IUCN UK Peatland Programme
Nov/Dec 2013

IUCN Website Revamp

IUCN UK Peatland Programme website has been under-going some changes and improvements and Friday 13th December will be the ‘soft’ launch of the new website. The new website will feature the ‘Peatland Portal’ with information on case studies and links from all regions of the world, more resources and information-sharing tools and will act as a hub for peatland restoration. We're striving to have everything in place by then and don't anticipate any snags, but the new website will grow and improve with as much or as little as you contribute, so get involved, add a case study, let us know what you’re doing or who we should be linking up with. Look forward to your feedback.

IUCN Conference Summary

We hope to have the IUCN ‘Investing in Peatlands: A New Peatland Era’ Conference Summary ready and available on the website in January 2014. Plans are underway for the 2014 Conference and we will make an announcement on the venue in the new year.

European Environmental Bureau adopts restoration of bogs at AGM

At the European Environment Bureau (EEB) Annual General Meeting in October 2013, the General Assembly called on all member states and the European Commission to actively support and take urgent measures to protect the remaining peat bogs in Europe.

Under the Habitats Directive, member states are required to designate areas to conserve and these areas are referred to as the Natura 2000 network and from a global perspective, these habitats are Europe’s equivalent to rainforests. Big habitats are among the habitats subject to this protection with some member states having effectively totally destroyed their active bogs.

To read the full report please click here.

New Scotland’s Soils Website

Since April 2011, the James Hutton Institute’s soils data, has been available under licence for non-commercial use through Scottish Ministers, but since then the Scottish Government have been working with the Hutton, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Forestry Commission Scotland and Ricardo-AEA to make the data more widely available, and there is now a new website, Scotland’s Soils, which was launched by the Scottish Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse, on 10th December 2013.

Many of the datasets are now available for both viewing and download, and these remain free of charge for non-commercial users (including consultancies when working for the public sector). The site also includes general information on soils and links to other resources, publications and printable maps and images.

This is an important step forward in making soils data and information more accessible.

If you register with the website to download data, you will be able to receive notification of any updates to the data. There is also a ‘post your comment’ box should you have any suggestions for improving the site or for datasets you would like to see added – as with any website, it will evolve over time and responding to the needs of users is an important aspect of the site’s future development.

For more information and to visit the site, please click here.
Vorpommern Initiative Paludiculture awarded German Sustainability Award

The research project “Vorpommern Initiative Paludiculture” (VIP) of Greifswald University has been awarded the German Sustainability Award, one of Europe’s most prestigious awards in the field of sustainable development.

The VIP-project aims to develop and implement paludiculture, i.e. the productive utilization of rewetted peatlands, as a sustainable alternative to conventional drainage-based peatland agriculture. Drained peatlands cause peat oxidation, soil degradation, land subsidence and disproportionately high greenhouse gas emissions. In contrast, paludiculture (palus lat. swamp) produces biomass fodder, fuels and fibers without these negative side-effects and without competing with food production.

This convincing concept made VIP one of the winners for the German Sustainability Award for outstanding research projects that nationally and internationally promote “sustainability made in Germany”. It was presented by Dr. Georg Schütte, State Secretary of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, in front of 1000 high profile guests during a glamorous award show in Düsseldorf at 22nd. Next to VIP, out of 68 applications also projects of the University of Kaiserslautern and the University of Tübingen were selected as nominees.

The German Sustainability Award is endorsed by the German Federal Government, the National Council for Sustainable Development, and numerous scientific organisations and associations, among others UNESCO and UNICEF. Prof. Dr. Klaus Töpfer, Prof. Dr. Uwe Schneidewind, Prof. Dr. Gesine Schwan and Prof. Dr. Edda Müller are among the members of the jury.

More information on paludiculture please click here

More information on the award click here.

PhD Opportunity: Evaluating Peatland Management and Restoration for Multiple Outcomes from James Hutton Institute

This studentship is supervised by Nick Littlewood and Rebekka Artz from the James Hutton Institute in Aberdeen and by Roxane Anderden and Kenny Boyd from the Environmental Research Institute of the University of the Highlands and Islands in Thurso. It will be undertaken in close cooperation with Neil Cowie, Reserves Ecologist with the RSPB. Forsinard Flows RSPB reserve will be the primary field site.

AIMS

This project will seek to establish which peatland management and restoration methods are optimal for the multiple benefits of both biodiversity conservation and for carbon storage and sequestration.

