

Issue 38

June 2011



SCOTTISH BIODIVERSITY FORUM

THE FORUM

Scotland's Biodiversity: A Living Landscape – THE LARGEST PROJECT OF ITS KIND IN SCOTLAND

A group of landowners has launched the “Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape”, the largest project of its kind in Scotland.

The Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape is a partnership project between the John Muir Trust, Assynt Foundation, Culag Community Woodland Trust, Eisd Brachaid Estate, Tanera Mòr and the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

These partners have joined forces to work together to deliver one of the largest ecosystem restoration projects in Britain – an aspirational 50-year plan to bring woodland connectivity, species-rich flora and fauna, and economic prosperity to the Scottish uplands. The Partnership aims to develop projects which have both environmental and social benefits for the area.

Coigach and Assynt, north of Ullapool in the northwest of Scotland are home to a wide range of wildlife, including nationally important populations of golden eagle, black throated diver, Scottish wood ant, wild cat, freshwater pearl mussel and basking shark, as well as rare habitats such as Atlantic oak, birch and hazel woodland.

Con't over



NEWSFLASH:

Until the new Biodiversity Scotland Website is completed, the main pages have been moved temporarily to the SNH website. Available at:

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/biodiversity-scotland/>

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Do you have a news story? Are you involved in a project? If so, then let the Biodiversity Implementation Team (BIT) know! Ask for our article guidelines to help you make the most of your article.

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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum. The editors reserve the right to edit or exclude articles; the editors' decisions are final. For further information about the Biodiversity Implementation Team, log on to: www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk



SCOTTISH
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A Living Landscape – THE LARGEST PROJECT OF ITS KIND IN SCOTLAND

As well as developing large scale restoration projects to restore woodland and peatland habitats, one of the major aspirations of the new project is to create local jobs, training opportunities and economic growth in Coigach and Assynt. The project also aims to attract new landowners into the Partnership.

Stuart Brooks, Chief Executive of the John Muir Trust said, “We are very excited about this project as it joins up estates which cover one of the most stunning areas of wild land in the UK. Assynt/Coigach is a world-class landscape that attracts visitors for a wide range of activities, including hill walking and fishing. There is a lot we can do as individual landowners to improve the landscape, and by pooling our expertise and resources through this partnership we hope to be able to achieve even more.”

Mark Snowdon of Culag Community Woodland Trust said, “The Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape project’s social and ecological objectives are ambitious, but by directly involving local people we can achieve them. The partnership structure of the project, combined with energetic and expert support from within the community encourages confidence that it will deliver important benefits for everyone involved.”

Jonny Hughes, the Scottish Wildlife Trust’s Director of conservation said, “A great variety of wildlife currently ghettoised in fragmented habitats stands to benefit from this partnership. By working together to see the bigger picture and breathe new life and connectivity into the ecosystems of Coigach and Assynt, globally rare species will be given a chance to increase in number and thrive once more. Key species set to benefit from this project encompass a wealth of biodiversity, including Scottish wood ants to iconic golden eagles and important habitats such as carbon-storing peatlands and rare Atlantic oak woods.

“However, this project is also about more than simply wildlife. People are at its heart and by caring for nature we hope to bring social and economic benefits to local rural communities, which are themselves an iconic part of Scotland’s heritage. Coigach and Assynt stand out because large areas are owned by conservation groups and community trusts, who have been enthusiastic about getting involved in this partnership project. Our main aim now is to demonstrate real conservation on the ground over large areas and bring benefits to local communities.”



Lizzie Williams from Tanera Mòr said: "Participating in a forum of local land owners, managers and national conservation organisations is a fantastic opportunity for the Island and her inhabitants to benefit from a wide range of expertise and resources, whilst also sharing the experiences learnt on Tanera. We hope that our involvement in the CALL project will help us more fully realise our ambitions for Tanera Mòr, whilst contributing to the long term environmental, social and economic sustainability of the whole Coigach and Assynt area." A map showing the project area can be found at the following link:

http://www.jmt.org/assets/pdf/call_projectpartners.pdf

NTS—Survey confirms new West coast population of hairy wood ants

A new population of hairy wood ants has been discovered on the National Trust for Scotland's Balmacara Estate in Ross-shire.

Experts say that the colony is the most northerly ever found on the west coast of Scotland and is 40 kilometres from their nearest neighbours in Glen Affric.

The hairy wood ant (*Formica lugubris*), is related to the Scottish wood ant which is more common in the west, but is distinguished by its larger size and much hairier body.

It is widespread in Scotland and northern England, but its populations are often very scattered, sometimes with just a few nests in a plantation or relict patch of old woodland. The nearest known populations to the Balmacara colony are at Glen Affric and north of Loch Sunart, 60 kilometres south.

A survey by Murdo Macdonald of the Highland Biological Recording Group (HBRG) carried out last summer has confirmed that a colony of what was previously thought to be Scottish wood ant, was actually hairy wood ant.



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The six nests were found by National Trust for Scotland Conservation Officer, Barbara Macritchie between Balmacara and the Kyle of Lochalsh on the Balmacara Estate and independently verified in their survey.

Hairy wood ant nest

NTS—Hairy wood ants

Murdo Macdonald from HBRG said:

“Wood ants are vital keystone species in the biodiversity jigsaw of Scotland’s forests and have been in decline throughout the 20th century as their preferred habitats have been destroyed and fragmented.

“Finding hairy wood ants at Balmacara is very significant, because we’ve located a pocket of survivors that were previously undiscovered. It’s also the most northerly colony known on the west coast, and a very isolated group. That could suggest that there may be other, as yet, unknown populations out there in the North West.”

Barbara Macritchie said:

“Balmacara has such a diversity of wildlife and we are very excited by this latest find. There will be a wider survey to search for other colonies and monitoring of those found to date. We’ll be making sure that our plans to manage the estate protect these important insects, ensuring that their habitat is conserved and they can continue to survive in this area for years to come.”

Balmacara is a crofting estate of 2,550 hectares with outstanding views of Skye and Applecross, and includes the historic village of Plockton, an Outstanding Conservation Area



The Wildlife Information Centre for the Lothians and Borders

On the 1st of April, the Wildlife Information Centre for the Lothian & Borders launched a survey of hedgehogs across the Lothians and Scottish Borders.

Everyone is invited to submit any sightings of hedgehogs to contribute to this important survey.

