



PIP GB - Pearls in Peril - securing the future of the freshwater pearl mussel in Great Britain

LIFE11 NAT/UK/000383



Photo Sue Scott/SNH

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Project description:

Background

The freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) is declining dramatically throughout its range and is under grave threat in the UK, as in other areas of its EU distribution. The British populations of the freshwater pearl mussel, which is highlighted for conservation under Annex II of the Habitats Directive, have been adversely affected by multiple issues, including wildlife crime (removal in order to sell the pearls), habitat degradation and declining water quality.

Objectives

This overall project objective is to safeguard the future of the most important pearl mussel populations (*M. margaritifera*), in Great Britain (i.e., in 21 Natura 2000 sites across England, Scotland and Wales) by tackling the main threats to this and by implementing best practice conservation methods.

Specific project goals are:

- Restoring the habitat of freshwater pearl mussels and their host fish (brown trout and Atlantic salmon) in selected UK river catchments. This will be achieved by improving instream and riparian (river) habitats for freshwater pearl mussels and their host fish;
- Securing the long-term survival of existing mussel populations and

preventing their further degradation, by carrying out artificial ‘infection’ of host fish with mussel larvae in three Natura 2000 sites (Ehen, Moriston, North Harris). This action will also include monitoring the existing levels of ‘natural’ infection; and

- Carrying out communications activities aimed at local, national and international audiences to raise awareness of pearl mussel conservation issues. Activities will include events within each project site, as well as presentations, seminars and conferences with national and international audiences.

Expected results:

- A reduction of nutrient and sediment input from diffuse sources by improving the riparian land management in at least five river catchments (Dee, South Esk, Ehen, Evelix and Afon Eden). This will include the promotion of enhanced riparian land management techniques with at least 120 land-managers;
- The promotion of tree planting will take place in at least the five catchments (Dee, Spey, S. Esk, Ehen and Naver). This will include working with at least 60 land-managers;
- The physical restoration of natural in-stream processes will take place in at least five catchments (Dee, S Esk, Naver, Eden, Ehen). This will include the identification of degraded sites throughout each catchment and the delivery of practical restoration work at over 25 individual locations. It will also include the installation of large woody debris and restoring access for Atlantic salmon in the Mingarry Burn catchment;
- A reduction in silt input in at least seven catchments (South Esk, Borgie, Mingarry Burn, Oykel, Eden, Ehen, Evelix) by blocking ditches and establishing riparian wetlands as well as the establishment of extensive areas of native riparian woodland. It will also include identifying opportunities and planning for the implementation of subsequent riparian woodland improvements in the River Moriston catchment;
- A ‘riverwatch’ programme will be developed and delivered in 16 Natura 2000 sites. This will include raising awareness of freshwater pearl mussel conservation issues with at least 20 stakeholder groups; and
- A “pearls in the classroom” programme will be developed and delivered in 20 Natura 2000 network sites. Delivery of the programme will involve at least 150 school visits.

Results

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Habitats - Freshwater

Species - Invertebrates

Keywords

endangered species, river

Target species

Margaritifera margaritifera

Natura 2000 sites

SCI UK0012870	Rannoch Moor
SCI UK0012935	North Harris
SCI UK0012994	River Moidart
SCI UK0012995	River Borgie
SCI UK0012996	River Kerry
SCI UK0013141	Foinaven
SCI UK0019811	River Spey
SCI UK0030057	River Ehen
SCI UK0030075	Afon Eden - Cors Goch Trawsfynydd
SCI UK0030079	Ardnamurchan Burns
SCI UK0030081	Abhainn Clais An Eas and Allt a`Mhuilinn
SCI UK0030154	Glen Beasdale
SCI UK0030171	Inverpolly
SCI UK0030206	Mingarry Burn
SCI UK0030231	Arddar and Loch a`Mhuilinn Woodlands
SCI UK0030254	River Evelix
SCI UK0030259	River Moriston
SCI UK0030260	River Naver
SCI UK0030261	River Oykel
SCI UK0030262	River South Esk
SCI UK0030251	River Dee

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Scottish Natural Heritage
Type of organisation	Regional authority
Description	Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is the statutory nature conservation body for Scotland. Its activities aim to secure the conservation and enhancement of the wildlife, habitats and landscapes of Scotland and to help people understand, enjoy and care for them.

Partners Environment Agency of England and Wales,
United Kingdom River and Fisheries Trusts of
Scotland, United Kingdom West Cumbria Rivers
Trust Ltd Forest Enterprise Scotland, United
Kingdom

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Administrative data:

Project reference LIFE11 NAT/UK/000383
Duration 03-SEP-2012 to 02-MAR -2017
Total budget 4,617,398.00 €
EU contribution 2,293,990.00 €
Project location North West (UK)(United Kingdom) Wales(United
Kingdom) Scotland(United Kingdom)

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Read more:

Leaflet Title: "Pearls in Peril: An iconic and vital species
is at critical risk of extinction..." (993 KB)
Editor: Pearls in Peril No of pages: 2

Leaflet Title: "Pearls in Peril" (390 KB) Editor: Pearls in
Peril No of pages: 2

Leaflet Title: "TOP TIPS: For Landowners and
managers in the River Ehen Catchment" (863
KB) Year: 2014 Editor: Pearls in Peril No of
pages: 2

Poster Title: "Pearls in peril: An iconic and vital species
is at critical risk of extinction..." (764 KB)
Editor: Pearls in Peril No of pages: 1

Project web site [Project's website](#)

Project web site - 2 [Project's Facebook page](#)

Project web site - 2 [Project's Twitter page](#)

Publication: Guidelines-Manual Title: "Restoration of Freshwater Pearl Mussel
Streams" (6.85 MB) Author: E. Degerman, S.
Alexanderson, J. Bergengren, ... [Year: 2009
Editor: WWF Sweden No of pages: 64

Publication: Management plan Title: "Pearls in Peril LIFE+ GB: Action A3:
Conservation Actions for the Freshwater Pearl
Mussel in the River Ehen, Cumbria: September
2013-2016" (656 KB) Author: Diane O'Leary
(editor) Year: 2013 Editor: West Cumbria Rivers
Trust No of pages: 49

Video link [Project video 2 \(EN - 6'\)](#)
Video link ["Freshwater Mussels - boosting numbers" \(link to the project's mini film \(4:06\)\)](#)
Video link ["Pearls In Peril" \(EN - 7'\)](#)

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