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Monitoring Marine Protected Areas

As part of our remit to monitor the UK's offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) we embarked on a survey aboard the *Cefas Endeavour* to carry out a variety of sampling in the North Sea. These surveys aim to gather data to allow us to identify changes that may be happening over time in MPAs.

The focus for this survey was on mud habitats, where slender sea pens and burrowing anemones can often be spotted protruding from the surface. These species are delicate and generally, though not always, unable to move themselves, so can be vulnerable to the effects of activities such as trawling.

The survey involved collecting samples inshore for Natural England's MPA monitoring work and offshore at Fulmar Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). Fulmar MCZ is located approximately 224 km from the Northumberland coast and covers an area of 2,437 km², a similar size to the county of Cheshire! The results of the analyses of these samples will contribute to an ongoing series of monitoring surveys that will enable us to observe any potential changes over time to the biological communities across Fulmar.

You can read all about this survey on [our blog](#).

Lifetime achievement award for Alison

Our Senior CITES Policy Adviser Alison Prince was recognised at the recent UK Wildlife Crime Conference. Alison received a lifetime achievement award for her efforts supporting the fight against illegal wildlife trade – all done behind the scenes providing analysis, training, expert witness statements and testimony.

Alison has made a significant and sustained contribution in combatting wildlife crime, especially illegal wildlife trade, for more than 20 years. Wildlife crime isn't victimless, it affects the common heritage of us all and Alison's pioneering use of impact statements in wildlife crimes has received praise from the judiciary and prosecutors. Alison also co-ordinates the Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group which brings together the country nature conservation bodies, JNCC, police forces, UK Border Force and others to assess the conservation risk to species and habitats from wildlife crime, the importance of enforcement intervention, and to identify and recommend priorities for concerted action. Many congratulations Alison on your well deserved award!

Air pollution report published

Our recently published report – [Guidance on Decision-making Thresholds for Air Pollution](#) – outlines decision-making thresholds to help inform assessments of the impacts of air quality on designated nature conservation sites, such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

Commissioned by JNCC on behalf of the Inter-agency Air Pollution Group and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the report consists of two documents: a main report which provides guidance is accompanied by a technical report which describes the evidence used in setting the decision-making criteria.

Our report helps decision-makers have confidence in focussing their assessment efforts on those proposals that require greater scrutiny, without undermining conservation objectives. It is intended to be used by anyone involved in the assessment of air pollution impacts on designated sites, including nature conservation body advisers, competent authorities and consultants acting on behalf of project proposers.

Birds of Conservation Concern

The report [*Birds of Conservation Concern 5*](#) is compiled by a coalition of the UK's leading bird conservation and monitoring organisations – British Trust for Ornithology, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, JNCC, Natural England, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds – which reviews the status of all regularly occurring birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

The latest assessment shows that 70 species are now of 'highest conservation concern' and have been placed on the assessment's Red list. In addition 13 species are on the Amber list and 72 on the Green. Worryingly, the Red list now accounts for 29% of UK species – more than ever before. Amongst the new additions to the Red list are the Swift, House Martin, Greenfinch and Bewick's Swan.

The assessment does, however, also contain some good news and demonstrates that targeted conservation action can make a real difference. The UK's largest bird of prey, the White-tailed Eagle, has moved from the Red to the Amber list as a result of decades of conservation work including reintroductions and increased protection.

New reports highlight recent work in the Turks & Caicos Islands

Two new JNCC reports have recently been published as part of our [Darwin Plus funded project](#) in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The project aims to build the evidence base to support assessment and management programmes in the coastal and marine environment of the Islands. [*JNCC Report 692 – Developing an Asset Register for the Turks and Caicos Coastal-Marine Area*](#) – investigates natural capital approaches through a study of the shallow marine coastal areas of the islands, to create a Natural Capital Asset Register for the TCI for the first time. [*JNCC Report 693 – Marine indicators to monitor changes in marine-coastal natural capital: Review of indicators from the literature*](#) – consists of a preliminary literature review, providing an overview of marine ecological indicators and types of data required.