



Summer 2011 Newsletter

The true value of the UK's natural environment *Laurie Jackson, Sussex Wildlife Trust*

The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) has released its key findings. The NEA is the first analysis of the benefits provided by the natural environment to society and the economy in the UK.



Photo: Sussex Wildlife Trust

We are dependent upon the natural environment and the ecosystem services that it provides for us, however many of these are currently undervalued. In particular, less tangible services such as air purification and pollination are frequently not taken in to account in economic assessments and policy.

Some of the key messages coming out of the NEA include:

- The natural world is critically important to our social and economic well-being, but is consistently undervalued in decision making.
- Ecosystems and ecosystem services, and the ways in which we benefit from them have changed markedly in the past 60 years. As the UK's population grew many ecosystem services relating to air, water and soil quality declined.
- The UK's ecosystems are currently delivering some services well, but around 30% are still in long-term decline. Others, such as marine fisheries and species diversity are in a degraded condition. Reduced ecosystem services are associated with habitat loss and changes in biodiversity, although the exact relationship is still incompletely understood.
- The UK population will continue to grow, along with its demands and expectations. This is likely to increase pressures on ecosystem services.
- Actions taken and decisions made now will have consequences far into the future. Recognising the value of ecosystem services more fully would allow the UK to move towards a more sustainable future.
- A move to sustainable development will require an appropriate mixture of regulations, technology, financial investment and education, as well as changes in individual and societal behaviour and adoption of a more integrated approach to ecosystem management.

More information about the UK National Ecosystem Assessment can be found on their website <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>. The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity <http://www.teebweb.org/> is an international initiative to draw attention to the global benefits of biodiversity and highlight the growing cost of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.



Photo: Fran Southgate

Theft of Juniper leaves bitter taste for Plantlife and the National Trust *Plantlife*

A thief has left a conservation project in jeopardy after taking a dozen newly-planted juniper bushes from Harting Down near Chichester. Conservation charity Plantlife is working in partnership with the National Trust at the site as part of a wider conservation project to save juniper from becoming extinct in southern England.



Photo: Alexander Henderson

The Plantlife project began in 2009, focusing on chalk and limestone across the counties of southern England. Recent data indicate that on average juniper has declined by 60% across these counties and is now extinct in six. Juniper is one of only three native conifers in Britain, and is an important part of our ancient landscape and culture, having been one of the first trees to colonise after the last Ice Age.

Juniper's aromatic berries are prized for the flavour they impart to gin, and the berries are also used in cooking, particularly to flavour game dishes. Its disappearance represents more than the loss of a single species; it is host to over 40 species of insect and fungus that are almost entirely dependent on it.

Without conservation action, this charismatic species could be extinct across southern England by 2060. More than 30 juniper sites were chosen - including Harting Down - where different management techniques have been trialled over the last two years to help this iconic species, including scrub clearance, creation and sowing of ground scrapes, planting of young junipers and protecting junipers and their berries from rabbits.



Photo: Mark Monk-Terry

Twelve young junipers were planted at Harting Down, following the clearance of dense scrub from an area over the winter of 2009/2010. The young plants were small, and each had a special shelter to protect it from rabbits and other small animals. The National Trust was checking on the junipers regularly and on the second visit following the planting, it was found they had all disappeared.

Biodiversity Information Network Bulletin

Looking for more regular updates? The South East Biodiversity Officers will continue producing the Biodiversity Information Network bulletin that was previously sent out by Tom Butterworth when in his role as Regional Biodiversity Coordinator. There will be one to two of these bulletins each month bringing together news and items of interest in one place. If you would like to be on the list to receive this contact Laurie (details below).

News

An army of volunteers will be wading into ponds across the UK to map the spread of the killer **amphibian chytrid fungus** *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*. Scientists from the Zoological Society of London are working with volunteers to swab more than 6,000 amphibians. Teams will be heading out after dark between April and June to swab in more than 200 ponds across the UK. The Defra-funded survey will include 100 more sites than the last survey in 2008, with volunteers in action in Northern Ireland for the first time. In addition to sampling common toads, natterjack toads and the UK's three native newt species, they will swab non-native species such as the alpine newt and marsh frog.

In February, the **Balanced Seas** Marine Conservation Zone Project launched its third progress report. A summary of the report has been released to enable those with an interest in the south east sea to see at a glance the areas that are being discussed and why they are being considered. The report can be downloaded at www.balancedseas.org

Experts from Natural England, the Zoological Society of London and Oxford University have teamed up to perform a vital health check on the **adder**, following worrying declines. With its iconic zig-zag markings, this snake was once a common sight in large parts of the British countryside. But recent surveys suggest a third of remaining adder populations may comprise fewer than ten adults. Scientists believe this is down to habitat loss and degradation, resulting in smaller and more isolated adder populations, which may not be able to maintain a healthy level of genetic diversity.

