



Beetles Missing in Action

Press release –** EMBARGO **– 1.00am 21st June 2006

Today the Government produces the results of the first 10 years of its Biodiversity Action Plan. While there are some positive messages – in general the species and habitats that have been identified as UK priorities are doing better than they were at the start of the process – the report shows that much wildlife is still declining, in particular a number of beetles are currently missing and conservationists fear some of them may be extinct.

There are over 4000 species of beetle in Britain doing everything from burying the bodies of animals, to pollinating flowers. Of these beetles 250 have not been seen since 1970, some are hard to find - others are heading towards extinction fast.

The Government's list of Priority species for conservation action includes 87 beetles. However, four of these beetles have now also disappeared.

“We are in a global extinction event, and during National Insect Week we should remind ourselves not only that the threat of extinction hangs over many of our native insects, but also that studying and understanding the ecology and distribution of these animals is essential to maintaining a healthy environment” said Matt Shardlow, Buglife Director.

The Pashford pot beetle (*Cryptocephalus exiguus*) has historically been known from several wetlands, but the most recent records have been from Pashford Pools Fen an SSSI in Suffolk. Agricultural drainage associated with the surrounding arable fields has left this tiny wildlife site dry and many of the wetland plants such as Bog myrtle have already gone extinct. The Pashford pot beetle has not been seen for at least four years and experts fear it has gone as well.

The Four-signed ground beetle (*Dromius quadrisignatus*) runs around on big tree trunks at night. Once found in several ancient woodlands, the last record was in Bushy Park in London in 1987.

The Sussex diving beetle (*Laccophilus poecilus*) was common in ditches on the Lewes Levels in the 1970s but steadily declined and was last seen in 2002. It has not been found in subsequent searches. Experts fear that the source of water for the ditches is polluted by the runoff from a new road. This beetle has not been seen at its Yorkshire sites for many years.

The Familiar sunshiner (*Amara famelica*) has never been found in numbers. Where it breeds is a mystery – last seen 1997.

Further Notes :

Buglife-The Invertebrate Conservation Trust is the first organisation in Europe devoted to the conservation of all invertebrates, and is actively engaged in saving Britain's rarest bugs, butterflies, snails, bees, wasps, ants, spiders, beetles and many more fascinating creatures. Set up in 2000, the charity now has seven members of staff working on diverse projects including a bumblebee survey and brownfield conservation. **For more information on the work of Buglife go to: www.buglife.org.uk.**

The Priority Species list was set up in response to the 1992 Rio Convention on Biological Diversity. The UK uses the Priority List firstly, to identify species requiring urgent conservation action, and secondly, to measure progress towards meeting the 2010 EU target of 'Halting Biodiversity Loss'. Other missing invertebrates on the BAP list are the Banded mining bee (*Andrena gravida*), Pea mining bee (*Andrena lathyri*), Eight-spotted wasp-hoverfly (*Chrysotoxum octomaculatum*), Rosser's sac spider (*Clubiona rosserae*), Brighton wainscot (*Oria musculosa*) and Serrated crane fly (*Tipula serrulifera*).

For further information on the BAP reporting call Andre Farrar 01767 680551

National Insect Week is held every two years, it aims to raise awareness about the importance of insects and the need to study and conserve them – they are as Edward O Wilson Buglife Vice-President said 'the small things that run the world'.

For more information about events and activities during national insect week go to <http://www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk/>

For further information on Bugs Missing in Action call Matt Shardlow 01733 201210 / 07921 700151.