



Project Work Package:

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REVIEW OF PRIORITIES FOR BIODIVERSITY DATA FOR IRELAND'S FRESHWATER HABITATS – FOLLOW UP FROM THE RECORDER'S EVENT 2009

Introduction

The National Biodiversity Data Centre held its 3rd Annual Recorders' Event on 20 & 21 August 2009. The title of the event was *Ireland's Freshwater Habitats – priorities for biodiversity data*. A key objective for hosting the recorder's event was to identify and agree national priorities for freshwater biodiversity data over the coming 5 or so years.

The following priorities were identified from the discussions and are divided into two main groups.

1. Expanding the knowledge base on freshwater biodiversity

- i. Reinstatement of annual meeting of freshwater biologists.
- ii. Investigate a programme of training for amateur recorders.
- iii. Promote networking among taxonomists and researchers on the more difficult groups (for example, sponges).
- iv. Establish volunteer opportunities for graduates.
- v. Develop web-based keys.
- vi. Other suggestions included: a simplified mechanism for amateur recording, some maps to be produced at different taxonomic levels (i.e. genus and family), to submit a document to funding bodies highlighting the knowledge gaps relevant to their biodiversity funding.

2. Information needs for legislation and conservation management

- i. Develop data sharing protocols between the Environmental Data Exchange Network (EDEN) and the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- ii. Provide mechanisms for the valuable incidental records that are collected by individuals or NGOs to supplement monitoring data collected by state agencies for reporting under the EU Directives.
- iii. Seek to have included as a condition of research grants that data be provided to the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- iv. Develop a Red List programme for freshwater biodiversity
- v. Provide up-to-date distributional information on Ireland's freshwater species, in particular conservation priority species and invasive species. Make information on these species available in appropriate formats both nationally and at the local authority level.
- vi. The absence of a national habitat map was recognised as a knowledge gap.
- vii. Investigate the necessity for a broad overview 'state of knowledge' publication on Ireland's biodiversity.

Review of the priorities

1. Expanding the knowledge base on freshwater biodiversity

i. Reinststate annual meeting of freshwater biologists.

An annual meeting of freshwater biologists would allow networking of Irish freshwater biologists (both amateur and professional) and also for updates on research to be presented and discussed.

Action: The National Biodiversity Data Centre will provide the administration for this. The first meeting is to be held in 2010.

ii. Investigate a programme of training for freshwater biological groups.

The initial groups to be targeted are Ephemeroptera and Plecoptera. Target audience to include amateur, student, and professional recorders.

Action: To be done in conjunction with the National Biodiversity Data Centre annual programme of workshops.

iii. Promote networking among taxonomists and researchers on the more difficult groups.

There are some aspects of Ireland's freshwater biodiversity about which relatively little is known. A particular example is the freshwater sponges which are regularly encountered by freshwater biologists but on a national level we are lacking the taxonomic expertise to identify them.

iv. Volunteer opportunities for graduates.

Graduate students are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain jobs. It appears that graduate students would like the opportunity to gain work experience but that there are little opportunities for this.

v. Develop web-based keys.

Our knowledge of Ireland's freshwater biodiversity is limited by a lack of easily accessible Irish keys. It is proposed that a series of online keys be developed. The first groups to be covered will be the freshwater worms and leeches.

Action: The National Biodiversity Data Centre will support the development of these into online keys on the Centre's website, working in collaboration with experts.

vi. Other suggestions included: a simplified mechanism for amateur recording, some maps to be produced at different taxonomic levels (i.e. genus and family), to submit a document to funding bodies highlighting the knowledge gaps relevant to their biodiversity funding.

2. Information needs for legislation and conservation management

- i. Develop data sharing protocols between the Environmental Data Exchange Network (EDEN) and the National Biodiversity Data Centre.*

EDEN, developed by the EPA, is a centralised information exchange for environmental monitoring data. It is intended as a mechanism for sharing environmental data between state agencies and local authorities. Extracting species data from EDEN and displaying this through the National Biodiversity Data Centre's mapping system will make the data available in an additional format that will assist with EU reporting, particularly under the Habitats Directive. All data within the Data Centre will also be made accessible through EDEN.

Action: The Data Centre to liaise with the EPA to develop protocols for sharing of species observation data.

- ii. Provide mechanisms ensuring the valuable incidental records that are collected by individuals or NGOs can supplement monitoring data collected by state agencies for reporting under the EU Directives.*

Displaying data from the Environmental Data Exchange Network through the Data Centre's mapping system (where appropriate) will allow this data to be combined with the other species databases held by the Centre. This will provide a mechanism for all available data to be directly accessible and viewable in a mapped format through the one system (data filtering mechanisms are available for viewing data from individual sources).

Action: The Data Centre to provide when protocols above (i) are in place.

- iii. Seek to have included as a condition of research grants that data be provided to the National Biodiversity Data Centre.*

The Heritage Council include as a stipulation of grants that the data be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The National Parks and Wildlife Service and the EPA operate similar principles. This should be expanded to bodies offering research grants.

- iv. Develop a Red List programme for freshwater biodiversity*

Red Lists provide an objective approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species. Where appropriate databases exist the Data Centre can provide support for freshwater experts who want to publish Red Lists of particular taxonomic groups.

Action: The Data Centre to provide support for database development and the Red List process in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

- v. Provide up-to-date distributional information on Ireland's freshwater species, in particular conservation priority species and invasive species. Make information*

on these species available in appropriate formats both nationally and at the local authority level.

Red Lists indicate extinction risk and are an important first step in generating lists of species that are conservation priorities for Ireland. As information on the conservation priorities within freshwater biodiversity become available these should be easily accessible. Up-to-date information should be available on these species and on aquatic invasive species in the most appropriate format for use nationally and at the local authority level.

Action: The Data Centre to assist with the development of lists of conservation priority species where Red Lists exist. The Data Centre to focus data collation on these species and on problematic freshwater invasives and to discuss with state bodies and local authorities the most appropriate formats for data access.

vi. The absence of a national habitat map was recognised as a knowledge gap.

In terms of information needs for legislation and conservation management, one significant knowledge gap identified was the lack of a national habitat map.

vii. Investigate the necessity for a broad overview 'state of knowledge' publication on Ireland's biodiversity.

Within other spheres 'state of knowledge' publications have proved a useful resource (e.g., A Census Atlas of Irish Agriculture). The feasibility for a similar biodiversity publication should be investigated.