



Adult female hen harrier bringing in prey
Circus cyaneus, Sutherland, Scotland

JNCC plays a central role in setting priorities for police and other agencies involved in the fight against wildlife crime. Current priorities include breaches of bans under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the illegal harvesting of freshwater pearls, and persecution of hen harriers and other moorland birds of prey.

The hen harrier *Circus cyaneus* is protected under both UK and European legislation, but continues to be persecuted throughout the UK. Grouse chicks are taken by hen harriers and though the species is recovering in parts of the UK, that recovery is not being seen in some areas where heather moorland is managed for shooting.



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> UK nature conservation advice

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We provide advice on policies, strategies and initiatives that have an impact on nature conservation across the UK as a whole

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is at the core of nature conservation in Great Britain (Northern Ireland is covered by its own Wildlife Order (1985)) and it requires that every five years the three GB conservation bodies – Natural England, the Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage – review two schedules of the Act that list protected species and recommend any changes that are thought to be necessary.

The GB conservation bodies carry out that duty working jointly through JNCC. The fourth Quinquennial Review was submitted to Government in 2002, and during this reporting year it acted upon that review's recommendations in respect of England

(Wales and Scotland are to make their own orders). Protection of the water vole *Arvicola terrestris* has been extended, while four other species – Roman snail *Helix pomatia*, spiny seahorse *Hippocampus guttulatus*, short-snouted seahorse *Hippocampus hippocampus* and angel shark *Squatina squatina* – join it on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

The fifth Quinquennial Review is now due, but it has been delayed during the UK Biodiversity Action Plan signposting exercise (see section 9, page 43). JNCC has now begun to consult a wide range of bodies for this fifth review and expects to make recommendations to ministers later this year. The Northern Ireland Wildlife Order is to be reviewed in 2008.



Landscape and ecosystems

Wenlock Edge, Shropshire

A growth area for JNCC is to formulate principles and advice on how nature conservation at the UK-level should be approached at the larger landscape scale. This burgeoning area is of interest to a range of partner organisations.

In bringing these together we will produce a set of guiding principles and definitions. Which species, habitats and protected sites are most at risk from landscape-scale deterioration in the face of climate change? How should we be managing landscapes to aid their conservation? Should the focus be on increasing connectivity and permeability or on improving the state and buffering of core areas? These are amongst the key questions to be addressed.



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During the reporting year, another priority for JNCC was to finalise a report on the status of the 167 UK habitats and species of European importance listed on the annexes of the Habitats Directive (see section 4, page 23).

Much of the work JNCC does in the area of nature conservation advice is developed in close partnership with the UK conservation bodies, often through specialist working groups, and with other partners. In June we set up a review of inter-agency working to identify opportunities to enhance joint work arrangements between JNCC and our colleagues in the country bodies. The review has been carried out by Professor David Hill of the Joint Committee, Professor Des Thompson of Scottish Natural Heritage and Dr Ian McLean of JNCC. They have identified options for improving joint working, which are now under consideration by the inter-agency Chief Scientists' Group.

One area of joint working concerns the impact of non-native species on UK biodiversity, which continues to be a key area of concern for JNCC. During the year we were involved in the development of an overall approach to the problem for Great Britain (other arrangements are in place for Ireland) through our involvement in the GB Non-native Species Programme Board, which is chaired by Defra. A new non-native species strategy has been developed and was launched in May 2008.

Wildlife crime continued to be an important issue during the year, and JNCC welcomed the new three-year funding package that has been secured for the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit. The unit, which is hosted by Lothian and Borders Police, gathers intelligence on national wildlife crime and provides analytical and investigative support to police and customs officers across the UK. We work closely with the unit, and JNCC's Ian McLean chaired the Wildlife Law Enforcement Working Group, which sets priorities and direction for the unit.



Topmouth gudgeon

Pseudorasbora parva

An audit published in 2005 reported more than 2,700 non-native species and hybrids present in England. Only a small minority become invasive, but those that do can pose a serious threat to both the environment and the economy. One example is the topmouth gudgeon *Pseudorasbora parva*, a small fish from south-east Asia that is thought to have been introduced to Britain through the pet trade.

The fish has been found at 32 locations in England and Wales, mainly in small lakes and ponds. Individuals mature in just a year and can reproduce several times, so in one season the gudgeon quickly establishes large populations at new sites. The species carries a parasite that is thought to pose a threat to native fish and also eats large quantities of vegetation, which upsets natural ecosystems.



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