Imogen German, Records Ecologist for The Wildlife Information Centre, said:

“The Wildlife Information Centre holds a comprehensive database of species and habitats found in the Lothians and Scottish Borders, however, we have very few records of hedgehogs. By launching a survey of hedgehogs and inviting everyone to send in details of all their hedgehog sightings, we hope to develop a clear picture of the status of the hedgehog in this region. With this we will be able to develop a baseline to monitor what is happening to hedgehogs in the future.”

To participate in the survey, please send in the details of any hedgehog you see in the Lothians and Scottish Borders to The Wildlife Information Centre. You can do this by going onto the hedgehog sightings page of The Wildlife Information Centre's website at www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/hedgehogs.php and giving details of the date you saw the hedgehog, where it was, how many you saw and if it was dead or alive.



Bryan T Wormly Photography ©2009

Scottish Woodland Trust—A Diamond Wood for Craigengillan Estate

The 3,000 hectare estate at Craigengillan will be home to a prestigious Diamond Wood, just one of 60 flagship sites celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

60 prominent new Diamond Woods - each of 60 acres - with hundreds of smaller Jubilee Woods are being created across the UK, that's the vision for the Woodland Trust's ambitious Jubilee Woods project that aims to plant 6 million trees and involve millions of people in celebrating The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

Owned by Mark Gibson, Craigengillan Estate is set amidst the hills of the Southern Uplands of Scotland in the heart of the Doon Valley. This estate is surrounded by a stunning landscape.

Within the grounds of the estate are a spectacular gorge and waterfall, two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), Listed Buildings, ancient semi-natural woodland and a designed landscape.

Mark Gibson estate owner said: "This is going to be a most beautiful wood, beyond a mighty waterfall and a little glen of ancient wood pasture and joining onto open

hill pastures. The rare water vole can be found in the burn which flows through the new woodland.

The wood will be planted with help from both the primary and secondary schools, who are already involved in lots of projects at Craigengillan. The Diamond Wood will become a part of the history of the Craigengillan landscape."



Carol Evans, Woodland Trust Scotland, said: "We are absolutely delighted that Mark is creating a prestigious Diamond Wood at Craigengillan. This project allows us to engage with local children, provide them with the opportunity to plant trees, engage with nature and celebrate their role in marking this historic event."

"We hope that this inspires other landowners and communities to join us in paying a very special tribute to the Queen, while at the same time creating something living and lasting to hand on to future generations. Not only is this a chance to celebrate the Queen's reign, but it's also a chance for people to enhance their home towns and to help build community spirit through creating a living asset to enjoy and be part of."

"In just 10 years the trees will be taller than the average person and the woodland will be full of wildlife for many people to enjoy."

The Woodland Trust Scotland is looking for landowners, of all kinds, to plant a Diamond or Jubilee Wood on their own land.

The project is not just open to landowners, the Trust will also be providing thousands of free Jubilee Tree packs to communities and schools across the UK.

For more information contact
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Woodland Trust Scotland
Tel: 08452 935795
Email: jacquimorris@woodlandtrust.org.uk



IUCN—International Union for the Conservation of Nature UK

An urgent international call for action on peatland protection and restoration has been made following the release of findings at a landmark peatlands conference. Delegates heard that a loss of only 5% of the carbon stored in UK peatlands would equate to the total annual UK greenhouse gas emissions.

The conference, Investing in Peatlands: Delivering Multiple Benefits, was organised by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) UK Peatland Programme in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Environment Protection Agency. The event drew together a wide range of scientists, experts and land managers from across the UK and internationally.

The IUCN UK Commission of Inquiry on Peatlands has undertaken one of the most extensive assessments of peatlands ever carried out in the UK. The findings were presented at a three day conference at the University of Stirling where speakers highlighted the huge significance of peatlands to society and the urgent need for action to protect them.

Over 50 experts were involved in gathering the evidence for the inquiry with input from over 300 organisations and individuals. The findings show that peat soils cover a third of the UK land area. The key peat forming habitats of bogs and fens, which support important plants and animals, are now greatly reduced in area, but are still our largest areas of semi natural habitats.

Globally the vital role of peatlands has been recognised in connection with biodiversity, water and carbon storage. Damage from development, drainage, fire and over grazing has left many peatlands in a degraded state with costly consequences.



Sphagnum moss

Peatlands Conference—Investing in Peatlands: Delivering Multiple Benefits



Raised Bog—Flanders Moss, Stirling

Environment and Climate Change Minister Stewart Stevenson said: "The Scottish Government has long recognised the benefits provided by our peatlands. We have been willing contributors to the inquiry's work and have funded research partners such as SNH and RSPB to show the benefits peatlands provide and ways in which they can be maximised. "I am delighted that the Stirling conference will provide the opportunity to show what Scotland through our landscape, experiences and stakeholders can offer to this important debate. The Inquiry's findings will be an important contribution to demonstrating the multiple benefits which well managed land can provide."

In all four UK countries the inquiry found examples of world leading expertise in peatland management and restoration techniques aimed at helping reduce carbon emissions, supporting biodiversity and improving water quality. The conference heard that extending this effort to ensure a greener future for our peatlands would bring widespread benefits and avoid costly problems from past damage.

Susan Davies, SNH's Director of Policy and Advice said: "Peatlands are our past, present and our future. The results of the peatlands inquiry clearly show the importance of restoring and enhancing peatlands in the 21st century. With climate change increasingly becoming a challenge for all of us, we must all come together to protect and restore our boggy heritage."

Lord Jamie Lindsay, chair of Scotland's Moorland Forum said: "There is a clear case for resources to support those managing peatlands for wider public benefit. Another positive step would be to establish showcase peatland restoration areas across the UK to demonstrate how natural improvements can be achieved and bring gains for society as a whole."

James Curran, SEPA's director of science and strategy, said: "Climate change is the most pressing environmental issue facing humanity and peatlands have a key role in tackling that challenge, as well as the many other benefits they provide to nature and society. We're pleased to support the Peatlands Commission findings and will be working with all our partners to ensure we all do what we can to protect and restore our precious peatlands."

LBAP Roundup

Edinburgh -

A unique partnership project between RSPB Scotland, RBGE, Lothian and Borders Raptor Study Group and the Scottish Seabird Centre has been set up to relay live images of breeding sparrowhawks to the John Hope Gateway Centre at the RBGE and the Scottish Seabird Centre in North Berwick. This project is the first of its kind in Scotland and hopes to attract a large number of visitors to gain an insight into the breeding behaviour of these fascinating birds of prey.

