



for birds
for people
for ever

Conservation

WORKS



a summary



C.H. Gomersall (RSPB Images)

This is a summary of the full-length report Conservation works . . . for local economies in the UK, by Matthew Rayment and Ian Dickie, available from The RSPB, UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, tel: 01767 680551, or e-mail: matthew.rayment@rspb.org.uk or ian.dickie@rspb.org.uk. It is also on the RSPB website, www.rspb.org.uk. In Scotland, it is obtainable from from Lloyd Austin, The RSPB, Scotland Headquarters, Dunedin House, 25 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh EH4 3TP, tel: 0131 3116500, or e-mail lloyd.austin@rspb.org.uk

The RSPB works for a healthy environment rich in birds and wildlife. It depends on the support and generosity of others to make a difference.

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Nature conservation

benefits rural economies in a number of different ways

- Direct employment in the natural environment sector in the UK is estimated to be the equivalent of 18,000 full time jobs.
- Money spent on goods and services by conservation organisations supports local suppliers and contractors.
- Conservation schemes pay for work in the countryside outside nature reserves.
- Tourism increases as wildlife and landscapes attract visitors who spend money locally.



Employment

The natural environment sector includes activities relating to the conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage, including nature and landscape.

Using published surveys and RSPB studies, we estimate around 18,000 jobs in the conservation sector in Britain and Northern Ireland (at least 8,789 jobs in England, 6,680 in Scotland, 1,564 in Wales and 1,000 in Northern Ireland).

Conservation jobs help keep rural people in the countryside and benefit community life. They help to diversify the rural economy, benefit nature conservation and enhance regional identity.

What kind of jobs?

Conservation offers opportunities for people with many kinds of expertise, such as countryside management, biological and environmental sciences, visitor services and environmental education, as well as managerial and administrative jobs.

Employment in nature conservation is widely spread across the UK, but reflects variations in landscape, habitats and biodiversity. Many jobs are in remote rural areas with declining employment in agriculture and few alternative jobs. In such areas, conservation offers valuable variety.

Management of the Abernethy Forest RSPB nature reserve, and spending by visitors to the Loch Garten osprey centre within it, supports 87 jobs in Badenoch and Strathspey

Top and left by Andrew Hay (RSPB Images)



Cirl buntings have increased as a direct result of an agri-environment scheme in Devon

Conservation expenditure

As well as employing people, conservation organisations spend money and generate work. They support local suppliers and contractors. Organisations spent £384 million in England and £44 million in Wales on nature and landscape conservation in 1991–92, equivalent to £485 million and £56 million at 2000 prices.

Conservation schemes outside nature reserves

Nature reserves generate small pockets of activity, but conservation schemes influence much larger landscapes. Agri-environment schemes pay farmers to protect and enhance the environment and can help farms survive in difficult times.

The cirl bunting, once widespread in England, is confined to low-intensity mixed farmland in South Devon. The introduction of special Countryside Stewardship payments in 1992 turned a long-term decline into a recovery. Stewardship agreements with farmers support extra jobs and 89% of farmers perceive them to have increased the profitability of their enterprise. This scheme is doing great things for wildlife while making farmers more optimistic about their future.

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Woodland management schemes have also created new jobs. By focusing on existing, under-managed woods, these schemes have helped wildlife without displacing jobs in other land uses such as agriculture. In Wales, some 290 jobs in

management, harvesting, processing and manufacturing activities involving Welsh hardwoods have been created in association with the Coed Cymru scheme. In southern England, the Wessex Coppice Group estimates that 500 jobs could be created in Hampshire alone by restoring 6,400 ha (16,000 acres) of derelict coppice, with scope to create 2,000 jobs throughout southern England.

Wildlife tourism

Wildlife attracts visitors to rural areas, where they spend money on local goods and services, providing income and employment. In many areas, this has a larger impact than conservation organisations' employment and expenditure. A study in 1997 estimated that tourists' spending in the English countryside was £9 billion per year, supporting 350,000 jobs.



