part of the road construction, which would have been stockpiled and reused, as sections of the road were completed.

© Abi Mansley.

Abi Mansley,
Border Uplands Project Coordinator



© Abi Mansley.



Community science project awarded £600K from HLF

Innovative monitoring project awarded £600,000 in Lottery funding

A Community Science Project in the Peak District and South Pennines that will encourage local people and visitors to get involved in caring for their local moors has been awarded over £600k in funding.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant has been given to the innovative moorland conservation specialists, Moors for the Future Partnership (MFFP), to expand and develop their Community Science Project that will help shape future national climate change initiatives.

This exciting scheme allows volunteers of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to learn new skills, have fun, get closer to nature and make a real difference to the future of our iconic upland moorlands.

The funding will support the expansion and development of the programme providing volunteers with the opportunity to learn and participate in 'Citizen Science' and improve scientific understanding of how the Peak District and South Pennine Moorlands are affected by a range of environmental factors.

Vanessa Harbar, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands says: "The moors are a much-loved, beautiful landscape and the work to restore them over the last decade is a real success story.

"We're delighted to continue supporting this pioneering work – helping to send hundreds of volunteers out across the length and breadth of the back-bone of England to gather data to inform land management practices.

"It will provide an incredibly useful insight into how habitats are changing, increasing understanding and informing future priorities."

During the next three years, and beyond, the Community Science Project will provide:

- ◆ A sustainable community volunteer programme for participants to learn, develop new skills and enjoy 'their' moorland heritage
- ◆ Invaluable scientific data on wildlife and climate change impacts in the region
- ◆ Data and knowledge which can be shared with conservation organisations at local, regional and national levels

Environment Agency Board member Dr Clive Elphick said: "This project is a key example of how partnership working can galvanise the public in the fight against climate change.

"Local communities have a vital role to play in monitoring the health of their local moors and helping to collect scientific data.

"We have been supportive of the project since it was launched and are pleased to see it go from strength to strength."

The first phase of the project has seen:

- * A total of 18 Bumblebee Targeted Monitoring training events, with 158 volunteer surveyors trained; totalling 632 volunteer hours.
- * Established 20 Targeted Monitoring transects each 1km in length at 10 locations, of which 8km were set up with partner volunteer organisations (National Trust, RSPB, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Trans Pennine Trail) to consolidate the project legacy.
- * From two communities 26 volunteers (total of 184 volunteer hours) set up two Environmental Monitoring sites in Edale and Holme.
- * Hundreds of bird and butterfly surveys have been carried out looking for three

Emma Downes
Moors for the Future



© Volunteers are at the very heart of the Community Science Project. Pictured are a group of university students on site carrying out moorland monitoring work.

© Villagers get hands-on monitoring their local moorland sites.





Continued...

specific types.

The project builds on the groundbreaking restoration work of the Moors for the Future Partnership which was formed in 2003 with the help of a £3.1million grant from HLF.

Seeking to undo 200 years of damage caused by industrial processes, the partnership has pioneered work to restore bare and eroding peat and protect blanket bog.

It has now become one of the largest moorland conservation programmes in Europe.

To find out more visit www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk or if you are interested in getting involved as a volunteer email MoorCitizens@peakdistrict.gov.uk or visit our Facebook page MoorCitizens or follow up us on Twitter @MoorCitizens.

The partnership and project is led by the Peak District National Park Authority and supported through its partners including the Environment Agency, Natural England, National Trust, United Utilities, Severn Trent Water, Yorkshire Water and RSPB. In addition, the partnership has been working with Stockholm Environment Institute, York University, to develop engagement and survey work.



© Jane Price (pictured at the front) is enjoying her new volunteer role as a MoorCitizen.

Efforts underway to improve monitoring and surveillance of amphibians & reptiles in the New Forest

A variety of governmental and non-governmental bodies involved in conservation in the New Forest have come together to develop a monitoring and surveillance project for amphibians and reptiles both common and rare. The project has been termed The New Forest Amphibian and Reptile Monitoring and Surveillance Project (New Forest ARMS Project).

Paul Edgar, Senior Environmental Specialist (Amphibians & Reptiles) at Natural England said – “The New Forest National Park is one of the most important areas in Britain for amphibians and reptiles. This new monitoring and surveillance project has been set up as a collaborative effort to ensure that all Herpetofauna monitoring requirements are being adequately met and co-ordinated.”

