

Call 999: an Emergency for Scotland's Biodiversity

Summary and Assessment for Scotland from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan 2005 Reporting Round

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5 April 2007: 1,000 days left to 2010, when the target to halt the loss of biodiversity expires. How is Scotland doing in terms of progress towards this target?

A new report assesses information to date from the 2005 reporting round for the UK Biodiversity Action Plan process on how well Scotland is progressing.

The sobering conclusion is that for Scottish priority species and habitats, progress towards the 2010 target is simply not happening quickly enough:

Dr Deborah Long, Convenor of the Biodiversity Task Force and Conservation Officer at Plantlife Scotland said "Progress towards the 2010 target to halt the loss of biodiversity is just not fast enough in Scotland. The UK biodiversity action plan process **needs higher levels of commitment from the Scottish Executive and Scotland's public bodies**. The key is to put biodiversity into the heart of all policy making in Scotland: the **biodiversity duty on public bodies in the Nature Conservation Act must be enforced**, land management schemes must deliver on biodiversity conservation through better targeted schemes."

"Agri environment and forestry grant schemes for example, must deliver on biodiversity conservation as an integral part of what they do. Biodiversity conservation must almost become a given. For example, current research on twinflower, characteristic of Scotland's native pine woodlands, is indicating that timber-harvesting techniques could be tweaked to benefit twinflower and to enable it to spread into new areas. This could lead, for example, to timber harvesting **techniques for conservation purposes as well as economic purposes**."

Dr Richard Luxmoore, Head of Conservation at the National Trust for Scotland said: "The report highlights the **failure to tackle conservation in the wider countryside**. The introduction of Land Management Contracts offers an ideal opportunity to put this right but the **indications are that this opportunity is going to be missed**. In particular, funding is likely to be restricted for the most effective conservation measures (under Tier 3) and allocated on a competitive basis. This will mean that relatively few land owners benefit from them."

Stuart Housden, Director of RSPB Scotland said: "This report demonstrates good progress in some areas but also highlights **many outstanding issues**. Meeting the 2010 target for halting the loss of biodiversity, as agreed by the EU, will be a **challenge for the next Executive**, of whatever political hue. Fortunately, however, **solutions are at hand** – and identified in this report and the individual species and habitat action plans. Often, these solutions are based on the successes to date, but all will require funding – the overall funding need, to meet the 2010 target in Scotland is around £43m per year

"For instance, the positive trend reported for corncrake has been delivered by a mix of site protection measures and, especially, agri-environment measures; maintaining these and funding agri-environment schemes for the many other farmland species must be a priority. Similarly, the success, to date, for capercaillie has been delivered by targeted land management and advisory projects funded by the Forestry Commission Scotland and the EU LIFE scheme. This effort needs to be maintained, enhanced and the habitat restoration needed for other species urgently funded. **The next Executive needs to ensure that funding streams are available to support**

this valuable conservation work – not just for its own sake, but in recognition of its contribution to Scotland's wider economy and our quality of life.

"RSPB Scotland is contributing substantially towards the process – leading on over 30 species (birds and other wildlife) which need urgent conservation action, but we, and other NGOs, need the support of the Executive to make this contribution more effective – and, together, meet the 2010 target."

Paul Kirkland, Director of Butterfly Conservation Scotland said "Thousands of volunteers are monitoring species and habitats across Scotland, in conjunction with NGOs, such as Butterfly Conservation, RSPB and Plantlife, in the belief that their commitment is reflected by the Scottish Executive, public bodies and business. There is a real danger that if this is perceived not to be the case, this wonderful and unique resource could begin to wither".

Angus Yarwood from the Woodland Trust Scotland said, "This report confirms what we all know – that **we are not moving quickly enough in helping the environment adapt to climate change.** We must protect what we have, restore what has been spoilt and create new habitats for the future. It is essential that we do more to ensure that the widest biodiversity is able to survive and evolve in the context of environmental change.

"The Woodland Trust has **evidence that some of the most pristine examples of priority woodland habitat, that the UKBAP aims to protect, are directly and imminently under threat** and still being lost. Our approaches must be about both the UKBAP priorities and the wider landscape which they sit in. To do this it is essential that we embed protection and improvement of biodiversity into our agricultural reforms, forestry policy, preparation for the water framework directive and land-use planning, to allow wildlife the ability to adapt to climate we have damaged"

Simon Milne, CEO of Scottish Wildlife Trust says "Ensuring the diversity of our natural environment is fundamental to the well-being of Scotland. This report highlights the significant challenges we face, in spite of the efforts that have been made in previous decades, and indicates that **a fresh perspective on nature conservation is urgently required.** We must expand our efforts beyond the management of individual species and sites and take a more integrated approach which focuses on large areas of Scotland's land, water and seas. This must involve government, the voluntary and private sectors and communities, and ensure that there is a real recognition of the economic and social value of our environment. **Opportunities are there but we must grasp them before it is too late. Don't let us squander our chance of saving Scotland's wildlife from further decline.**"

Link's **Everyone campaign** is asking for better protection of Scotland's seas, landscapes, wildlife and habitats. Go to <http://www.everyonecan.org/campaigns.html> for more information on the campaign.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

1. Scottish Environment LINK (LINK) is an umbrella body for Scotland's voluntary environmental organisations representing approximately half a million members throughout Scotland.
2. LINK's Biodiversity Task Force consists of the following environmental NGOs working on biodiversity issues in Scotland:

Bat Conservation Trust	Royal Zoological Society of Edinburgh
Butterfly Conservation Scotland	Scottish Native Woods
Marine Conservation Society	Scottish Wildlife Trust
National Trust for Scotland	Soil Association
Plantlife Scotland	The Ramblers Scotland
Raptor Study Group	Woodland Trust Scotland
RSPB Scotland	