



Gannet

Morus bassanus

The UK's seabird populations are well covered by censuses, which are carried out at 15-year intervals, and during the reporting year JNCC undertook a comprehensive review of our Seabird Monitoring Programme. The recommendations of this review will now be discussed with stakeholders.



© Michael Usher



> Surveillance and monitoring

10

Working with partners, JNCC tracks trends in plant and animal populations and the condition of protected sites to identify changes in UK biodiversity and geodiversity

High-quality information on the status of wildlife and habitats is essential to UK governments' efforts to achieve their nature conservation aims. JNCC plays a key role in gathering that information by supporting UK-level surveillance and monitoring schemes, many of them operated in partnership with other organisations. In all, 70 surveillance or monitoring schemes produce data, which are put to a wide range of uses, including fulfilling international reporting obligations, gauging the state of UK nature and establishing the effectiveness of conservation measures.

During the reporting year we continued to develop a new strategy for terrestrial biodiversity surveillance to improve the

evidence base for measuring the effectiveness of nature conservation efforts, guide policy and report on priorities. Its aim is to get better coverage for the limited resources available by re-balancing the UK's surveillance effort, reducing overlap and filling gaps in coverage. Currently, surveillance is highly focussed on birds and mammals, and the new strategy would shift the emphasis to less well served areas, such as plants and habitats. Our proposals were considered by the UK Biodiversity Standing Committee in April 2008.

A strategy for marine biodiversity surveillance is being developed as an integral part of the UK Marine Monitoring and Assessment Strategy, a process that JNCC is supporting.



Comma

Polygonia c-album

JNCC supports the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). Butterflies are amongst the best indicators of the state of the environment; their short life cycles and high sensitivity to environmental conditions can be used to determine impacts of land use change or climate change and provide insight on the effectiveness of biodiversity policies. UKBMS will develop long-term trends and interpretation of change, in both protected sites and the wider countryside, providing a more robust analysis of the state of UK butterflies and the thousands of insects that share similar ecological requirements.



© Helen Baker/ JNCC



While the future strategy for surveillance and monitoring was being worked on, JNCC has continued to support the range of ongoing species surveillance schemes. We work with a wide range of partners, such as the British Trust for Ornithology and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, and much of this information-gathering effort on the ground is carried out by volunteers.

A good example of the benefits of well-co-ordinated surveillance and monitoring is the Tracking Mammals Partnership (TMP). The partnership is made up of 25 organisations with a variety of interests in mammals.

During the year it issued its third annual update on the first major report on mammals' status and trends, which was published in 2005. TMP reports on population changes for 35 land mammals and can now give 25-year trends for some species. The 2008 update reports that 16 of the species covered are increasing in population, 11 are stable and six are declining; for two species the trends are unclear. Unfortunately, four of the 16 increasing species – common rat, grey squirrel, sika deer and muntjac – are non-native species.

During the reporting year we began a review of the scope of goose and swan monitoring in the UK by hosting a stakeholder workshop with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. We also hosted an expert workshop that looked at how vegetation sampling could be extended, which could help to improve surveillance of ecosystem functions, understanding of changes in habitat quality and detection of the impacts of environmental pressures.



Scottish wildcat *Felis sylvestris grampia*
Cairngorms National Park, Scotland

Monitoring the fortunes of mammals can be challenging, and the Tracking Mammals Partnership is working to improve data collection. During the year the Mammal Society, supported by JNCC, piloted a range of field techniques aimed at monitoring populations of small mammals, and Scottish Natural Heritage launched a survey of Scottish wildcat *Felis sylvestris grampia* populations, the first for 20 years.



© Pete Cairns/naturepl.com



