

JNCC

NatureNews

The national and international conservation digest

Issue 17: Spring 2008

Projects spring into action



ALSO FEATURING

- + Health and biodiversity
- + Global impacts update
- + Protecting birds of prey



Chair's Introduction

Welcome to the 17th issue of *Nature News*, JNCC's journal that informs the world about the work we do, and the partnerships we make to help further nature conservation around the globe.

There have been recent changes to our Committee. We bid farewell to Bryan Riddleston, Lucinda Blakiston Houston and David Ingram. I would like to thank all of them for their contributions to our work, and in particular David, who has been with us since 1999, initially as a representative of Scottish Natural Heritage, before becoming an independent member – and doing a fine job as Deputy Chair in the last years.

At this stage, I am able to welcome to two new Committee members - Dr Ieuan Joyce from the Countryside Council for Wales, and Patrick Casement, Chairman of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside. This issue, we are able to learn a lot more about Patrick via his *Conservation Conversation* article on the back page. I know from feedback I have received that many of you find this regular feature of *Nature News* both useful and highly entertaining!

One area not touched upon in this issue is that JNCC has been running a public consultation on seven marine sites that have been selected as draft Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the Habitats Directive. Although the consultation is open to anyone, around 400 organisations and individuals were specifically invited to take part. We have held meetings with key stakeholders, such as those in the oil and gas industry, fishermen's organisations and government agencies, to explain how the consultation is being run and answer any questions they may have.

The closing date for responses was 14 March, and by June we expect to have incorporated the results into our site recommendations, before submitting them to Government. We will be running a similar consultation for the Dogger Bank draft SAC later this year, followed by further consultations in 2009. The next issue of *Nature News* will have an in-depth feature on this significant piece of JNCC's work.

This issue carries the latest update from the Tracking Mammals Partnership, and the background to the delivery of the second

Habitats Directive report to Europe. You'll also discover how JNCC is involved in the proposal of an international agreement to conserve endangered migratory birds of prey in Europe, Africa and Asia.

We investigate the links between health and biodiversity – not a traditional area of work for JNCC, but we can assist the health community through many strands of our work, as demonstrated at COHAB 2008, the Second International Conference on Health and Biodiversity. There is no doubt that security for food and energy, and health issues, will become key themes in the next decade. The challenge for the conservation community to grapple with is how to balance all this with advancing conservation.

I hope you enjoy the issue, and I welcome any feedback and input you may have.

Peter Bridgewater, Chair, JNCC

Front cover images:

Snowdrop. © Cathy Gardner/JNCC
Water vole, a BAP priority species. © Johnny Birks
Blackwater estuary. © David Connor/JNCC

This is one of a range of publications published by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. JNCC advises the UK Government on national and international nature conservation issues on behalf of the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside.

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You can find out more about the work of JNCC by visiting our website

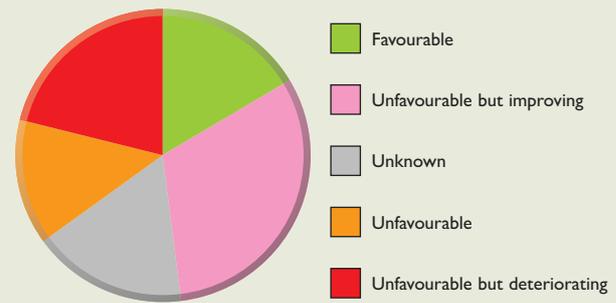
jncc.gov.uk

Second Habitats Directive report delivered to Europe

Every six years, Member States of the European Union are required to report on implementation of the Habitats Directive. The first UK report is available at: www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/rrrpac/ehabitats/index.htm. The second Habitats Directive report focuses on a first assessment of conservation status of all habitats and species of Community interest. The reporting format set by the European Commission requires a separate analysis, for each species and each habitat, in each biogeographic region which that country covers.