Initial project partners include the following bodies with representation expected to expand in due course:

- Natural England
- Amphibian & Reptile Conservation
- The New Forest National Park Authority
- The Forestry Commission
- The National Trust
- The New Forest Land Advisory Service
- The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust



© Nick Moulton (ARC).

Terms of reference have been prepared which define the projects purpose as follows: to set the strategy and direction for the group, promote the groups aims to other relevant stakeholders and volunteers and to raise funds to support the groups aims where necessary.

For more information: Dr John Wilkinson (Science Programme Manager), Amphibian and Reptile Conservation via john.wilkinson@arc-trust.org



UK Biodiversity Indicators 2014

It's that time of year again, when we can announce that the most recent (2014) update of the UK biodiversity indicators (*UK Biodiversity Indicators 2014*) has been published (4 December 2014). More details can be found on the UK Biodiversity Indicators web-pages (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ukbi/>).

The UK Biodiversity Indicators have been updated every year since 2007, and provide an overview of biodiversity trends in the UK, showing changes in a number of different aspects of biodiversity, such as population sizes of particular species, government expenditure on biodiversity, and the area of land managed for wildlife.

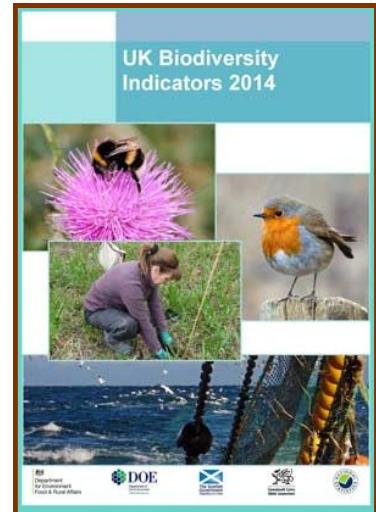
As previously mentioned in Biodiversity News (Issue 56), the UK Biodiversity Indicators have undergone a review over the past 3–4 years, firstly to align them to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets set out in the [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#), adopted at the 10th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2010; and secondly to ensure that they continue to be based on the most robust and reliable available data.

As a result of the review, the biodiversity indicator suite has been expanded, and now includes 24 indicators, consisting of 47 measures. Some of these measures are still under development, but it is anticipated that the suite will be completed over the next few years. Several new indicators have been published for the first time in the 2014 update.

The UK Biodiversity Indicators can be used to report on progress towards meeting UK and international commitments, and formed a key part of the [UK's 5th National Report to the CBD](#) in 2014, providing evidence on progress towards meeting the Aichi Targets and implementation of the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020*.

The indicators are produced from a huge amount of data, provided by a number of organisations working together, including government departments, the statutory nature conservation bodies (SNCBs), research institutes, and non-governmental organisations. Without the collaboration of all of these organisations, the publication wouldn't be possible.

Regular updates and details of progress on the UK Biodiversity Indicators will be available on the [UK Biodiversity Indicators](#) web-pages. Be sure to visit them to see the latest information, and to re-visit them in the near future to keep up-to-date with the changes being made.



Emma Durham,
JNCC

Publications

Winter



Ecosystems Knowledge Network

It is hard to keep up with the evolving language in ecosystem management and to see how this relates to nature conservation. Terms such as ecosystem services and natural capital are increasingly popular in many quarters.

They are putting ideas from earlier decades back in the spotlight and are stimulating new conversations about the relationship between people and nature. In some cases, the thinking behind the language is leading to new partnerships and actions 'on the ground'.

The Ecosystems Knowledge Network website continues to grow as the place to see how ideas in ecosystem management are being applied in practice in line with the ecosystem approach (as adopted by Convention on Biological Diversity). The Network website contains profiles of over 50 projects UK-wide that are showing what 'new' thinking in ecosystem management means in practice. It contains an array of links to practical tools and guidance.

Visit <http://ecosystemsknowledge.net>. Follow the link on the homepage to register for free as a member.