Many people experience sparrowhawks hunting songbirds at garden bird tables; however this project will offer a unique opportunity to view and understand the family life of sparrowhawks at a nest site during the breeding season. The camera was set up during the second week of May when the female was incubating a clutch of eggs. Unfortunately, the nest was predated by a crow the following week and dramatic images of this nest predation can be viewed on the BBC Scotland website. However, an RSPB Project Officer and team of volunteers are currently on hand to interpret recorded footage of last years breeding season. The project partners are now attempting to establish a live link to a second sparrowhawk nest in the RBGE. Find out more about the project by visiting: www.rspb.org.uk/datewithnature



Sparrowhawk Nestcam—A First For Scotland



Photograph courtesy of Lorne Gill

The Sparrowhawks in the “Botanics” form part of a larger breeding population of up to 30 breeding pairs nesting within the outer limits of the city which are being monitored by the Lothian and Borders Raptor Study Group. The fact that Edinburgh has such a healthy breeding population of these birds just goes to show that Edinburgh has some first class urban green spaces and biodiversity where these birds can nest and hunt. It is hoped that the public viewing project in the “Botanics” and the wider sparrowhawk monitoring programme will allow us to gain a better understanding of how sparrowhawks and other birds of prey are utilizing the urban landscape. An Edinburgh Hawk Watch website www.edinburghhawkwatch.org.uk has been set up by the Lothian and Borders Raptor Study Group which provides information about sparrowhawks and other birds of prey in and around Edinburgh. The website has an online recording system which allows people to report their sightings and observations of birds of prey in the City.

For Further information please contact Mike_thornton_99@yahoo.com



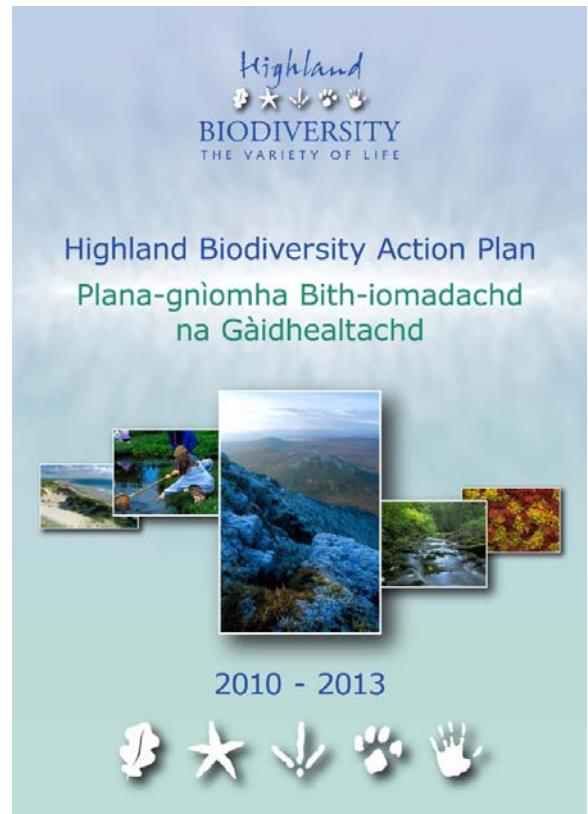
Highland Biodiversity Action Planning

Biodiversity planning in Highland has always taken a different approach to elsewhere in the UK. Whilst other areas have produced suites of Local Habitat and Species Action Plans, the **Highland Biodiversity Partnership** agreed to focus on the key strategic issues facing biodiversity in this large and hugely diverse area.

The Partnership covers the Highland Council area of 26,484 km². This is 33% of Scotland, 11.4% of the Great Britain, ten times larger than Luxembourg, 20% larger than Wales and nearly the size of Belgium! With 51 UK priority habitats and 455 UK priority species it is one of the most important places for biodiversity in the country. However, with



a population of 220,490 and just one Biodiversity Officer post, the Partnership was keen to focus its efforts where they would be of most use.



Seven **Local Biodiversity Groups** were set up, and Local Biodiversity Action Plans were prepared for seven of the eight local areas within Highland. Badenoch and Strathspey is covered by the Cairngorms National Park and as such, has its own Biodiversity Partnership and resources.

Some of these Local Groups have agreed constitutions, set up bank accounts and are delivering projects on the ground. Others are experiencing problems with a lack of capacity, and some are even struggling to agree what their main focus should be. Recognising this, the Partnership secured funding for a three year, £100,000 project: the **Local Biodiversity Groups' Capacity Building Programme**, which has now been running for two years with some success.

The Programme aims to produce LBAP Project Plans for each of the seven Local Groups, which will set out their aims and objectives and include worked-up specifications for up to five local projects. Consultants are now helping some of the Groups draw together funding applications to deliver some of these projects. There is also funding for training and awareness-raising through events, websites and printed materials. The Programme has one year left to go, and we hope that by this time next year the Highland Biodiversity Groups will be in a stronger position.

In addition to the Local Groups and their LBAPs, the Highland Biodiversity Partnership produces its own Highland Biodiversity Action Plan and holds an annual Forum event to listen to views and update a wider audience on progress. Anyone with an interest in Highland wildlife can be a member of the **Highland Biodiversity Forum**, which meets in Inverness on a Saturday during March or April.

Highland Biodiversity

The second **Highland Biodiversity Action Plan** (2010-2013) was launched at last year's Forum event. It identified eight strategic issues facing biodiversity in Highland, and proposed 24 new projects to address these issues. Job-share Biodiversity Officers Jonathan Willet and Janet Bromham gave an update on progress made towards delivering these 24 projects at the last Forum event on 2nd April. Highlights are as follows:

Invasive Species: The Highland Invasive Species Forum came into being in 2009. Its formation arose from an interest in taking action on invasive non-native species in Highland. Several projects have been completed or are underway, including a mapping project which collated information on the top five invasive species in Highland; the co-ordination of giant hogweed control in the four areas of infestation in Highland; and the employment of a Project Officer to secure funding for *Rhododendron ponticum* eradication projects.

