

Conservation Officer's Report 2021, Mags Cousins

Various members, including Council have been busy on various aspects of molluscan conservation work over the past year. Many thanks to those who have contributed material. I'm sure the following is only a fraction of what has taken place so if you wish your voluntary conservation work to be shared with members in future do let me know during the year.

Invasive Non-Native Species Horizon Scanning for Scotland

In late June 2021 Martin Willing was contacted by a representative of the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) and invited to take part in a 'horizon scanning' study to produce lists of harmful Invasive Non-native Species (INNS) that might invade Scotland within the next ten years. With numerous mollusc species to consider, it was decided to divide the initial work on terrestrial, marine and freshwater species between Society members Ben Rowson, Simon Taylor and Martin Willing respectively. The project ran between August – November 2021; further details will be given in a forthcoming Mollusc World (59) article.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981: The 7th Quinquennial Review 2021 - First responses from The Conchological Society

Early 2021 saw the launch of the first consultation phase of the 7th Quinquennial Review (QQR7) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Martin Willing was approached by Buglife to work in partnership with them to submit proposals to the Government's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). Following consultation with other Society members a first set of proposals were submitted in 2021. This QQR review process is still ongoing, and a more detailed account will appear (alongside this Officer's report) in the next issue of Mollusc World (59).

British Wildlife magazine

Three molluscan 'Wildlife Reports' were published in *British Wildlife* in 2021 - **32** (5): 374 – 376; **32** (8): 607 – 609; **33** (2):139 – 142. As in previous years, these covered a wide range of molluscan conservation news issues, partly drawing upon papers, reports and articles from *Mollusc World* and *The Journal of Conchology* and so publicising the Society's work to a wider audience.

Adastra

Each year the Sussex Wildlife Trust's Biological Records Centre publishes *Adastra*, a review of wildlife recording in the county during the previous year. In the 2020 issue (published 2021) Martin Willing included an annual mollusc recorder report for the year including a wide-ranging review of molluscan news which can be viewed at <https://sxbrc.org.uk/projects/publications/Adastra2020/>.

Identification requests

Enquiries continue to come in from the public, often non members, interested in molluscs they have come across. These id requests arrive via Twitter, email and to the two main molluscan Facebook groups which are not run by Conch Soc, but many members engage with them; Land & Freshwater Mollusca Britain & Europe and the British Marine Mollusca group. For example a rather surprised shopper found a snail which turned out to be a Mediterranean Snail *Theba pisana* in a packet of mint from Morocco bought from Sainsbury's; and a large and unusually pale shell from Wiltshire that was confirmed as Garden Snail *Cornu aspersum*, not Roman Snail *Helix pomatia* as the enquirer initially thought.

Conservation News from Ireland, Evelyn Moorkens

Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*

The KerryLIFE project undertook conservation measures for the Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FPM) in two catchments from 2014 to 2019. KerryLIFE is currently submitting its final report to the EU.

These two catchments and another six were brought on since 2019 by the “Pearl mussel project”. This is a locally led European Innovation Partnership (EIP) where local farmers, researchers and advisors work together to develop a programme to rewet these FPM catchments to improve the hydrology, a very important aspect of restoring conservation status. Landowners are paid by results based on a scoring scheme for the recovery of indicator plants in their fields that demonstrate that their peat lands are rewetting.

This project is now being rolled out across the country via a new scheme for Common Agricultural Policy rural development payments. It is also being used in a new LIFE integrated project called Wild Atlantic Nature. The project aims to improve communication, cooperation and coordination of the protecting and restoration of Ireland’s blanket bog Natura Network along the Atlantic seaboard. The restoration of blanket bog is essential to the recovery of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel.

A further LIFE integrated project called Waters of LIFE aims to protect and restore high ecological status waterbodies in Ireland. The project is set up to support the implementation of measures to protect and enhance high-status waters through a catchment-scale demonstration project. The project will develop, test and validate integrated catchment management measures to reverse the ongoing decline in the state of Ireland’s Water Framework Directive high status water bodies. Again, FPM catchments have been prioritized for this project.

Conchological Society members Evelyn Moorkens and Ian Killeen are advising on all these projects and more details on all these projects are available at <https://ec.europa.eu>

Geyer’s Whorl Snail *Vertigo geyeri*

A new project is underway to restore a site at Lough Talt in County Sligo which formerly hosted Geyer’s Whorl Snail *Vertigo geyeri*. A drinking water abstraction that caused excessive drawdown is being closed, and rehabilitation efforts can now begin. This will include instrumenting the fen habitat here and at current sites for the snail, before translocating snails into suitable habitat to try to recover a population. Postgraduate students will undertake the work under the supervision of Evelyn Moorkens.

Kerry Slug *Geomalacus maculosus*

A major road through Kerry Slug habitat continues, along with the largest habitat creation project for slugs in Ireland to date. To compensate for the loss of habitat to the road, new habitat is being created, allowing for very interesting science to be collected! This research is also being done by Conchological Society members Evelyn Moorkens and Ian Killeen.