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UK nature conservation advice



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

A major commitment during the reporting year was the completion of the five-yearly review of Schedules 5 and 8 (which list protected species) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the legislation that is at the core of nature conservation in Great Britain (Northern Ireland has its own Wildlife Order (1985)). The outcome of the review was a set of recommendations for changes to the schedules that were submitted to Ministers in December 2008.

Consultees put forward more than 100 species for additional protection under the Act. The list was subjected to a rigorous process that assessed the scientific basis of the argument for inclusion and the benefits that might come from protection. In the ministerial submission JNCC recommended that 11 animal species be added to Schedule 5, including the pool frog *Pelophylax lessonae*, (northern clade only), the common skate *Dipturus batis* and the pine hoverfly *Blera fallax*.

In addition, two plant species were proposed for addition to Schedule 8: the rock nail lichen *Calicium corynellum* and lungwort *Lobaria pulmonaria*. Three animal species and five plant species were proposed for removal from the schedules, either because they are now known to be more widespread than they were previously thought to be, or because of extinction.



Jurassic coastline at Brandy and Hobarrow Bay, Kimmeridge
Fossil Reptiles of Great Britain, GCR volume 10

A recent addition to the body of Geological Conservation Review material that is available on the web is Volume 10 *Fossil reptiles of Great Britain*, which deals with a very popular aspect of Britain's geology. Britain's 500 or more fossil reptile sites include examples from the Jurassic, the time of marine reptiles such as plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs. The volume gives details of 50 locations that are judged to be of greatest special scientific interest. They are spread throughout Scotland, Wales and England, but the greatest

concentration of sites is to be found along the 'Jurassic Coast', the section of the Dorset and Devon coastline that was designated as a natural World Heritage Site for the richness of its geology. At Kimmeridge Bay and Brandy Bay on the coast of Purbeck, Dorset, the Late Jurassic fossil marine reptile and terrestrial vertebrates recovered from this locality are relatively abundant – for such rare fossils – and the most diverse from rocks of this age anywhere in the world.

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In January 2009, JNCC hosted the fifth meeting of the Wildlife Law Enforcement Working Group at Peterborough. The group, which is chaired by JNCC, provides the police and other enforcement agencies with advice on priorities for wildlife law enforcement from a nature conservation perspective. It brings together representatives from a wide range of organisations, including the country conservation

bodies, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Defra and non-governmental organisations.

The priorities identified by the group are freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, birds of prey, bats, and species covered by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.



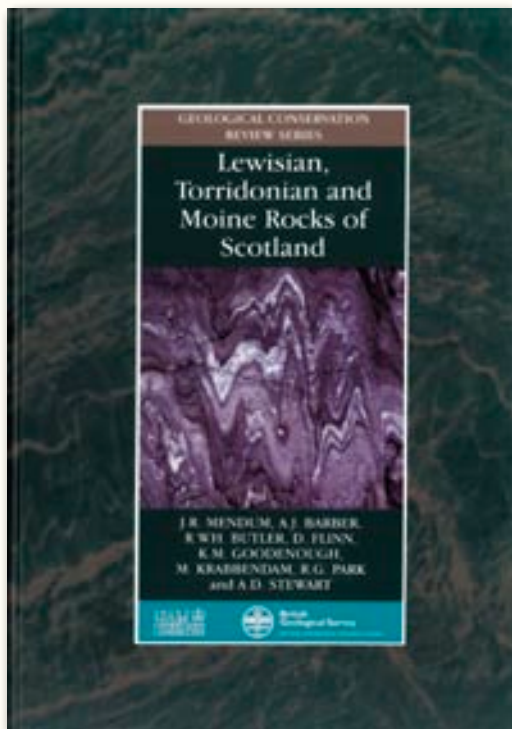
Freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*
River Kerry, North Highland Area, Scotland

The freshwater pearl mussel is widespread in rivers throughout the west and north of Great Britain, but is now very rare. Scotland is one of the European strongholds for the species.

The age profile of surviving populations is an issue for the future of the species. Mussels do not reach reproductive maturity until at least 12 years of age, but can live for more than 120 years.

Some rivers are home to only a few mussels and if younger individuals do not survive the population will not have a future. Population declines have been caused by a number of factors including pollution, acidification, silting and river engineering. Pearl-fishing was a significant pressure, but is now illegal – enforcement of the legislation is a priority identified by the Wildlife Law Enforcement Working Group.

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Lewisian, Torridonian and Moine Rocks of Scotland
JR Mendum, AJ Barber, RWH Butler, D Flinn,
KM Goodenough, M Krabbendam, RG Park and
AD Stewart

This volume describes the outcrops of Precambrian rocks that lie north-west of the Great Glen in the North-west Highlands of Scotland and in the Outer Hebrides and parts of Shetland. The rocks and their convoluted history chart the first 2,700 million years of the geological development of Great Britain. They formed when continents were in far different positions to those seen today and provide tantalising fragmental evidence of continent collisions, lost volcanic arcs, and long-disappeared oceans. The Geological Conservation Review sites encompass a very wide range of rock types of different ages, affected by tectonic processes that have occurred over many millions of years. The mountain scenery of the North-west Highlands in places strongly reflects these varied rock-types.

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During the reporting year, JNCC continued to work closely with the habitat Lead Co-ordination Networks, which comprise specialists from the nature conservation bodies in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The focus of this work was the creation of an online reference tool for practical habitat management advice that will be accessible via a portal on JNCC's website. The work was well advanced by the end of the reporting year and the site is expected to go live in 2009.

JNCC has continued its longstanding commitment to the Geological Conservation Review (GCR) project, which describes the most important geological sites in Britain in a series of publications, which will comprise 45 volumes when completed. Northern Ireland has an equivalent, the Earth Sciences Conservation Review. During the reporting year, volume 34, *Lewisian, Torridonian and Moine Rocks of Scotland*, was published.

At the same time, JNCC has continued to make GCR information available in a free, downloadable form at the GCR website – 20 volumes are now available at www.thegcr.org.uk

A new area of work for JNCC is the provision of secretariat services to the UK Geodiversity Action Plan (UK GAP). There are currently around 30 local Geodiversity Action Plans and the new UK GAP initiative aims to create an upper tier plan that will form a framework embracing geoconservation nationally, regionally and locally.

The partnership that is developing the UK GAP includes JNCC, the country conservation bodies, local authorities and extractive industry representatives. JNCC has been asked to support the partnership's work, which has included hosting a website www.ukgap.org.uk



Lungwort *Lobaria pulmonaria*
Growing on hazel, Inverness-shire

Recommended for protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, lungwort is a large, eye-catching lichen. It is found in the damp woodlands of western and northern Britain and Ireland. The plant is collected

for use in traditional medicines and the species is thought to be vulnerable to commercial exploitation. It is recommended that protection should outlaw both collection and sale.

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