The UK report covers 167 habitats and species in the Atlantic biogeographic region, and 14 in the Mediterranean biogeographic region. The Atlantic part was completed by JNCC in consultation with species and habitats specialists in the country conservation agencies. The Mediterranean part was completed by the Gibraltar Ornithology and Natural History Society under contract to the Government of Gibraltar.

Conservation status of UK species and habitats (Atlantic biogeographic region)



Details of the UK assessments are available on the JNCC website at: www.jncc.gov.uk/article17. Details of submissions by other EU countries are available at: <http://roddev.eionet.europa.eu/art17qa>.

JNCC has undertaken some simple analysis of the results.

Three broad themes have been identified in the assessments:

- Firstly, there are gaps in our knowledge in the form of data and understanding. These are recorded as 'Unknown' in the assessment conclusions.
- The second theme is that considerable progress has been made since the Habitats Directive came into force in 1994, which is reflected in the number of habitats and species that are recorded as being favourable or unfavourable but improving.
- Finally, there are those habitats and species which are unfavourable and deteriorating which require additional measures to ensure their long-term viability.



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Collaboration is key

JNCC's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies programme and the Isle of Man Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) organised a workshop for the Crown Dependencies, Gibraltar and Sovereign Base Area Cyprus.

Hosted by the Isle of Man Government, the event was attended by representatives from Defra, the governments of Jersey, Guernsey,

Delegates from the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies workshop.

© Wyn Jones/JNCC



Alderney, and the Isle of Man, and the Sovereign Base Area Cyprus. The workshop aimed to open lines of communication between JNCC and these islands, focusing on areas where there was the potential for future collaboration.

JNCC Chairman Peter Bridgewater opened the workshop and representatives from each of the islands made presentations, along with Head of Marine Habitats David Connor, Environmental Economics Adviser Emily McKenzie, Head of Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Wyn Jones, Biodiversity Research Coordinator Richard Ferris and Overseas Territories Officer Tara Pelembe from JNCC.

There was positive feedback from participants, and there are a variety of actions to follow up, including proposals for annual thematic workshops to focus on single issues in more detail.



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What goes in and what comes out

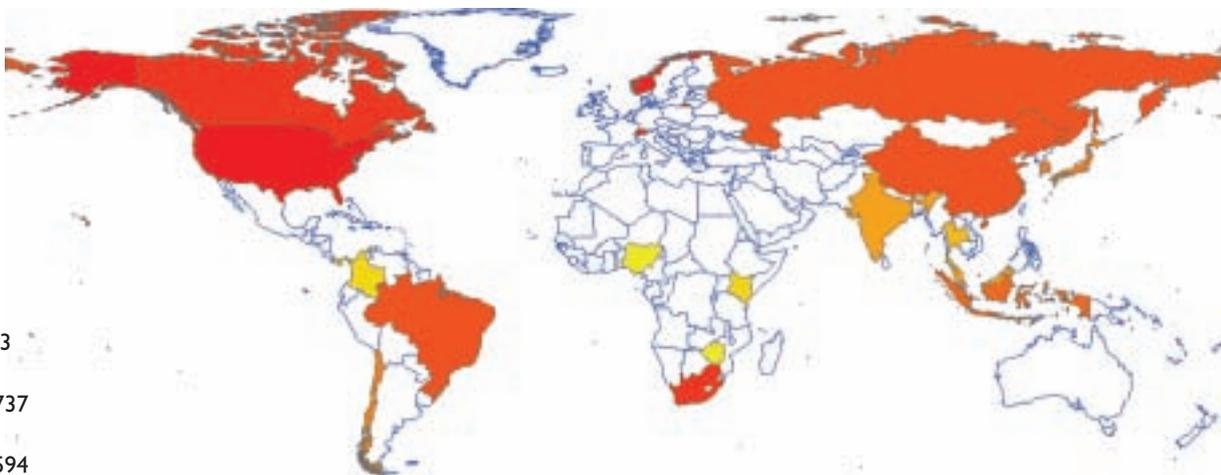
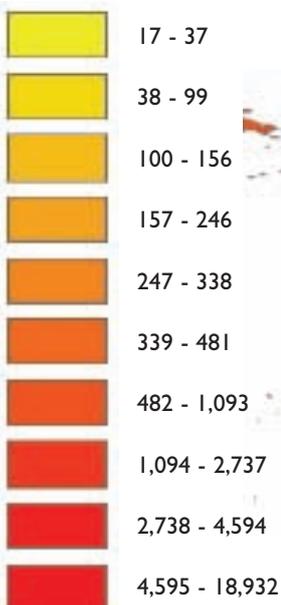
The economic links between the UK economy and global ecosystems

