

Nature in brief

1: Biodiversity



Ballachuan Hazel Wood Wildlife Reserve

To celebrate the **Year of Natural Scotland**, the Scottish Wildlife Trust is producing 12 nature briefings.

We open with **biodiversity** – the fundamental **building block of Scotland's ecosystems**.

'Biodiversity', 'life', 'species richness', 'nature' - the names we use aren't important – what is crucial is that we recognise biodiversity's intrinsic value which we as a society have a responsibility **to protect, enhance and pass on for future generations to enjoy**.

The state of our wildlife is also inextricably linked to Scotland's prosperity. **Species richness = healthy ecosystems**.

Ecosystems provide us with 'free' services, worth about **£21 billion per year to Scotland's economy**, such as crop pollination; carbon storage; increased air and water quality.

Globally, **biodiversity is being lost at an unprecedented rate** and Scotland, like its European neighbours, failed to reach the target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

There is an increasing realisation that the impacts of **biodiversity loss might be as big a threat to our ecosystems as climate change**.

It's not all doom and gloom however - we have a chance now, through the refreshed Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to halt the decline. We will need to **be bold, invest resources wisely, and take action** to deliver **biological outcomes** not just in protected areas but also throughout the wider countryside at the **landscape scale**.

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What the Scottish Government can do:

- **Scottish Government must stick to its commitments** to deliver the Convention of Biological Diversity's 20 Aichi targets in the SBS
- **Champion biodiversity** across all government directorates be they involved in health, economy, transport or planning etc.
- **Provide statutory guidance to public bodies** and local authorities on how they should deliver and report on their Biodiversity Duty
- **Support 'greening' of the Common Agricultural Policy** so farmers who deliver public benefits in terms of clean water, productive soils, carbon storage and biodiversity are better rewarded
- **Develop a National Ecological Network opportunity map** for the whole of Scotland and use this to help target agri-environment spend, new developments and large scale ecological restoration projects
- **Develop a suite of high level Ecosystem Health Indicators** at national and regional level which will provide an annual 'report card' on the health of Scotland's natural environment
- **Designate an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas** to safeguard important marine habitats and species