Ecosystems
Knowledge
Network

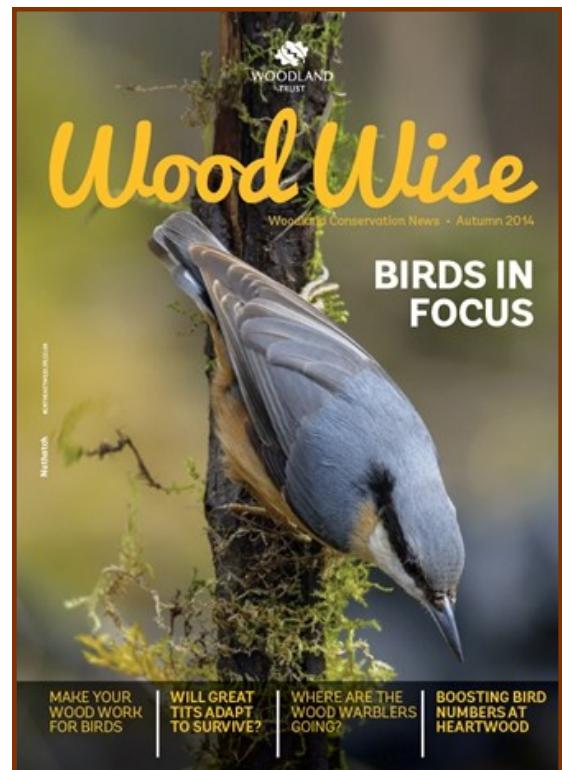
Wood Wise: Birds in focus

The UK's iconic woodland birds have suffered declines in recent years – particularly woodland specialists.

This edition of Wood Wise focuses on the issues affecting them and work being done to support and better understand their needs.

Woodland management requirements for birds and the effects of deer are discussed alongside adaptability to climate change, the loss of wood warblers, and the impacts of habitat creation.

To read current and past issues of Wood Wise just follow this [link](#). If you would like to subscribe to future issues, please email Conservation@woodlandtrust.org.uk





Upland Biodiversity Conference: 3rd–5th March 2015

The Moors for the Future Partnership announce a 'Save the Date' for their conference: 'An Integrated Approach to Upland Biodiversity conservation' in Halifax on 3 and 4 March 2015, with field trips on 5 March 2015.

National keynote speakers from the peatland and upland community will be presenting at the two day event which will bring together practitioners, policy makers, researchers and communicators.

The event will provide opportunities for delegates to share knowledge and best practice of biodiversity conservation across uplands, particularly the South Pennine Moors SAC. There will be discussions on strategies for conserving upland biodiversity, an update on the status of key species, and an overview of the ecosystem service benefits of upland biodiversity conservation initiatives. The event will also include sessions on communications and engagement activities.



© Photo of one of our project sites – Black Hill.

On the final day, field trips will be arranged to Black Hill and Rishworth Common where the five year MoorLIFE project has undertaken conservation works to protect 2,500 hectares of moorland in the Peak District and South Pennines.

The conference, organised by the Moors for the Future Partnership, will take place at Dean Clough Mill – formerly the largest textile mill in the UK which, in the past, would have contributed to the pollution that has damaged vast areas of the Peak District and South Pennines.

More details, including registration arrangements, will be available soon at
www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/moorlife-final-conference

UK's major political parties to present their environmental commitments at a manifesto debate: 9th March 2015

The Light, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Debate chaired by Jonathan Dimbleby

To follow updates of the event on Twitter use
#EnvAnyQs

With the 2015 General Election just months away, how will the UK's largest political parties seek to secure a sustainable future for the natural environment?

Join the Sibthorp Trust, the British Ecological Society, and the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management on Monday 9 March 2015 for 'People, Politics and the Planet – Any Questions? A pre-election debate on the environmental policies of the UK's major political parties chaired by Jonathan Dimbleby'.

Chaired by leading broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby, the debate will give the public a unique opportunity to question representatives of the UK's major political parties on the environmental commitments in their election manifestos.

Following a brief opening statement from each party, the panellists will participate in an 'Any Questions' style debate chaired by Jonathan Dimbleby, and then attendees will be able to put their questions to the panel. Questions from the audience will be selected from those submitted in advance upon registration.

To register and book tickets visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/people-politics-and-the-planet-any-questions-tickets-14696837637>.



11th National Heathland Conference

Wed 18th – Fri 20th March 2015

Location: De Vere Venues, Sunningdale Park, Larch Avenue, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 0QE

The conference will be the first held since 2008 and offers a great opportunity for face-to-face networking and to catch up with developments in heathland management and research.