Described by Napoleon as a 'nation of shopkeepers', the UK is now a nation of consumers and investors. In 2005, we imported £280 billion of goods, and UK business invested £46 billion abroad. The UK economy is near the top of the league of global investors and this financial and purchasing power gives the UK the potential to exert a significant influence on the global environment, including biodiversity.

To identify the scale, nature and location of this global economic biodiversity footprint, JNCC initiated its Global Impacts Programme in 2005. With a functioning project website, partners across government and beyond, and a carefully developed strategic focus on key geographical areas, commodities and investment sectors, the programme is now showing results. With an initial emphasis

on imported commodities likely to impact on producer country biodiversity, the website enables access to evidence concerning global trade and an analysis – from reports prepared by UK government, JNCC and non-governmental organisations – of the potential environmental impacts of these commodities. National biodiversity context at the producer end is provided through protected area data,

UK non-EU investment overseas for 2003 (millions £s)



UK foreign direct investment outside the EU



It is increasingly important for governments and individual consumers to understand where the commodities we buy come from, and understand the environmental impacts of global trade.
© Dana/Dreamstime.com

national biodiversity action plans and Millennium Ecosystem Assessment reports, much of which is provided through joint work with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge.

Current project work is focusing on tracking UK investments into key economies and key business sectors abroad, and also on the global impacts of the rapidly developing biofuels industry. An underpinning programme philosophy emphasises linking evidence, analysis and policy, whilst looking at key trade and investment partners outside the EU and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. The work supports key government international programmes, in particular Defra's work with the Sustainable Development Dialogue countries¹ to promote sustainable consumption and production, and also the international project assessment work of the UK's Export Credits Guarantee Department.

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¹Brazil, China, India, South Africa, Mexico

Marking the boundaries for nature conservation

A range of boundary issues between different agencies were highlighted at the Agency Chief Executives (ACE) Conference *Pushing the Boundaries* held last November.

ACE exists to promote excellent working relationships throughout all aspects of Government and gives JNCC opportunities for collaboration with other agencies and Government departments holding environmental and geographic information. The high-quality geographic data produced by Ordnance Survey, for instance, is essential as the backdrop to the UK biodiversity advice JNCC provides for Government and others.

While the Ordnance Survey and JNCC have been working closely to achieve the best mapping solutions for where their paths cross, the National Biodiversity Network has made available 28 million records via its www.searchNBN.net website. This information, available to all, comes from many validated sources, including the volunteer community.

Reflecting on the conference, Deryck Steer said: "I have great admiration for my fellow Chief Executives and Directors who have transformed the delivery of their services – they are without doubt 'Pushing the Boundaries' and the conference reflected that.



The power of searchNBN.net can be seen on-line. The site allows the user to choose any 10 km square across the UK and see the species that have been recorded there (according to the data that are currently available). For instance, in square TL28, aside from an array of amphibians, birds, conifers, ferns, reptiles and spiders, there are also records for over 2,200 different species of insect. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved NERC 100017897 2004.

"For my part, I hope I can transform the way we understand biodiversity boundaries and the impact we have on them."