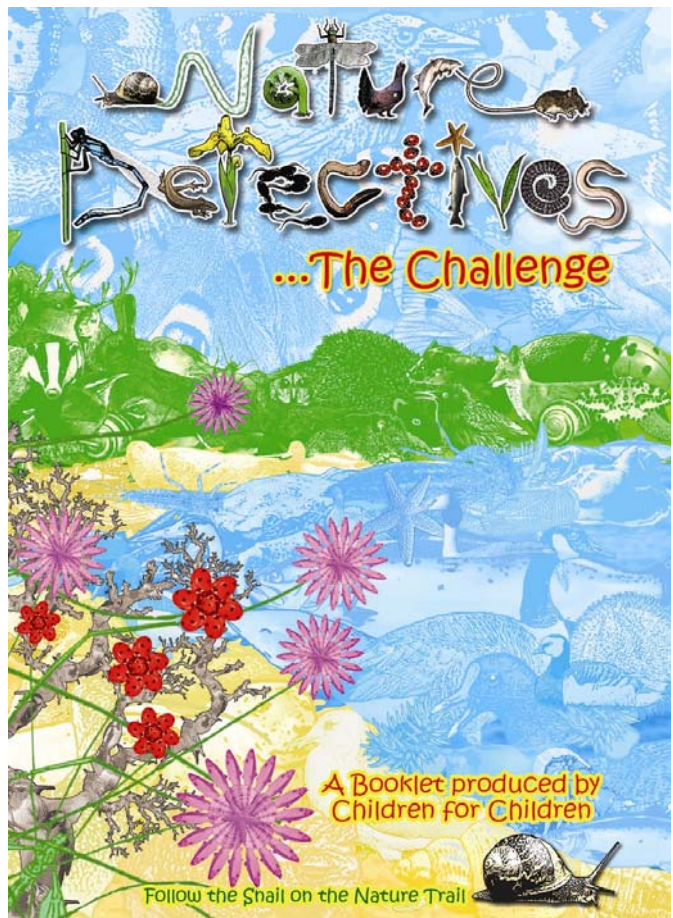
Biodiversity & Planning: Highland Council has produced a draft supplementary guidance note titled "Highland's Statutory Protected Species". [The draft Note has been approved for consultation subject to a separate SEA screening consultation].

Highland Wildflower Nursery: BTCV Scotland is taking forward this project, and is currently seeking to secure a site in central Inverness. If a site can be found, there are high hopes that work can begin later this year. The nursery will grow and sell wildflowers of local provenance and act as a training hub for garden centres and nurseries selling wildflowers elsewhere in the Highlands.

Nature Detectives: Children from South Lodge Primary in Invergordon have been working with a local artist to produce a new, colourful booklet entitled "Nature Detectives: The Challenge". It is hoped this will encourage children throughout the Highlands to find out more about the wildlife on their doorsteps. Teachers and Countryside Rangers will help pupils to work towards bronze, silver and gold awards. An annual trophy will be awarded for the best project.

Jonathan concluded by saying that although the Highland Biodiversity Action Plan is not delivering everything it set out to do, it is delivering projects for which there is support nationally. This is having a positive impact on Highland's biodiversity.

Further information on these plans, events and the various projects that have taken place since the Highland Biodiversity Project started in 2002 can be found on our website: www.highlandbiodiversity.com.



Janet Bromham, Highland Biodiversity Officer (part-time) Tel: 01463 702274

North Lanark—The future’s green in Orbiston

PUPILS at Lawmuir Primary School in Orbiston, Bellshill have a spring in their step as they get down to some hard work on their wildlife garden and vegetable patches.

The Bellshill school played a big part in North Lanarkshire Council’s Greening Orbiston Project, which kicked off last year to improve the local environment for the community.

Planting a wildflower garden and creating a bug hotel were just some of the fun activities enjoyed by the pupils. This year staff from Greenspace Development are back, helping the kids plant cherry trees, herb bushes, make bird boxes and feeders, as well as working on interpretative totems on insects and wildflowers.

Not to be outdone, parents and pupils who use the Out of School Care service at the nearby YMCA have also been working on the gardens there. They’ve helped to create a not-so-secret garden, incorporating a path and stone circle alongside flower beds and raised areas made out of recycled materials.

Clematis and honeysuckle plants are now climbing the side of the building and everyone is enjoying the spring weather on a “smiling grasshoppers” carved bench – inspired by the their own drawings.



Pupils from Sacred Heart Primary School came up with design ideas for the garden and helped to plant the herbs and wildflowers.

The project was developed by Greenspace Development in partnership with local schools and Orbiston YMCA to deliver actions from the North Lanarkshire Biodiversity Action Plan, which is designed to regenerate school grounds, parks and public open space in the area.

“Last year, the whole community was energised by the work we were doing here,” said Senior Biodiversity Officer Laura Whyte.

“People spent a lot of time learning about their environment and how to protect it. It’s wonderful to see the same faces back this year continuing the hard work for their community.”

Tracy Hurst, Principal Teacher at Lawmuir, feels the pupils haven’t looked back since they got involved with the project. “We already had our Healthy Heroes and Eco Committee initiatives at the school,” she explained.



“Getting involved with Greening Orbiston was a natural extension of that. It has allowed the pupils to make a real connection with their environment.

“They’re now much more aware of the type of plant species that thrive in this area and how the garden can benefit local wildlife.

“We’re also planning a new kitchen area for the kids so they’ll be able to turn the produce they’re growing into great tasty meals with lessons about horticulture and the environment, they’re making a real difference to their own community.”

North Lanark—The future's green in Orbiston

Jean Guy, Assistant Manager at the YMCA, also noticed a big change in the kids since the start of the project.

She said: "They were a bit reticent at first; most of them had never been involved with these kinds of practical tasks, but when the greenspace staff started to work with them, showing them how to build a bug hotel, letting them dig holes to plant trees, you saw their confidence growing and before long they started to pitch in with their own ideas."

"This is a great project to be involved with," added Laura. "Not only are the kids learning invaluable lessons, crucially, they're also taking their knowledge back home with them. I'm delighted with the great response we've had from parents who've really backed the project."

To find out more about Greening Orbiston and how you can get involved, call Laura on 01236 780636 or email whytela@northlan.gov.uk



Border Currents—New website Launched

A new website about the Berwickshire & North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site has been launched by Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council. The new site contains a huge amount of information which should be of interest to a wide range of audiences. Information about legislation and management can be found, as well as information about the qualifying features and wider marine ecosystem, tools and advice for exploring the coast and shore, and information about upcoming events.