Topics to include:

- Heathland restoration
- Grazing heathland, the SWT approach
- Surveying and monitoring on a large scale, the latest research
- Meeting challenges and conflicts with other uses
- Living landscapes and the role of golf courses
- Ecosystem services

To register your interest and for further information please email: heathland.conference@surreywildlifetrust.org.uk
surreywildlifetrust.org/nhc2015

Hosted by Surrey Wildlife Trust

Endorsed by: Natural England, the RSPB & Footprint Ecology



RESTORE final conference

17-18 June 2015 in Brussels

The RESTORE project - aiming to develop a framework for minerals restoration to benefit biodiversity, habitats and local people across northwest Europe – will hold its final conference on 17 & 18 June 2015, in Brussels.

The conference will afford an opportunity for debate and discussion on all aspects of mineral site restoration and to share and update knowledge on best practice in this area.

Focusing on the key themes of the project's work programme areas – policy into practice; restoration best-practice; evaluating ecosystem services – Day 1 of the conference will disseminate the outputs of the project through presentations and posters, with visits to two restored sites planned for Day 2 of the conference.

Visit [Final Conference - RESTORE](#) to view the Save the Date flyer; details of the conference and to register interest in attending.

Full details of the conference programme will be released in due course.

To register your interest in attending, contact: restoreconference@prvlimburg.nl

Further details of the RESTORE project are available at its website: www.restorequarries.eu

Check out their article on page 11 - Demonstrating best-practice in mineral site restoration for nature





Wilder by Design? - Managing landscape change and future ecologies

9th to 11th September 2015 at Sheffield Showroom & Workstation, Sheffield, UK.

This major international conference organised by Professor Ian Rotherham and colleagues, is sponsored and supported by: BANC, BES, IPS, IUFRO, ESEH, Sheffield Hallam University, the Ancient Tree Forum and the Landscape Conservation Forum. It follows on from the successful event in May 2014 which covered a range of perspectives across the wilding debate.

In 2015, the themes will be expanded to look critically at projects, issues and perspectives from across the world as well as in the UK. The conference will examine concepts of cultural severance and the nature of eco-cultural landscapes as well as addressing critical issues around (re) wilding in both rural and urban situations. The paradigms of wilder landscapes and the interactions between nature and culture, between history and ecology, and between climate, people and nature, will make for a continuing and rich discussion.

Speakers already confirmed include Adrian Newton, Alastair Driver, Peter Bridgewater, Ted Green, Keith Alexander, Jill Butler, Della Hooke, Rob Lambert, George Peterken, Peter Taylor, Sue Everett, Chris Spray, Tomasz Samojlik, Kenneth Olwig, Frans Vera and Tom Williamson. Chris and Anne-Marie Smout will be attending as guests of honour.

The conference will include a poster presentation session for new researchers as well as displays and posters from more established organisations.

For more information visit: <http://www.ukeconet.org/>

A Life in Ecology – a celebration of the work and inspiration of Dr Oliver Gilbert pioneer ecologist.

14th November 2015 at Sheffield Hallam University (and field visit / River Don lectures on 13th November) Sheffield, UK.

It is ten years on from Ollie's premature death. This 2-day conference is being organised by Professor Ian Rotherham and Dr Paul Ardron both long-term friends and associates of the late Dr Oliver Gilbert to encompass his many interests and as a celebration of his contributions to urban ecology, lichenology, exotic plants, and urban and post-industrial landscapes over a period of 50 years.

Invited speakers will deliver papers relating to topics, which reflect some of Oliver's many interests that included 'alien' species, lichens, urban woodlands, and the flora associated with post-industrial sites. Oliver was one of the first academic ecologists to look in detail at the urban environment and he established terms such as 'the urban commons', and his book *The Ecology of Urban Habitats* still stands alone as the primary text in this field.

He also challenged much conventional thinking on the merits or otherwise of invasive aliens such as sycamore and Japanese knotweed. Along with George Barker, Oliver pioneered academic interest in urban habitats and in urban ecology.

Speakers confirmed so far include Penny Anderson, Dr Rob Francis, Dr Peter Shaw, Professor Melvyn Jones, Dr Anna Jorgensen and Dr John Barnatt; also approached include Dr Bruce Ing, Professor Mark Seaward and others. There will be a celebratory volume of conference papers from the event.

For more information visit: <http://www.ukeconet.org/>