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ACE promotes effective government and provides networking and learning opportunities for its members.
www.ace.gov.uk

Gus O'Donnell (Cabinet Secretary), centre, Vanessa Lawrence (Chief Executive, Ordnance Survey), right, and Deryck Steer (Managing Director, JNCC) look at how wildlife information is presented to its audiences at www.searchNBN.net



Cohab 2008

Second International Conference on Health and Biodiversity

Health issues are not a traditional area of work for JNCC but biodiversity is increasingly seen as an important factor in maintaining health and well-being in both developed and least developed countries. The links between ecosystems and health were discussed at *Cohab 2008*, in Galway, Ireland, attended by JNCC's Head of Sustainability Advice, Diana Mortimer.

The conference focused on the links between ecosystems and health through three main themes:

- disaster prevention, relief and recovery;
- food resources, diet and nutrition; and
- emerging infectious diseases.

The relationship between the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment¹, which assessed the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being, and the attainment of the eight Millennium Development Goals², which range from halving extreme poverty to ensuring environmental sustainability, was explored. Without fully functioning ecosystems and their biodiversity there is little hope of realising the eight goals. For example,

ecosystems promote health by filtering toxic substances from air, water and soil, and by breaking down waste and recycling nutrients. In addition to enhancing ecosystem services, biodiversity also provides a unique and irreplaceable source of medicines on which 80% of the world's population rely.

Presentations on food resources, diet and nutrition highlighted projects showing how access to diverse food stuffs affected health. Perceived 'development' had led to poorer diet and discussion on what could be done to address this issue. For example, in Kenya there had been a shift away from growing indigenous green vegetables towards production of cabbages. Cabbages were seen as the kings of the vegetable world, available in new Kenyan supermarkets and representing a progressive diet. However, growing cabbages requires more water, and the use of pesticides and fertilizer; additionally they are nutritionally poor. To switch people back to their traditional foods, the project team worked with supermarkets to stock the local varieties of vegetables. As the

poorer people of the area saw the wealthier people eating traditional vegetables, they too were encouraged to return to them. Such a turnaround helps not only the environment but also the people who grow and eat vegetables.

JNCC was represented in a panel discussion entitled *Living within our means: ecosystems, economies and community in 21st century Europe*, alongside representatives from the European Commission and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. The panel answered questions including 'do we need a new way to understand progress?', 'how can we realistically and effectively influence consumer demand so we live within our means?', and 'what additional measures can be taken to increase certification of natural resources?'

The conference demonstrated that JNCC can assist the health community through many strands of work. Application of the ecosystem approach has shown how taking a holistic approach to project planning ensures people, the environment and the economy are all taken into account. Recent JNCC advice to the European Commission on the setting of sustainability criteria for biofuels can ensure people in least developed countries have access to food, medicines, fuel and cultural services provided by the natural environment that might otherwise be lost.

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¹ www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx ² www.un.org/millenniumgoals/



Flooding in Vietnam. © Dreamstime.com



Mission accomplished on marine publication series

Marine Nature Conservation Review: Sector 13, Sealochs in west Scotland, is published

The Marine Nature Conservation Review (MNCR) was initiated by the Nature Conservancy Council in 1987, and subsequently undertaken by JNCC from 1991. The MNCR has drawn together information on marine ecosystems around Great Britain with the objectives of:

- extending our knowledge of marine habitats, communities and species in Great Britain; and
- identifying sites of nature conservation importance.

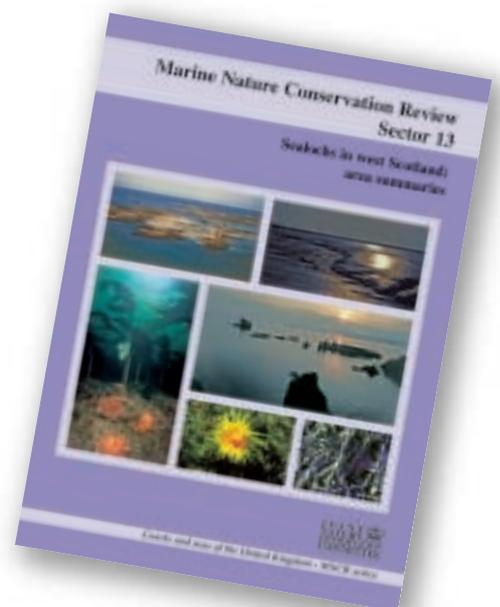
Eleven years of surveying the UK's inshore seabed habitats, plants and animals have yielded spectacular insights into this mysterious world, and supported the identification of Special Areas of Conservation for the Habitats Directive.