The spectacular coastline and shallow sea of Berwickshire and Northumberland support a rich diversity of habitats, plants and animals, many of which are internationally important. The impressive range of conservation designations within and adjacent to the European Marine Site testify to the importance of this landscape. The magnificent scenery continues offshore where a dazzling array of colourful marine life and hidden natural treasures can be found.

The website will help you find out about the incredible habitats and wildlife for which the European Marine Site has been designated. You can also learn about the management of this cross-border site, and how the groundbreaking joint Management Plan with the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is at the forefront of Integrated Coastal Zone Management.



**Berwickshire & North
Northumberland Coast
European
Marine Site**

<http://www.xbordercurrents.co.uk/>



Angus Cetacean Awareness Project

Angus waters are visited by local and national priority cetacean species. Tayside Biodiversity priority species found in Angus waters include bottlenose dolphin, harbour porpoise and minke whale. January 2011 saw Humpback whales visit Montrose Bay on more than three occasions, an exciting and rare occurrence.

Launched in September 2010 the Angus Cetacean Awareness Project, a 2/3 year data-collection exercise which aims to address the lack of knowledge of species presence and behaviours in Angus waters is now under full swing and is playing a part in developing working relationships, public participation and raising awareness of land based watching opportunities in the Angus area. March 2011 saw the first Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society “Shorewatch” training day in Angus at Montrose Basin Wildlife Centre where more than 10 local volunteers were trained in species I.D. and data recording techniques. A second followed last month at SNH’s St Cyrus NNR.

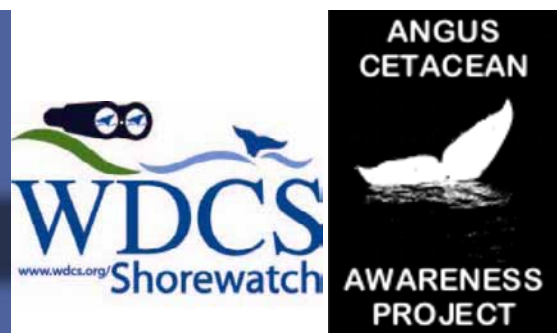
Further details of the project, sightings reporting and coastal wildlife watching opportunities can be found at the website www.marinelifeangus.co.uk An Aberdeen college student is at present developing a map based sightings page which will be updated after each new sighting is logged adding a useful element for the public to pinpoint areas along the coastline where sightings frequently occur.



Image by Kelly Ann Dempsey

It would be fantastic if **YOU** spot any cetaceans that you contact us with details such as species type, location, number of animals, time of day etc by either visiting the site or emailing info@marinelifeangus.co.uk.

More information on the Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society “Shorewatch” can be found at http://www.wdcs.org/national_regions/scotland/shorewatch/index.php



www.marinelifeangus.co.uk



TAYSIDE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

New European Biodiversity Strategy endorsed by Ministers, but actions to meet the new targets require further debate

Informed by the Convention on Biological Diversity conference in Nagoya, Japan, European Commissioners tabled on 3rd May an updated EU biodiversity plan. Titled “Our Life Insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020”, the strategy includes six priority targets and twenty associated actions which address the main drivers of biodiversity loss.

Paraphrased and summarised, the six targets are:

- Habitat and species assessments are improved between now and 2020.
- “By 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems”.
- Ensure uptake of agricultural funding to improve the status of species dependant upon agriculture and to ensure that public owned and private woodland (above a certain size) are managed according to plans to improve the conservation status of habitats and species.
- Safeguarding and protecting EU fish stocks to achieve the maximum sustainable yield by 2015.
- “By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority invasive species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.”
- “By 2020, the EU has stepped up its contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.”

The strategy is in line with two major commitments made by EU leaders in March 2010 – halting the loss of biodiversity in the EU by 2020, and protecting, valuing and restoring EU biodiversity and ecosystem services by 2050:

2050 vision

By 2050, European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides — its natural capital — are protected, valued and appropriately restored for biodiversity's intrinsic value and for their essential contribution to human wellbeing and economic prosperity, and so that catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity are avoided.

2020 headline target

Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR
OF FORESTS • 2011



NTS—Rare vagrant bat found on Isle of Arran

A National Trust for Scotland's Brodick Country Park Ranger has been involved in identifying and looking after a rare vagrant parti-coloured bat that was found grounded on the Isle of Arran earlier this year.

Ranger Corinna Goeckeritz received a phone call from a family in Kildonan a few months back. Nine-year old Victoria Mowatt, who is a member of the local National Trust for Scotland Young Naturalists' Club and attends Whiting Bay Primary School had found a bat on the ground. Victoria looked closely and established that the bat was still alive, although obviously in trouble. With the help of her family, the bat was captured and put into a shoe box.

Victoria explains: "I know bats like dark places, so I emptied out my friendship box for her. Then we fed her water from the end of a small paintbrush on advice from the rangers."



For ranger Corinna, who has recently completed training for her bat licence, there was a surprise in store. The Mowatt family were curious to know which species of bat they had found.

Corinna said: "I was a bit embarrassed when I was not able to tell them, as this was a species of bat I had not come across before. Back home, I consulted bat identification books and also asked experienced bat workers for help. Even then, identification was not straightforward. "In the end, the bat turned out to be not just a rare Scottish species as first suspected, but a species not native to the British Isles.' Parti-coloured bats are relatively large bats usually found in continental Europe and parts of Asia. Their name is derived from their distinctly bicoloured dorsal fur. The hairs are brown at the base, but have silvery tips, giving the fur a "frosted" appearance.

"The natural distribution of parti-coloured bats ranges from eastern France eastwards. Vagrant parti-coloured bats are recorded sporadically in Britain, thought to be individuals blown off course on migration. Most of these records however occur on the east coast of England. It is impossible to say how this particular bat ended up on a Scottish west coast island. Severe weather is likely to have played a part - she could even have made part of the journey as a blind passenger on a ship."

John Haddow of Auritus Wildlife Consultancy, who helped identify the bat, said:

"There are only around 30 UK records of parti-coloured bats. Sussex bat expert Dr Tony Hutson, who is currently writing a paper on migrant and vagrant bat species, confirms that there have been several records of parti-coloured bats from Shetland, and some more from North Sea oil rigs, but nowhere else in Scotland."

.... Vagrant bat

Lindsay Mackinlay, the National Trust for Scotland's Nature Conservation Adviser added:

"This is a very exciting find and we are proud that the Trust has been able to help the bat on this occasion. The Trust does a lot of work to conserve all bat species in Scotland, and indeed, we only just established the UK's first bat reserve down at Threave estate, near Castle Douglas last year."