The IEEM Tony Bradshaw Best Practice Awards for 2011 are open for entries. Entries should demonstrate best practice; display high standards of professionalism; enhance biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and sustainable development; contribute to the profession of ecology and environmental management; and contribute to knowledge exchange, training and education. Entries are welcome from all sectors for projects of any size, with a deadline of 8 July. For further information visit www.ieem.net/awards.asp or contact Jason Reeves jasonreeves@ieem.net 01962 868626.

Funding Deadlines

- PTES Worldwide Small Grants Programme (grants of £2000 - £8000) **15 June 2011**
- HLF Heritage Grants (grants over £50000) **19 June 2011**
- SITA Fast Track Fund (grants up to £10000) **20 June 2011**
- SITA - Fast Track Fund (grants up to £10000) **20 June 2011**
- Tesco Charity Trust Community Award (grants of £1000 - £4000) **30 June 2011**
- SITA - Enriching Nature Programme (grants up to £120000) **1 July 2011**
- Biffaward flagship grants (grants of £150000 - £500000) **1 July 2011**
- Cemex Community Fund (grants of £1000 - £15000) **13 July 2011**
- Children in Need Grants (grants up to £100000) **15 July 2011**
- Grassroots Endowment Fund (grants up to £2000) **15 July 2011**
- Southern Water Fund (grants of £500 - £2000) **15 July 2011**
- PTES Worldwide Continuation Grant (grants of £10000 - £250000) **20 July 2011**
- SITA - Core Fund (grants up to £50000) **25 July 2011**
- American Express Fund (grants up to £5000) **29 July 2011**
- Ernest Cook Trust large grants (grants of £4000 - £10000) **31 July 2011**
- Veolia Environmental Trust (grants of £25000 - £40000) **5 August 2011**
- Little Cheyne Court Wind Farm Fund (grants up to £5000) **9 September 2011**
- Idlewild Trust (grants up to £5000) **23 September 2011**

Look out for

The Flora locale Training Programme 2011 continues to be great value for money and includes workshops on the full range of habitat restoration topics. The programme is created for people involved in the design, management and restoration of landscapes for biodiversity, whether on a farm, smallholding, village green or city park. Each event is led by an individual with practical experience and provides an informal opportunity for participants to learn from an expert and each other. This year for the first time we are working with The Millennium Seed Bank and the Weald Meadows Initiative. We continue to collaborate successfully with the Grazing Advice Partnership and the Small Woods

Association. The full training programme and information on how to book can be found on the training and events page at www.floralocale.org

Buglife report on the impact of artificial light on invertebrates
<http://www.buglife.org.uk/News/Save+bugs+from+light+pollution>

The new High Weald Landscape Trust website <http://www.highwealdlandscapetrust.org/>

Pond Conservation's Big Pond Dip 2011 <http://www.pondconservation.org.uk/bigponddip>

Protecting England's Natural Treasures, a report by Natural England on the condition of England's Sites of Special Scientific Interest
<http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/ne306>

The Urban Regeneration and Greenspace Partnership website, which provides information, research and case studies to help maximise the benefits of green infrastructure <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/URGP>.

Plantlife - *Here today, here tomorrow? Horizon scanning for invasive non-native plants* - report http://www.plantlife.org.uk/publications/here_today_here_tomorrow/

Upcoming Events

- **June 15:** IEEM summer conference *Biodiversity and Big Society* is held in London <http://www.ieem.net/ieemsummerconference2011.asp>
- **September 5-7:** A spatial ecology and conservation conference takes place in Birmingham <http://www.ert-conservation.co.uk/SEC1-Homepage.htm>
- **September 6-8:** IALE conference *Landscape ecology and ecosystem services* takes place in Telford <http://iale.org.uk/conference2011>
- **September 13-15:** IMCORE conference *Adapting to coastal change: local perspectives* takes place in The Hague <http://imcore.eu/TheHagueConference2011/>
- **September 13-15:** Wessex Institute of Technology *First International Conference on Lake Sustainability* takes place in the New Forest <http://www.wessex.ac.uk/11-conferences/lakesustainability-2011.html>
- **September 22-27:** The 8th International Dormouse conference takes place in Ostritz, Germany http://www.senckenberg.de/root/index.php?page_id=13771&preview=true
- **September 26-30:** The World Conference on Marine Biodiversity is held in Aberdeen <http://www.marine-biodiversity.org/programme/>
- **November 2-3:** The annual Communicate conference for environmental communicators takes place in Bristol <http://www.bnhc.org.uk/home/communicate.html>
- **November 2-3:** IEEM autumn conference *Tools for Rebuilding Biodiversity* takes place in Liverpool <http://www.ieem.net/conferences.asp>



Photo: Alan Price, Gatehouse Studio/
Sussex Wildlife Trust

Is there something we should know about?
Got an article you would like us to include?

Contact Laurie with the details if you would like something included in a future newsletter
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The deadline for submissions for the next edition is 21 August 2011.