The marine biology of the coast of west Scotland, from the Mull of Kintyre to the Point of Ardnamurchan, is described in 24 area summaries in this final publication of the series. Each summary covers a marine inlet, such as a sealoch or lagoon, or a stretch of open coast, and gives details of its physical and biological character, the habitats present, current nature conservation designations, the main human influences and relevant literature.

Maps show the sites surveyed and the distribution of each habitat. A summary of the habitats present in each area and a list of species recorded are also given.

David Connor, Head of Marine Habitats, who has overseen the publication of the fifteen volumes in the MNCR series said: "The MNCR programme provided the foundations for our current understanding of inshore marine habitats around Britain and has supported the country agencies in their marine site designations, monitoring and management from the early 1990s. It is therefore very pleasing to have the final volume published to act as a permanent record of the programme's achievements."

Copies of the publication are available through NHBS at www.nhbs.com, priced at £55.00.





Bechstein's bat, one of the UK's rarest bats, is a BAP priority species and is on Annex II of the Habitats Directive, with Special Areas of Conservation designated to protect its roosts and habitat. © Hugh Clark/BCT.

Tracking Mammals Partnership

The Tracking Mammals Partnership (TMP) has just published *UK Mammals Update 2008*, the third annual update of population trends for 35 terrestrial mammals, around 54% of our land mammal fauna. For the first time we have been able to assess trends for most species over 10-year and 25-year intervals, which provides interesting information on differences in short-term and long-term trends.

Bats continue to do well, with 45% of those monitored (five of 11 species) showing increases, and the rest (six of 11 species) with stable populations, although with only eight years of information

the trends are still relatively short-term. For other native species the news is more mixed – mole, stoat, weasel, badger, otter and roe deer are increasing, polecat, fox and red deer are stable after periods of long-term increase, but hedgehog, red squirrel, dormouse and water vole continue to decline.

Some non-native species have shown very large increases, both long- and short-term, with muntjac populations increasing by over 1,200% in 25 years and nearly 130% in the last 10 years. Grey squirrels have increased by 100% in the last 25 years, with more rapid increases in the last 10 years. Sika deer, fallow deer and common rat have all increased substantially. Rabbit populations have shown a long-term increase of 161%, but have declined in the last 10 years. Mink, a species known to be a problem for water voles, has been steadily declining over the last 25 years, correlated with increasing distribution and abundance of otter populations.

The organisations in the TMP continue to improve species coverage in the UK, with the production of guidelines to monitor red squirrels (JNCC, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and Forestry Commission), developing methods to monitor small mammals (JNCC and The Mammal Society), a new project, funded by PTES, Environment Agency and Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts to collate data on, and map occurrence of, water voles, and a new survey to assess Scottish wildcat distribution run by Scottish Natural Heritage.



MESH is dead, long live MESH!

After four years' hard work, spending just over 8 million Euros, the **M**apping **E**uropean **S**eabed **H**abitats project (MESH) finally came to a close at the end of January 2008. JNCC and our MESH partners tied together all the loose ends and submitted the final report to the North West Europe INTERREG secretariat at the end of March 2008. So, was it worth all the effort and resources? In simple terms, yes! The project delivered all its key products on time and within budget, to the acclaim of our stakeholders.

JNCC, with the support of the MESH partners, published the *MESH Blue Book*, a glossy executive summary describing all the achievements of the project. It is a highly illustrated, non-technical document that will be easily digested by both the non-specialist and the technical mapping scientist. All the key products are

described, including links to the actual products themselves, together with a closing summary of MESH partner views on how these products will fit into the future policy agenda. All the project outputs are available through the *Product Library* on the project website (www.searchMESH.net/products).