Brodick ranger Corinna Goeckeritz commended Victoria who made the discovery and acted quickly and sensibly to save it. She said:

"Credit should go to Victoria Mowatt who discovered the bat. It is unlikely the bat would have survived without her."

The bat is now in the care of Tracey Joliffe, an experienced bat carer based in Dundee.

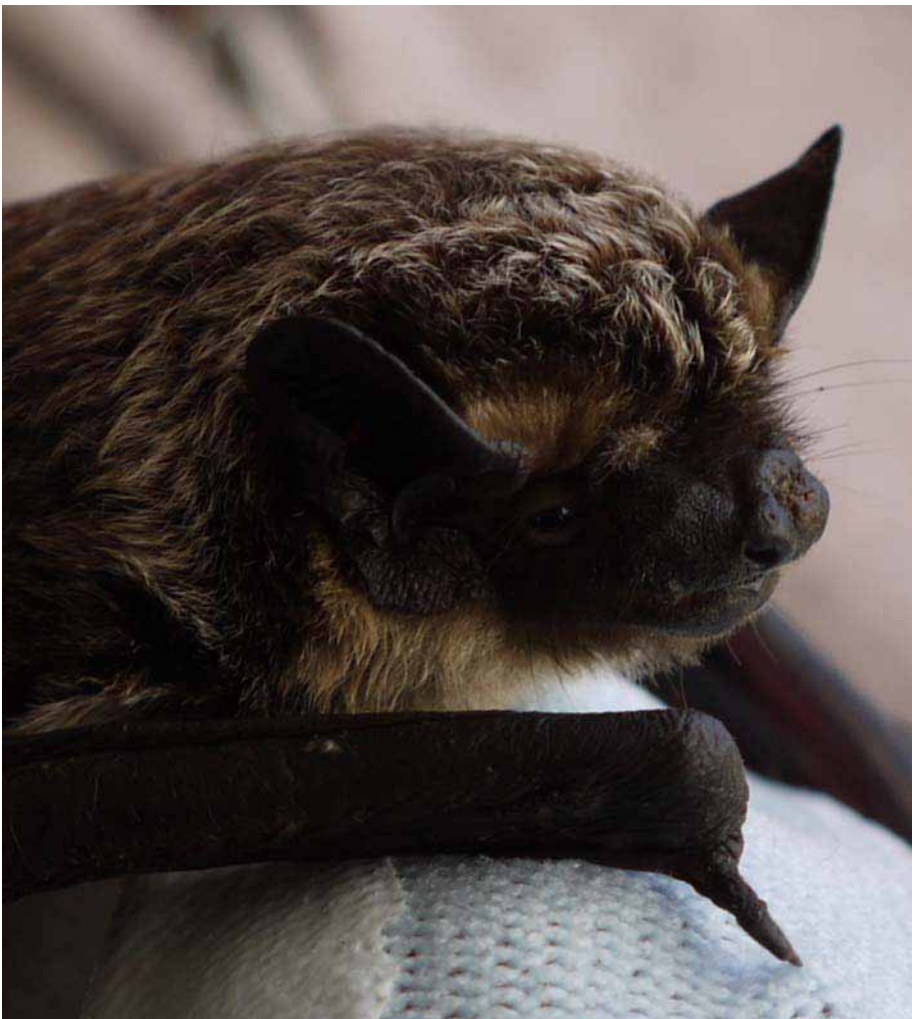
Corinna continues:

"The bat's injuries suggest that she was caught by a cat, possibly easy prey after a long, exhausting journey from the continent. Unfortunately, the injuries the bat sustained from the attack were too severe for her to recover fully. An irreparably damaged wing means that she

will not be able to fly again and will therefore remain in Tracey's competent care.

"Long-term captive bats can be very useful for educational purposes. Having access to such a rare vagrant is a great opportunity for bat workers to familiarise themselves with the species."

It is illegal to intentionally or recklessly disturb, damage or destroy a bat roost, and to handle a bat without a licence unless it is ill or injured. Advice on how to deal with bats around residences can be obtained from Scottish Natural Heritage - www.snh.gov.uk.



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RSPB—Harnessing horsepower

An Aberdeenshire nature reserve has taken a new course of action to improve its wetland habitats.

RSPB Loch of Strathbeg has drafted in the help of a herd of rare wild horses to enhance its conservation work through natural grazing. Known as konik horses, the breed is a direct descendent of the tarpan, a wild forest horse driven to extinction in central Europe in the late 19th century.

Hardier than their other domestic cousins, konik horses are resistant to harsh climates and adept at foraging in the wild. Their ability to graze on courser grass, sedges and rushes can also help boost biodiversity.



Dominic Funnell, site manager at RSPB Loch of Strathbeg, said they are ideal for conservation: “Koniks love eating rank tussocky vegetation and we have lots of it at Strathbeg. Currently we have to artificially strip it away to ensure our wetlands remains in top condition. But now, thanks the grazing habits of these horses, we can ditch the machines and get back to an ‘au natural’ approach to habitat management. It’s great news for the geese, swans, ducks and wading birds, like lapwings and curlew, who need wetlands to feed and breed, and it means we will have more time to concentrate on other conservation work.”



Rare species helps conservation on RSPB reserve

“These horses will be doing an important job for us, so to make sure they’re not disturbed, they’ll be working on the less public areas of the reserve. Visitors will be able to see them distantly from Tower Pool hide and be able to hear more about their work in the visitor centre and on the reserve website.”

Prior to their arrival in Scotland, the eight foals were under the care of the Wildwood Trust, a conservation charity based in Canterbury, who has been using konik horses as part of a conservation grazing project on nature reserves in Kent.

Peter Smith, Chief Executive of Wildwood Trust said: “We are delighted to be able to give these horses to the RSPB. The mission of the Wildwood Trust is to re-create the natural eco-systems of Britain. As a natural resource, the konik horse offers conservationists a way of saving more wildlife for less money, saving charitable organisations and the tax payer alike thousands of pounds as we recreate semi-natural habitats for some of the rarest and most endangered species in the UK.”

Konik horses graze intensively in small areas so their effects are long lasting and resounding. They will be confined to certain areas of the reserve that require more concentrated habitat management approach.

For more information, images and interviews please contact Louise Smith, National Media Officer RSPB Scotland, on 0131 317 4136 or 07540 121 457.



