

Summary

Biodiversity is 'the variety of life' - all living creatures and their habitats. In 1994, following on from the 1992 Earth Summit, the government launched its UK Biodiversity Action Plan. A key feature of this is the development of Local Biodiversity Action Plans to aid the conservation of important threatened species and habitats, and to form part of Local Agenda 21 (sustainable development) initiatives. At UK level, 1,250 species and 61 broad and key habitats were identified as priorities for Action Plans.

This report presents the results of an audit of the priority species and habitats which are present in NE Scotland (Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray). It is not a complete account of the biodiversity of the area, nor does it consider every threatened species present. However, it is a first step towards identifying what can be done in NE Scotland to help achieve national biodiversity targets, and also helps to identify some further local priorities.

Species: Around 398 of the nationally listed species occur in the North-east (c 30%), including 107 of 508 species (21%) on the high priority 'Short' and 'Middle' Lists. Aberdeenshire holds 309 of the listed species, Moray 275, Aberdeen 161 and the sea area 65. For the Short and Middle list species, an analysis of distributions suggests that NW Moray and Deeside have the highest numbers of listed species. Concentrations also occur in Donside, lower Speyside, around Haddo House and Aberdeen itself.

For more than 100 of the listed species present, the North-east can be considered significant in a Scottish or UK context, holding a high proportion of the population or important sites. These include 10 mammals, 30 birds, one amphibian, 2 fish, 23 invertebrates, 11 lichens, 11 bryophytes and 16 flowering plants. Although these are very approximate figures, they point to some priorities towards which NE Scotland can make a very important contribution. A number of other species have been suggested as being locally important.

Habitats: The majority (48 / 61) of the UK listed habitats are found in the area. These include 28 of the priority 'Key' habitats, of which 12 are also 'Broad' habitats, and a further 20 'Broad' habitats. Aberdeenshire holds examples of c 44 of these, Moray c 45 and Aberdeen c 29. Habitats which are well represented in NE Scotland in a UK or Scottish context are: native pine woods, planted coniferous woodlands, acid grassland, upland heathland (moorland), montane habitats, lowland raised bogs, fens, coastal vegetated shingle, sand dunes and open sea. In addition, 6 locally important habitats were identified; of these, birch woodlands and serpentine grassland/heath were considered to be of national significance.

The occurrence of some of the listed species and habitats needs further confirmation, and some additional work is suggested in order to complete the audit.

North-east Scotland is therefore of considerable importance for many UK priority species and habitats. This audit should help as a first step towards developing local action plans to ensure that this range of biodiversity is conserved into the next century.