At the outset, the MESH project's goal was to establish a framework for mapping the marine habitats of north-west Europe through the development of internationally agreed protocols and guidelines for seabed habitat mapping and the generation of the first compiled marine habitat maps for north-west Europe. Did we achieve this goal?

MESH Guide to Marine Habitat Mapping (www.searchMESH.net/mapping-guide) offers a framework for seabed habitat mapping to help standardise future

mapping activity, and to improve the consistency of maps. It provides both a comprehensive overview of the seabed habitat mapping process, and detailed technical advice supported by tools, templates and actual case studies. JNCC published a synopsis of the *MESH Guide* aimed at the non-technical user who needs to gain a basic understanding of the seabed habitat mapping process; it comes with a DVD of the full guide for offline use.

The *MESH webGIS* is a powerful interactive mapping system that presents seabed maps for north-west Europe available through www.searchMESH.net/webGIS, the project website. It includes both existing maps that were sourced from many organisations by the MESH partners, and new maps predicting the distribution of seabed habitats using modelling techniques researched by the project. The *MESH*

UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority mammals

Insectivores/bats	Lagomorphs	Rodents	Carnivores
Hedgehog, greater horseshoe, lesser horseshoe, barbastelle, Bechstein's, soprano pipistrelle, noctule, brown long-eared bat	Mountain hare, brown hare	Red squirrel, water vole, hazel dormouse, harvest mouse	Scottish wildcat, otter, pine marten, polecat

Habitats Directive conservation status assessments for European protected mammals

Favourable	Unfavourable Inadequate	Unfavourable Bad	Unknown
Lesser horseshoe, common pipistrelle, Daubenton's, Natterer's, brown long-eared bat, otter, pine marten, polecat	Greater horseshoe, Bechstein's bat, mountain hare	Hazel dormouse, wildcat	Barbastelle, soprano pipistrelle, Brandt's, whiskered, noctule, Nathusius' pipistrelle, Leisler's, grey long-eared, serotine bat

The Bat Conservation Trust, which runs the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP), in partnership with JNCC, is using the experience gained to help develop European and international bat monitoring, under the auspices of the European Bats Agreement, and has start-up funding from several Member States, as well as the Darwin Initiative-funded iBats project www.ibats.org.uk (in partnership with the Zoological Society of London).

The TMP continues to make a substantial contribution towards comprehensive data access through the National Biodiversity Network Gateway, which has mammal data from the National Otter Surveys, the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme, the Bat Conservation Trust/Mammals Trust UK car survey, the British Birds Survey and Waterways Breeding Birds Survey, and the NBMP Daubenton's Waterway Survey. In 2008 data from the other surveys in the NBMP will be made generally available.

2007 saw the culmination of two major conservation status assessments, the review of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority list of species and habitats, and the EU Habitats Directive

conservation status assessments for European protected species and habitats. Criteria for assessment were different but both processes relied quite heavily on TMP monitoring data to provide evidence on the status of individual mammal species. As a result we now have 18 mammal species on the BAP priority list, and 22 mammals that are listed on the Habitats Directive Annexes and have breeding populations in the UK had full conservation status assessments.

JNCC continues to work in partnership with the 24 other organisations in TMP to provide data from multi-species schemes and continues to provide major support to the partnership through the TMP coordinator role.

For more information see the Tracking Mammals website www.trackingmammals.org.

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webGIS includes the 'first compiled marine habitat map for north-west Europe' – a significant achievement by the MESH project partners.

