

Climate change already affecting UK wildlife

May 9 2013, by Alex Peel



UK wildlife is already feeling the effects of climate change, scientists say. According to a report out on Thursday, with input from many of the UK's top environmental scientists, many species are now found further north and at higher altitudes than in previous decades.

Climate change may also be making it easier for species from foreign shores to invade, often to the cost of [native wildlife](#).

The Terrestrial Biodiversity Report Card is the first in a series of reports commissioned by the Living With [Environmental Change](#) Partnership, led by NERC with Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

The Report Card is designed to provide policy makers, [land managers](#), environmental consultants and researchers with the most up-to-date evidence on the effects on climate change.

'When thinking about climate change it's important to stand back, review the evidence and take a long-term view,' says Dr Mike Morecroft from Natural England, who led the development of the report.

'The report card shows strong evidence from a large number of different scientific studies that the natural world has started to respond to climate change over the last few decades.'

'It also shows the range and complexity of these changes: some species and habitats are much more sensitive than others.'

'This is a challenge for conservation and we need to adapt our approach to reduce the risks and take advantage of any opportunities. It is also another wake-up call about the seriousness of tackling climate change.'

Amongst the report's most important findings is an increasing risk of new pests and diseases in the UK, such as the oak processionary moth, whose [caterpillars](#) can also cause [respiratory problems](#) in humans.

It also reveals a sharp decline in wildfowl and wading birds wintering in the UK. Surveys show that the number of Bewick's swan wintering in the UK declined by 44 per cent in just ten years between 1997/8 and 2007/8.

Natural Environment Minister, Richard Benyon MP, says the new report will be important for informing new policies to protect wildlife.

'It's essential that we improve our understanding of how the natural environment is changing, as this affects the action we need to take to conserve biodiversity,' he says.

'New policies are based on scientific evidence, which is why research like this is so important.'

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