



## Policy-relevant information and reporting

### JNCC aims to encourage research and provide information products that support the development and implementation of nature conservation policy

JNCC undertakes a range of activities in support of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP), including chairing the Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group (BRIG). Following the revision of the priority list of habitats and species under UK BAP undertaken in 2007/08, BRIG co-ordinated an exercise to identify the key actions needed to improve the conservation status of the hundreds of habitats and species on the priority list. This will assist future conservation action in support of these features. During this process it became clear that lack of knowledge was an important constraint to identifying appropriate actions for many species. To help improve our knowledge, JNCC organised a workshop with ecological consultancy Peak Ecology Ltd that brought together 30 UK species experts to identify 1,300 priority research and survey actions.

Improving the focus and direction of UK research effort so that it is better able to support biodiversity conservation is an important aspect of JNCC's work. JNCC provides the secretariat for a UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee sub-group, the Biodiversity Research Advisory Group (BRAG), which brings together researchers, practitioners and policy-makers to promote scientific research that answers the needs of the UK BAP. During the reporting year BRAG continued to foster links with other research co-ordination groups, most notably by organising a special session on ecosystem services at the annual meeting of the British Ecological Society in September 2008. The session was attended by more than 75 ecologists, economists and policy-makers.



We also provide the secretariat for the Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee of the UK Global Environmental Change Committee, an inter-departmental committee that co-ordinates UK investment in the science and technology of global environmental change. Outputs during the year included a paper on emerging science issues, such as ground-level ozone and ocean acidification, for the ninth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

JNCC is closely involved in ensuring that available biodiversity data are put to the best

possible use, and during the year we made significant progress toward streamlining reporting on progress towards the 2010 biodiversity target (see Chapter 1). The UK has obligations to report on achievements in the area of nature conservation under international agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, and under European law through the Habitats Directive.

As much of the reporting uses the same information, JNCC sees advantage in harmonising the processes wherever possible with a focus on biodiversity outcomes rather than actions.



**Serotine bat**  
*Eptesicus serotinus*

The suite of biodiversity indicators that measure the UK's progress towards halting biodiversity loss were updated during the reporting year. First published by Defra in June 2007 as *Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket*, the project has since been updated online ([www.jncc.gov.uk/biyp](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/biyp)).

The indicators track changes in 18 very different aspects of biodiversity, such as spending on biodiversity, populations of key species, river quality and volunteer

conservation work. Trends are measured using a simple traffic light rating. The traffic lights assess change over time and judge whether or not the indicator is 'going in the right direction'. For example, the bat indicator uses data from JNCC-supported surveys. Its headline measure is a composite index based on population trends for six species – Daubenton's, noctule, serotine, lesser horseshoe, common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle.

© Hugh Clark/ Bat Conservation Trust

Indicators are being used increasingly as a means of summarising biodiversity information in a way that is relevant to policy. During the year, JNCC provided support to Defra on the update of *Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket*.

We also finalised the second report on the status of habitats and species of European importance that are listed on the annexes of the EU Habitats Directive. The report includes an assessment of the conservation status of all habitats and species listed by the Directive that occur in the UK. The report was completed by JNCC working in close collaboration with colleagues in the country conservation bodies, including the

habitat Lead Co-ordination Networks (see Chapter 6). In addition to the 167 habitats and species in the Atlantic biogeographic region the UK report also covered 14 habitats and species found in Gibraltar in the Mediterranean region.

The assessment set out in the report has revealed that considerable progress has been made in protecting some habitats and species since the Directive came into force in 1994, but that there are other habitats and species that require additional measures to ensure their long-term viability. Another key conclusion is that there are gaps in our knowledge in the form of data and understanding.



**Green sea turtle**  
*Chelonia mydas*

Just over half of the species and habitats reported from Gibraltar and adjacent waters are in unfavourable conservation status. This is not a huge surprise given that species and habitats were listed on the Habitats Directive because they were recognised as being impacted by a range of problems. The results illustrate the task facing governments in improving the conservation status of species and habitats.

The green sea turtle *Chelonia mydas* was assessed by the UK as in 'unfavourable-inadequate' conservation status in the Mediterranean biogeographical region. This is as a result of threats from fishing, shipping and pollution. The biogeographic assessment for the region as a whole was 'unfavourable-bad' in the most recent reporting on conservation status under the Habitats Directive.

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**Fen raft spider *Dolomedes plantarius***  
Redgrave and Lopham Fen National Nature Reserve, Norfolk-Suffolk border

First recorded on the Norfolk-Suffolk border in 1956, the fen raft spider lives on the surface of pools and ditches where it ambushes other invertebrates and even small fish using its long, highly sensitive legs. Improved monitoring of invertebrates like the fen raft spider is one of the priorities that emerged from the workshop organised by JNCC during the reporting year to address

information gaps identified during the recent UK Biodiversity Action Plan Species and Habitat Review. The workshop brought together species experts to set priorities, many of which were in the areas of invertebrates, bryophytes, lichens and fungi – taxonomic groups that have not traditionally attracted funding.

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