Now the project is complete and the pain and frustrations forgotten, the partners can look back over the four years though their rose-tinted spectacles and reflect on what the project really did achieve. It was responsible for far more than simply a series of maps, reports and web pages. The MESH partnership itself is arguably the greatest achievement: 12 organisations from five countries came together to establish strong professional and personal relationships, to work through transnational cooperation on delivering an impressive range of products. At the end, the MESH partnership remains intact and whilst there are no current plans for a MESH II, groups of partners are actively pursuing new ventures to take forward the MESH outputs. So, whilst the MESH project is dead, long live the MESH partnership!



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Nations unite to

An international agreement to conserve endangered migratory birds of prey in Europe, Africa and Asia was discussed in October 2007 at an intergovernmental negotiation conference hosted by the UK Government in Scotland. It was attended by experts and government representatives from 60 countries.

Eagles, falcons, sparrowhawks, buzzards, red kites and osprey are amongst the 77 birds which could benefit from such a treaty under the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). As top predators, raptors are sensitive indicators of the condition of the environments they pass through, such as changes in the global climate which can affect wildlife and people. They play a key role in the ecology of the habitats they use during their migration, and without them the ecological character of these habitats would be degraded. These extraordinary birds are also attractions for tourism ventures along their migratory routes.

A variety of human-induced threats are driving declines in migratory birds of prey, such as habitat loss and degradation, collisions with aerial structures, and electrocution by power lines. Climate change is a further concern.

UK Climate Change and Biodiversity Minister Joan Ruddock attended the meeting and said: "There is no doubt these magnificent birds are under serious threat. Our commitment to their conservation is clear. The Government has brought together experts from around the world to develop this action plan. I have pledged an initial £10,000 towards the practical conservation work that an agreement will undertake.

"This agreement would build on current conservation efforts. In the UK we have had success at re-introducing the red kite in England and Scotland, the sea eagle to Scotland, and are working to extend the range of the osprey. The agreement would address the future problems that climate change will bring to these migratory birds, and has the potential to contribute to our objective of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010."

The aim of such an international action plan is to bring together expertise from around the world to monitor and protect these birds, combat the threats they face, and raise funds for future conservation activity. The joint actions of countries along the international flyways of raptors are critical for the conservation of these migrants.

In 2005, an independent study commissioned by Defra found that more than 50% of the birds likely to be covered by the agreement are rare or endangered. Some are showing signs of rapid or long-term decline. It confirmed that an international action plan would benefit the conservation of these birds.

The meeting discussed the geographical boundaries of the agreement, the species to be covered, and the type of treaty – concluding that a Memorandum of Understanding would be an effective option, given that it could be rapidly implemented.

The meeting was organised in partnership with: the United Arab Emirates Environment Agency (who will host the final negotiating meeting in October this year); CMS; JNCC; Birdlife International; RSPB; the Scottish Government; SNH; and the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.



The fine detail of working together

New booklet describes who does what in nature and landscape conservation in the UK

Within each country of the UK there are separate statutory bodies responsible for nature and landscape conservation. These are the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, and, in Northern Ireland, the Environment and Heritage Service as advised by the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside.

These bodies are funded by Government and provide independent advice on policy development and implementation to the UK Government and devolved Governments. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee co-ordinates nature conservation at a UK level and advises UK Government on scientific and policy matters relating to nature conservation internationally.

Working together for nature and landscape conservation in the UK and beyond is written with a European audience in mind, and promotes the role of the UK Nature and Landscape Office in Brussels, which acts to raise the profile of these bodies and enhance their advice. It also includes full contact details for all our statutory bodies and governments.

For a free copy of the booklet please email communications@jncc.gov.uk

save endangered birds of prey



The lesser kestrel Falco naumanni is a globally threatened species (listed as Vulnerable by IUCN). It migrates from breeding areas in southern Europe and central Asia to wintering areas in central and southern Africa. This species has undergone rapid declines in western Europe, declining by around 95% since 1950. The main cause of its decline has been habitat loss and degradation in its western Palearctic breeding grounds, primarily a result of agricultural intensification, but also afforestation and urbanisation. It is a good example of a migratory raptor which would benefit from collaborative international conservation action. © dreamstime.com



Delegates at the conference hosted by the UK Government in Scotland.