Andrew Hay (RSPB Images)

Many people visit rural areas for their pleasant landscapes, and nature conservation can boost rural tourism by helping to enhance the countryside. Wildlife tourism can extend the tourism season and reduce seasonal unemployment. In the Scottish island of Islay, many visitors come in the winter months to watch the large flocks of geese, while in the Isles of Scilly, an influx of birdwatchers each October extends the tourism season by a month.

Reserve visitors spend money

The RSPB manages 168 nature reserves in the UK. People are encouraged to visit them as much as is possible without damaging sensitive habitats and wildlife. The RSPB promotes 20 reserves most actively, offering good access, well-developed facilities (visitor centres, car parks, shops, hides, and footpaths) and easily-seen wildlife.

RSPB nature reserves receive more than one million visits each year. Visitors spend £12 million around reserves each year, as a result of visiting those reserves, estimated to support more than 300 jobs in local economies. Employment on reserves amounts to a further 200 jobs.

Spending by visitors attracted by red kites (below) supports more than 100 jobs in the mid-Wales economy

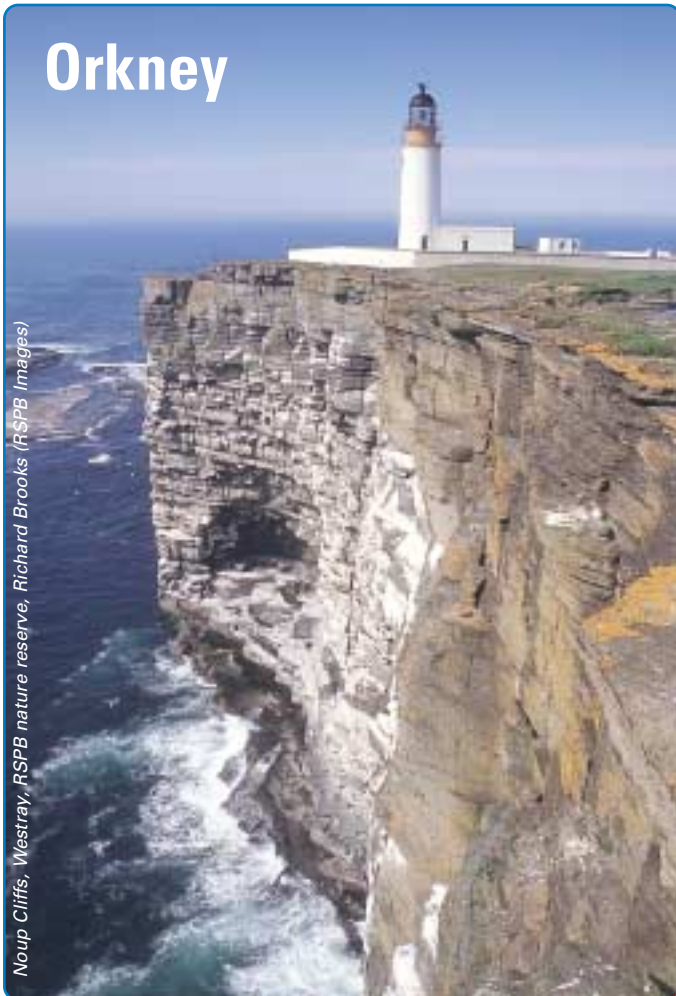
Malcolm Hunt (RSPB Images)



C H Gomersall (RSPB Images)

Conservation and local economies: some case studies

Orkney



Tourism put about £18 million into the islands in 2000, £1.3 million spent by visitors attracted by birds and wildlife. Other main attractions are Orkney's history, archaeology and the quality of the landscape. The future of tourism depends on the protection of Orkney's outstanding natural and historic environment.

The Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland

The RSPB's largest nature reserve is around Forsinard in north Scotland, a rural area a long way from the main cities of central Scotland. The reserve brought an extra £185,000 of visitor spending into the economies of Caithness and Sutherland in 1997. Visitors have increased (and promotion of the area greatly expanded) since 1997 and the nature reserve has the potential to attract many more visitors.