*All Images
courtesy of
Wildwood Trust*

NTS—Good Newtsat Culzean’s new pond

Conservation charity, the National Trust for Scotland is reporting success in a project to extend the habitat for a rare species of newt at Culzean Castle and Country Park in Ayrshire.

A thriving population of the great crested newt was already well-established at the historic estate, thriving since their introduction to the site more than a decade ago. The species is so rare that it is protected by both UK and EU law.

In a bid to encourage more amphibian and insect life to the property, three new ponds, which were part-funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, were created in February 2010.

Now a survey has established that the great crested newt is expanding into its new territory, as immature specimens were caught. Palmate newts were also recorded.

Great crested newts are the UK’s biggest, can grow up to 6 inches long, and are found at only two National Trust for Scotland sites – Culzean in Ayrshire and the Pineapple in Falkirk. The newts were introduced to Culzean ten years ago and they appear to be thriving in pollution-free and fish-free ponds that are their preferred habitat.

Deirdre Mackinnon, Head Ranger at Culzean said:

“It’s great news that these newts are doing so well at Culzean. We’ve been working hard to ensure we provide the best possible habitat for these rare creatures and there are clear signs of success. This type of conservation work is crucial to the future survival of some of Scotland and the UK’s rarest species and we will continue to strive to save those species for future generations.

“As a conservation charity, we are always pleased to hear that a rare or endangered species is doing well. We’re lucky to have some fantastic plant and animal life at our properties all over Scotland. “



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Great Crested Newt

Big Butterfly Count—Join the big butterfly count and help us take the pulse of nature

The Big Butterfly Count was launched last year by Butterfly Conservation and Marks & Spencer and an amazing 10,000 people took part giving our scientists a great baseline against which to measure the changing fortunes of butterflies in our gardens, towns and countryside. This year we want to greatly exceed the 2010 total and make Big Butterfly Count the biggest butterfly event in the world.



Common Blue

Butterflies are in severe decline in Britain, indicating a worsening of the environment for much of our wildlife. Sir David



Red Admiral

Attenborough, who will launch the Big Butterfly Count in July, is very aware that there are far fewer butterflies in his own garden these days. Numbers of the much-loved Small Tortoiseshell have dropped by 68% over the last decade alone, and the stunning Peacock butterfly has declined by nearly 30%. By counting butterflies for just 15 minutes in a sunny spot, anyone can help Butterfly Conservation's scientists to 'take the pulse of nature' and get a better understanding of how butterflies are faring, particularly in towns, gardens, parks and school grounds.

Big Butterfly Count is an exciting nationwide online survey run by Butterfly Conservation and Marks & Spencer. Anyone can take part, young or old, without needing to be experts. In addition to the Small Tortoiseshell and



Small pearl bordered fritillary

Peacock, there are 19 other butterflies and day-flying moths to look out for, all easily recognized using our downloadable identification chart.



Green veined white



Meadow brown

Small tortieshell

Big Butterfly Count takes place from 16-31 July 2011 at www.bigbutterflycount.org



Angus—River South Esk Catchment Partnership

The River South Esk catchment in Angus is a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for Atlantic salmon and freshwater pearl mussels. Montrose Basin, the large enclosed estuary of the River South Esk is a Ramsar site, Special Protection Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserve. The catchment supports a wide range of economic activity in industries such as farming, forestry, fisheries, tourism and recreation.

The River South Esk Catchment Partnership

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... managing the environment

Project Aims

The Environment

Working In Partnership

What does the Catchment Management Plan for the River South Esk aim to achieve?

The Catchment Management Plan (CMP) brings together all of the users of the River South Esk catchment.

What will the impact of the Plan be on the environment?

The South Esk catchment is on the East coast of Scotland and is entirely within the county of Angus - information on the South Esk Catchment area, its resources and its history.

Industries such as farming, forestry, fisheries & tourism all take place within the boundaries of the River South Esk Catchment.

The Plan works with and is supported by a number of partner organisations.

Why is the River South Esk Catchment so important?

The River South Esk catchment is the area of land drained by the river and its burns, including its lochs, groundwaters, wetlands, and the unique estuary of Montrose Basin.

This water resource is of immense value to a variety of users from the local community, to businesses, and tourism providers.

It is a source of drinking water, irrigation for crops, watering for livestock, a valuable habitat for wildlife, and acts as a basis for tourism, recreation and salmon fishing. The water resource of the River South Esk Catchment is thus a central asset, underpinning much of the rural economy of Angus.

RIVER WATCH

We want to hear from you. Have you seen something of interest then send it to us!

LATEST NEWS

The Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust on behalf of the River South Esk Catchment Partnership earlier this year was awarded £20,000 by Angus Environmental Trust.

River South Esk Catchment Partnership
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Undertaking a catchment wide invasives weed eradication project has been no small feat for the River South Esk Catchment Partnership but progress in 2010 was very successful. By late October in excess of 180,000 sq m of giant hogweed was sprayed beginning in the middle of the catchment and over 14,500 sq m of Japanese knotweed were sprayed in the three main areas of infestation. The Project led by the Esk Rivers & Fisheries Trust began again in March/April this year. Seed banks and re growth will contribute to new plants in future years, hence the need for continued spraying over several consecutive years. Continued treatment will allow greater access to areas of the catchment and is of great benefit to native species. The knock on effect of treating the catchment upstream of Montrose basin will hopefully be visible on the reserve in the near future.



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas



Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

Invasive Weeds to be targeted for a 2nd year

South Esk catchment wide eradication project continues

A river watch scheme has also been developed by the partnership allowing the public to report invasive weeds, fresh water pearl mussel poaching, species sightings and many other topics. River watch can be found on the partnerships new site <http://theriversouthesk.org/> along with copies of the partnership's newsletter, an educational zone and links to other useful sites.

Phase two of the partnership's catchment management plan is due to begin in June 2011 where River restoration, GIS technologies and green corridor enhancement will be focused on.

For further information please contact Kelly Ann Dempsey at: dempseyk@angus.gov.uk.