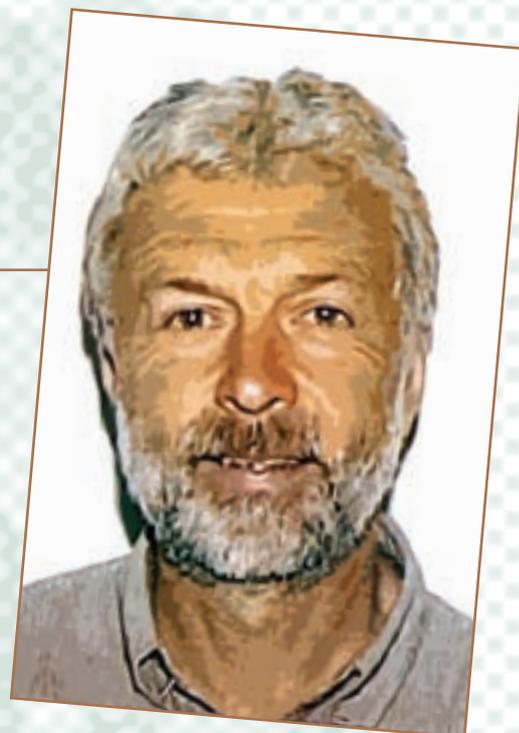
For more information about migratory birds of prey and this meeting, please visit www.cms.int/species/raptors/index.htm and www.cms.int/species/raptors/pdf/6th%20proof%20Raptor%20leaflet.pdf

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Conservation Conversation

This issue we focus on Committee member Patrick Casement, Chair of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, representing Northern Ireland on JNCC. His previous public appointments were committee member of the Committee for Nature Conservation, including Chair of their scientific sub committee, from 1985 to 1989, council member of the CNCC, including Chair of their Antrim/Londonderry sub committee and member of their scientific sub committee, from 1989 to 1996.



Q Species that inspired you as a child?

A Birds generally. In particular, the swallow, with its association with human habitation, its flying ability, and its reappearance each spring from Africa, which seemed both highly romantic and scientifically fascinating at the same time.

Q What concerns you most about the natural world in the next two decades?

A Climate change, both in terms of its effects and its causes. Natural ecosystems seem well able to cope with gradual change, but I fear that what awaits us is more rapid and extreme than they will be able to adapt to.

Rathlin Island. © Pete Oxford/naturepl.com



Q What would you do with a £1 million grant for nature conservation?

A Invest in an education programme that would enable every primary school child in Northern Ireland to get out of the classroom and experience wildlife first hand, while learning something of the practical issues of nature conservation.

Q What would you like to achieve in your time at JNCC?

A To ensure that Northern Ireland is fully engaged with the rest of the United Kingdom in conserving its natural heritage, while gaining the benefits of the experience and expertise of Great Britain.

Q Who is your human hero in the natural world?

A Robert Lloyd Praeger (1865-1953), remarkable Irish naturalist, whose explorations and descriptions of every corner of this island have provided an incomparable baseline for much of our understanding of Irish wildlife.

Q What is your favourite place?

A Murlough Bay, on the north-east corner of Ireland – beautiful scenery, fabulous views to Scotland and Rathlin Island, extraordinary geology, rare plants, and an other-worldly atmosphere.

Q What's your pet hate in nature conservation?

A Too much paper, too many meetings!

Q Desert Island disc?

A *All along the Watchtower* by Jimi Hendrix.

Q What do you do when you're not saving the world?

A I run a farm, rearing quality beef from suckler cows.

Q Porritt, Attenborough or Titchmarsh?

A Attenborough – in a class of his own.

Q Place you'd most like to visit?

A South Island of New Zealand.

Q When I'm reincarnated, I'm coming back as.....?

A A dolphin. I would love to be able to experience the marine environment as an integral (and intelligent) part of it, rather than being rather frightened by its magnitude and power and literally out of my depth.