Implementing an evidence-based framework for review and dissemination of scientific evidence to support biodiversity conservation

A NERC-funded Knowledge Transfer Project
starting January 2005

Rationale: There is a dissemination problem in biodiversity management at the interface between scientific research and policy/practice. This project brings together existing networks of scientists and decision-makers with the key aim of developing and implementing a model for knowledge transfer in biodiversity management through an evidence-based framework following a protocol modified from that established in the health services.

Specific objectives:

- To undertake systematic reviews of the published and unpublished data on a series of problems of current biodiversity importance.

- To establish an active web-based dissemination (push delivery) system for systematic reviews on effectiveness of actions for biodiversity conservation from practical species and site management to national and international policy.

- To develop a culture and reward system (through grants and peer-reviewed publication) within the scientific community for participating in knowledge transfer through undertaking systematic reviews.

- To develop a culture of question formulation in the user community to promote effective use of the evidence-based framework.

- To develop the evidence-based framework as an effective tool for identifying knowledge gaps and therefore research priorities.

The outcome will be a critical step forward in knowledge transfer in push-delivering systematic unbiased reviews of evidence to decision-makers to underpin biodiversity policy and practice. To date decision-makers rely heavily on their own experience, i.e. decision-making is largely experience-based rather than evidence-based. Decision-makers want to and do use evidence when available, but what they gather is not systematic, usually incomplete and often biased.

The collaboration of UKPopNet (Universities of Aberdeen, East Anglia, Leeds, Sheffield, York and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology) and the Centre for Evidence-Based Conservation (University of Birmingham) will undertake systematic reviews and disseminate research evidence to support decision-making. A trained team of individuals will systematically search relevant information using an explicit and repeatable review protocol to minimise bias, interpret the findings and present them on an open-access web site in a format suitable for decision-makers. Organisations representing decision-makers will then assess this information and feedback on its utility.

The project is directly relevant to NERC's aim of ensuring NERC science contributes to the effectiveness of public services and policy and quality of life.

Organisations that have currently agreed to represent the decision-makers: English Nature, CCW, JNCC, Environment Agency, RSPB and National Trust

If you want to get involved just contact us.