Angus Environmental Trust



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The River South Esk Catchment Partnership



Full Steam Ahead for Partnership

The Partnership is well on the way of carrying out the first year of implementation targets

The Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust on behalf of the River South Esk Catchment Partnership earlier this year was awarded £20,000 by the Angus Environment Trust (landfill tax funding) allowing the proposed first phase of implementation of the River South Esk Catchment Management Plan to proceed. The success of this application ensured that match funding previously awarded by Angus Council, Esk Rivers & Fisheries Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage, Cairngorms National Park Authority, and Rural Tayside LEADER were available, ensuring a further one year delivery of the objectives of the South Esk Catchment Management Plan (SECMP). The Implementation Phase began with the employment of a Project Co-ordinator to implement actions identified in the SECMP and to assist with the first flag-ship project for the partnership, the control of invasive non-native species (INNS project). The Steering Group have selected the INNS project as a priority as it believes that it is excellent way of engaging stakeholders in

the early stages of the implementation of the SECMP. The high-profile project is applicable to many of the plan's action cards which include water quality, habitats and species, social and economic factors, water resources, flood management, and river engineering. Other priorities for this first year include enhancing relationships with catchment residents and business, promoting good ecological practice, investigating the economics of the catchment, developing an educational outreach programme and securing funding for future years' implementation.

Montrose Basin looking North west over the catchment



Catchment Wide Weed Wipe Out

Invasive non native weeds eradication project in progress

Undertaking a catchment wide invasives weed eradication project has been no small feat but progress this year has been very successful. Treatment carried out by the contractor Tillhill Forestry Ltd. using Roundup Bioactive under licence from SEPA and authorisation (under SAC Legislation) from SNH has ensured that large swathes of the catchment have been treated. In excess of 180,000 sq m of

Giant Hogweed was sprayed beginning in the middle of the catchment and over 14,500 sq m of Japanese Knotweed were sprayed in the three main areas of infestation. The spraying programme ended in late October and will begin again in March/April next year. Seed banks and regrowth will contribute to new plants in future years, hence the need for continued spraying over several consecutive years.

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Your Say: Challenges in Conserving and Protecting Local Biodiversity

Coming from an Environmental Planning background, Aftab Majeed comments on some of the challenges facing biodiversity. If you have any thoughts which you would like to present in “The Forum”, please feel free to contact us - Ed.

Local Authorities across Scotland have an important role to play in conserving and protecting biodiversity through planning and other local initiatives. Local Development Plans, Planning Policies, supplementary guidance and development management can all influence and enhance local biodiversity. Equally the development of strategies such as nature conservation strategies, open space strategies, forest and woodland strategies can be used for conserving and protecting biodiversity and ecological networks.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) are also developed to protect biodiversity and open spaces which are locally important. In preparing LBAPs it is essential to involve local communities to attain input, set objectives and develop action plans that protect, enhance and conserve species and habitats regardless of their nationally protected status. In addition, local conservation sites such as Local Nature Reserves, District Wildlife Sites and green space networks can contribute toward biodiversity. These small locally designated sites do not accommodate all species but constitute an important part of the country's natural capital, particularly in urban environments.

Planning provides the framework for future sustainable development and offers an opportunity to protect biodiversity alongside development through environmental policies or supplementary planning guidance (SPG). Development management then applies those policies and SPGs to manage applications for development. A simple sounding process, but planning authorities and development management face many challenges. Development pressure has placed demands on our natural resources particularly in urban areas where resources are scarce. Whilst national environmental bodies focus on nationally protected species and sites, local planning authorities often with limited, or no expertise, try to determine the likely impacts of developments on local nature conservation via ecological and Environmental Impact Assessments. When sites are considered local, less weight is attributed to the benefits they bring, often resulting in a failure to protect open space and biodiversity. The consequence is that local authorities deviate from local plan policies, environmental strategies and local biodiversity action plans.

A failure to protect open space has an overall impact on local biodiversity as a direct loss of habitat, reduction of total area of an ecosystem and indirect effects causing habitat fragmentation into smaller isolated patches and degradation of ecosystems reduce the capability of an ecosystem to sustain its original biodiversity. Ultimately it undermines the social, environmental, health and economic benefits that biodiversity brings to the local area.

Although laws and procedures are in place to conserve biodiversity many of our decision making mechanisms fail to give sufficient weight to local biodiversity. New procedures that strengthen our decision making process and achieve the right balance between economic development and sustainable use of our natural assets are required at a national level to make local biodiversity more meaningful. Our open space and biodiversity provide opportunities for lifelong learning, health, access and the economy, they all deserve to be protected for future generations.

Aftab Majeed ,Environmental Planner ,Planning & Sustainable Development, Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure , Aberdeen City Council

Dragon flies and damselflies of Scotland

The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Scotland

An introduction to dragonflies in Scotland



A new leaflet—The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Scotland— was launched at Gardening Scotland in May. It contains pictures of all twenty three of the species currently recorded as breeding in Scotland. It also explains the difference between damsel and dragon flies and lists the habitats and distribution of the Scottish species.

The leaflet shows you where to see dragonflies and tells you how you can help by recording what you see.

To find out more about dragonflies and how to join the British Dragonfly Society – visit www.british-dragonflies.org.uk



Diary Dates

9th-12th August 2011: Bat Ecology, Surveying & Survey Guidelines: NTS Threave, Dumfries & Galloway. For further information visit: www.echoesecology.co.uk/training.php.

6th-8th September 2011: ialeuk conference - Landscape ecology and ecosystem services. Wolverhampton University Telford conference2011@iale.org.uk www.iale.org.uk

26-30 September 2011: World conference on Marine Biodiversity. Hosted by Aberdeen and St Andrews Universities. For further information visit: <http://blog.protectplanetoocean.org/2010/03/world-conference-on-marine-biodiversity.html>

14th November 2011: Sharing Good Practice—School Grounds-Designing for nature, health, learning and play. Venue Thornlie Primary School, Lomond Drive, Wishaw, ML2 0JR. Free event. To register email: sgp@snh.gov.uk for further info go to <http://www.snh.gov.uk/news-and-events/events/event-details/?id=749>

Deadline extended!

The closing date for the Scottish Biodiversity Week Photography Competition has been extended to the 31st July 2011.

The theme for the competition this year is "Nature gifts to me".

Enter to win one of these great prizes:

- 1st prize: A one to one tutorial with a top nature photographer
- 2nd prize: Olympus E-450 Digital SLR Camera with carry case and 2 GB memory card
- 3rd prize: Panasonic Lumix FZ45 14.1MP Digital Camera, Hama Star 62 Tripod and carry case

For more information visit:

<http://snhwebsite:8090/protecting-scotlands-nature/biodiversity-scotland/biodiversity-week/photography->



2010 winner
Barn owl
by
Paul Cook