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Policy-relevant information and reporting

JNCC aims to produce information products that will support the development and implementation of nature conservation policy

During the reporting year, much of our work in this programme was focussed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). Established in 1995, the UK BAP sets out a national strategy to halt biodiversity loss under the guidance of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We were closely involved in several strands of UK BAP-related work, some of which will bear fruit during the 2007-08 reporting year.

JNCC chairs and provides the secretariat for the Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group (BRIG), a sub-group of the UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee, which plays a key role in the provision of information to support the UK BAP. BRIG co-ordinated the first full review of UK BAP targets, which was completed in 2006 for all terrestrial, freshwater and coastal habitats, and for most species (see section 10). In addition, the group is taking the final steps in developing a new list of priority species and habitats, and identifying the necessary conservation action for these features.

JNCC also provides the secretariat for the Biodiversity Research Advisory Group (BRAG), which brings together researchers, practitioners and policy-makers to promote scientific research. During the reporting year, BRAG

launched its own website www.ukbrag.org and published strategy proposals for two research areas, genetic diversity and ecosystem function.

We have been working with Defra and other partners towards a comprehensive review of the UK BAP. JNCC's contribution to the process has been wide-ranging and included playing a prominent role in *Refreshing the UK Biodiversity Partnership*, a workshop organised by Defra to push forward the review process.

An important new component of JNCC's work is the UK Nature Barometer, which was launched in June as a part of the wildlife statistics area of our website. It pulls together biodiversity data from a wealth of sources, allowing for more comprehensive analyses than were previously possible. The barometer plots trends in the fortunes of 4,800 species. It contributes towards an assessment of rates of change in biodiversity and of the main pressures on species and habitats.

In addition, JNCC contributed to work led by Defra to produce indicators that will help measure progress towards the target to halt the loss of biodiversity in the European Union by 2010. The results of this work, *Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket*, will be published in 2007.

Upland peat bog

(Far left) JNCC contributes to a number of multi-partner research programmes. One example is the Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU, www.relu.ac.uk) research programme, a £40 million interdisciplinary programme that covers countryside and rural economy issues. It is led by Professor Philip Lowe of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, and sets out to bring together economics and the natural and social sciences to consider future choices for the management of the countryside. JNCC is a member of the programme's strategic advisory committee.

An example of RELU's recent work is a study that looked at how peatlands could act as carbon sinks, potentially storing large quantities of carbon per year if they were in good condition. Erosion caused by drainage, overgrazing and burning means that peatlands currently release carbon into the atmosphere.

RELU researchers concluded that if drainage ditches were blocked then peat could begin to re-form, storing carbon as it does so. The RELU team suggest that carbon offsetting companies could fund upland peat regeneration by selling offset to the public.

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Wildlife Statistics Online

(Left) JNCC's Stuart Ball (seated) demonstrates Wildlife Statistics Online.

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