Specifically, this project aims to:

1. Evaluate the short- and long-term carbon benefit of restoration using a life-cycle approach by integrating a) measures of GHG emissions and b) carbon budget based on timber harvest during the transition from afforested to open ground,

2. Characterise biodiversity assemblages, especially arthropods, found in pristine blanket bog, afforested blanket bogs, and blanket bogs restored at different times and with different management approaches,

3. Identify species from the arthropod assemblages that are indicative of the status of restored peatlands,

4. Compare how effectively different management approaches deliver biodiversity and carbon benefits.

For more information please click here.
Scottish Environment LINK wishes to hear from local communities restoring peat bogs

Scottish Environment LINK have commissioned a study to explore the benefits of improved communications between local groups and national environmental organizations and how this could be delivered.

The study includes an online survey of local groups along with a small number of interviews and online research. They are particularly keen to hear from local Scottish communities working to conserve or restore peat bogs and they are hoping to get as many survey completed as possible in order to have a good understanding of local groups’ needs, perceptions and expectation of LINK’s member bodies.

The deadline for the survey is December 20th 2013 and the first draft of the report is due by the end of January with final report submitted at the beginning of March.

Please feel free to share with your contacts and networks. To take the survey please click here.

For more information about Scottish Environment LINK please click here.
The session aims to bring together peatland scientists to advance our understanding of hydrological processes operating in all types of peatlands. Peatlands being considered may be pristine or disturbed and degraded and may also include rehabilitation and re-wetting interventions. Hydrological data may have been collected for other reasons (e.g. carbon flux calculations) but the session welcomes re-examination of such hydrological data in its own right or as supporting data for other studies.

Results from research focusing on all aspects of peatland hydrology are welcome in this session. Our scale of interest ranges from the plot to the regional scale. Field, laboratory or modelling studies on hydrological, hydrochemical or geophysical topics are welcome. Studies examining hydrological ecosystem service provision such as nutrient retention or flood protection are also appreciated.

Peatlands develop in specific hydrological settings and react sensitively to changes in climatic and hydrological boundary conditions. The hydrology of peatlands is fundamental to their function and development. Soil hydrological properties can change drastically after human interventions such as drainage, causing challenges for both model parameterisation and re-wetting measures. Pristine peatlands offer and regulate a number of ecosystem services such as biodiversity, carbon storage and nutrient retention. Hydrology is a key control for a number of these services but studies on peatland hydrology are surprisingly scarce. Furthermore, the effects of peatlands (both pristine and disturbed) on flood retention and on regional climate are much debated, but there seem to be more myths than data.

As hydrological and biotic processes in peatlands are strongly coupled, estimating the eco-hydrological response of peatlands under climate change and linking it to vegetation development and greenhouse gas emissions is a demanding task for modellers. This session aims to bring together peatland scientists to focus on improved understanding of hydrological processes operating in all types of peatlands. Peatlands being considered may be pristine or disturbed and degraded and may also include rehabilitation and re-wetting interventions.

The deadline for the receipt of Abstracts is 16 January 2014. For more information, please click here.
News items

The National Trust project to save a threatened Welsh ecosystem—Wales Online, December 16th 2013

Greenwood water project encounters peat bog—The Annapolis County Spectator, December 4th 2013

SNH concerns over SSE’s Strathy South wind farm—Smallerholder, December 2nd 2013

Peat bogs make for wet roof of the Westcountry—This is Somerset, November 30th 2013

80 jobs lost in battle to restore Cumbrian peat bog—In-Cumbria, November 29th 2013

Groups call for halt to peatland extraction permits—The Jakarta Post, November 26th 2013

Edinburgh forum says putting value on nature could save it—BBC News, November 20th 2013

Stubborn bog fire mostly contained at Kings Point Park - Long Island Newsday - November 17th 2013

Burns Bog group celebrates 25 years—South Delta Leader, November 7th 2013

To protect peatlands we must ensure alternatives are readily available—The Guardian, October 30th 2013

£2.5m boost for Lough Neagh—Belfast Telegraph—October 31st 2013

Lough Neagh to get £2.58m from Heritage Lottery Fund—BBC News, October 30th 2013

Further Information

For information about reports and initiatives referred to in this newsletter please visit: www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/

To submit items please email Rea Cris

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Wishing everyone
Happy Holidays

and all the best for
2014

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a global organization, providing an influential and authoritative voice for nature conservation. The IUCN UK Peatland Programme promotes peatland restoration in the UK and advocates the multiple benefits of peatlands through partnerships, strong science, sound policy and effective practice.