Red kites and tourism on the Black Isle

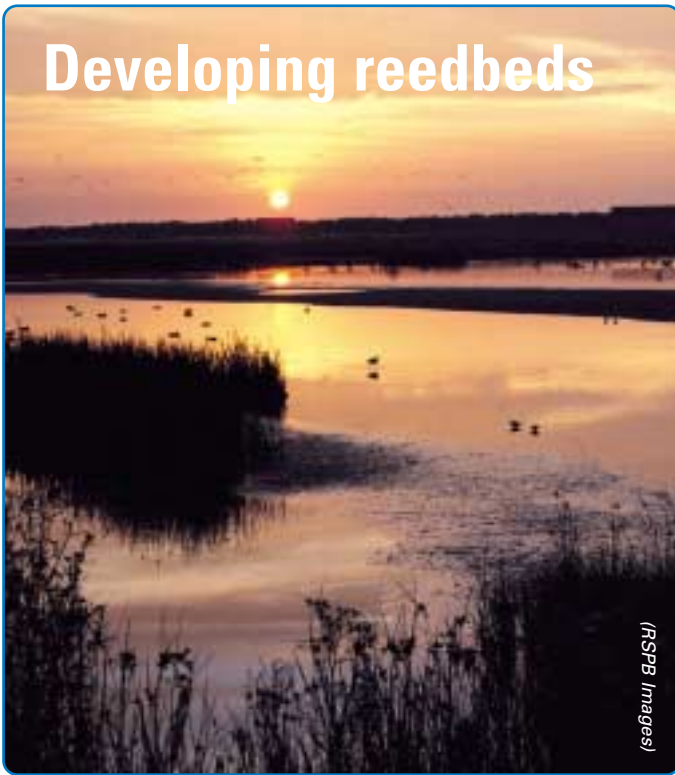
Red kites, re-introduced to the Black Isle in the Highland region of Scotland, are viewed at North Kessock Tourist Information Centre via closed circuit television. Large numbers of visitors go there and may also visit the area to watch dolphins. In 2000, the wildlife of the Black Isle proved a major attraction for many visitors and red kite watchers added £116,000 to the local economy.

A wild goose chase



Geese in Scotland damage agricultural crops but benefit tourism by attracting winter birdwatchers and goose shooters. Between them, they spend £5.4 million in the local economies around goose sites each winter, of which £3.6 million can be attributed to the presence of geese themselves. Goose-watching alone was estimated to attract £1.5 million to these economies each year, significant when compared to the damage caused by geese and supporting the case for rewarding farmers who manage their land in a way that supports healthy goose numbers.

Developing reedbeds



(RSPB Images)

Reedbeds seem unlikely tourist attractions yet are full of exciting and often rare wildlife. Their creation and management benefits both rural economies and wildlife. Management of reedbeds for conservation supports up to 90 jobs, plus much more contract work, worth up to £4 million per year. Commercial harvesting of reeds provides more employment, and helps to support the thatching industry. Major reedbed reserves such as Titchwell and Minsmere in East Anglia are among the RSPB's most popular reserves, attracting money to local economies.

Norfolk's valuable coastline

A study on the Norfolk coast in 1999 estimated that visitors to six prime sites spent £21 million per year locally. Those wanting to see birds and wildlife spent £6 million in the area, supporting an estimated 135 jobs. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust's reserve at Cley and the RSPB's reserve at Titchwell brought in £2.5 million and £1.8 million respectively to the Norfolk coastal economy in 1999. Work by conservation organisations managing sites in the area supports a further 30 jobs.

Minsmere: a Suffolk gem

This RSPB nature reserve between Felixstowe and Lowestoft attracts almost 80,000 visitors per year, who spend £1.1 million in the local economy, supporting 27 tourism jobs. Direct employment on the reserve adds a further 20 jobs.

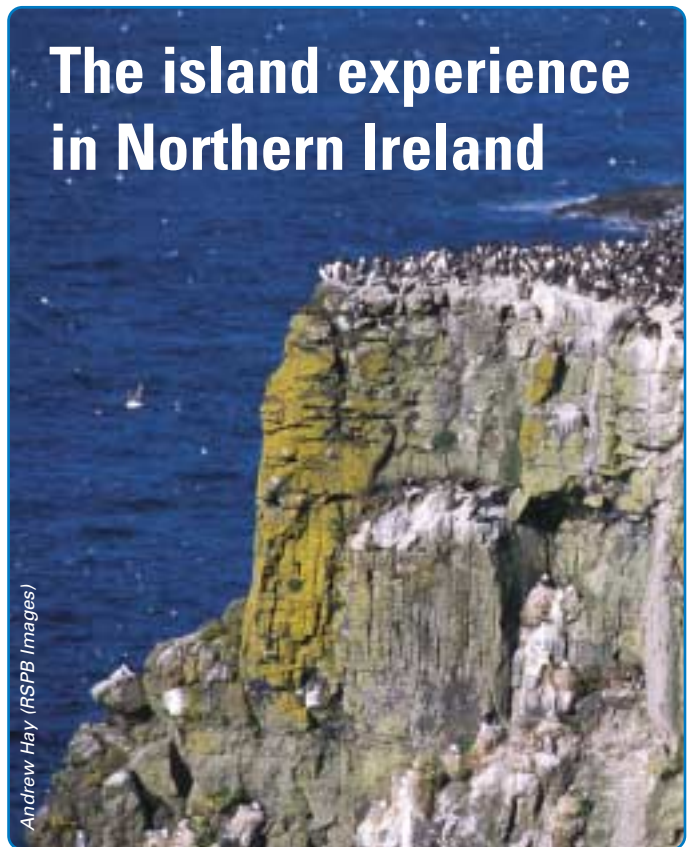
Peregrines appeal

The RSPB and Forestry Commission peregrine viewing scheme at Symond's Yat Rock attracts 50,000 visitors each year, spending £551,000 in the Forest of Dean area in 1999, supporting an estimated 18 jobs.

Leighton Moss: Lancashire success story

This RSPB nature reserve, 10 miles north of Lancaster, is one of the most visited reserves, with 90,000 visitors, including 4,000 schoolchildren, each year. In 1999, the wildlife of Leighton Moss and neighbouring sites attracted at least £950,000 extra spending in the local economy, supporting at least 27 tourism jobs. A further 20 jobs are supported by visitors to the Leighton Moss area attracted by its scenery.

The island experience in Northern Ireland



Andrew Hay (RSPB Images)

About 25,000 people travel to Rathlin Island, off Northern Ireland's north coast, each year, 6,000 visiting the RSPB reserve at the West Lighthouse. A survey in August 2000 found that 78% of visitors watched birds and other wildlife during their visit and the visitors spent £245,000 on the island each year, supporting at least seven jobs. The island ferry employs 10 people full time and two-thirds of the ferry's traffic is estimated to be recreational passengers.



The future

Interest in conservation is growing, and benefits to local people and economies are increasing. **Conservation Works** recommends a series of policy measures that would help both wildlife and rural economies in the UK.



Restoring and re-creating wildlife habitats such as native woodlands, heathland and downland will create jobs and protect wildlife.

Supporting conservation-friendly rural produce such as organic food, timber from native woodlands and thatching materials from UK reedbeds could provide new employment opportunities.

Investing in conservation and traditional countryside management skills such as coppicing, woodland management and thatching would help to promote the restoration and conservation of habitats such as woodlands and reedbeds.

Reforming the Common Agricultural Policy could benefit wildlife and create jobs.

Promoting sustainable tourism can bring benefits both to conservation and local economies.

Environmental tax reform offers potential for increased employment and environmental improvement.

Recognising the role of nature conservation in rural development will help to strengthen attitudes towards conservation.