

## **Making nature count: evidence of winners and losers in the fight to save Irish biodiversity.**

**Waterford/Dublin, Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015** – Today sees the launch of Ireland’s National Biodiversity Indicators, designed to summarise trends in the health of our species, landscapes and seascapes, as well as reflect broad changes in Irish society’s relationship with wildlife protection. <http://indicators.biodiversityireland.ie>

Compiled by the National Biodiversity Data Centre from information provided by both governmental and non-governmental organisations, 60% of indicators show inadequate progress in delivering biodiversity conservation, 32% show progress has been made and another 8% are uncertain. Overall, the indicators demonstrate that more concerted action is needed if Ireland is to meet targets listed under the National Biodiversity Plan and international conservation targets set by the EU and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Indicators suggest that Ireland is beginning to show progress on the conservation of species protected under EU legislation, increased awareness about conservation and improved integration of environmental considerations into local and national decision making:

- For species protected under EU law, 53% species have a favourable conservation status.
- In an EU survey on public opinions on biodiversity, out of a 1,000 Irish people surveyed 95% agreed that our well-being and quality of life is based upon nature and biodiversity.
- Four Biodiversity Officers and 23 Heritage Officers with a biodiversity remit are now employed across 26 Local Authorities.

However, areas where Ireland still struggles to conserve nature include:

- As of 2013, 91% of Ireland’s habitats designated under EU law are of ‘inadequate’ or ‘bad’ status.
- The number high impact invasive alien species introduced into Ireland has increased by 183% from 1961 to 2010.
- Only 5% of Ireland’s 31,500 species have had their conservation status assessed. Of those, 20% are assessed as threatened

For the first time in Ireland, the National Biodiversity Indicators summarise biodiversity information from a variety of sources to support policy and decision making, reporting on progress towards national and international conservation targets, as well as providing a useful educational resource. Ireland is now the 5<sup>th</sup> country in Europe to develop a suite of National Biodiversity Indicators.

“As a society, the indicators show that we’re becoming more aware and beginning to take more affirmative actions to conserve Irish biodiversity,” said Dr. Tomás Murray from the National Biodiversity Data Centre, who co-ordinated the National Biodiversity Indicator project. But he added “these societal changes are happening too slowly to have a positive impact on many of our habitats and species.”

Ireland is a signatory to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and is committed to the biodiversity goals and targets set out in the Convention's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The 20 biodiversity targets, commonly known as the Aichi 2020 Biodiversity Targets, relate to the sustainable management and use of the world's biological resources and cover a broad range of actions, including mainstreaming biodiversity conservation across government and society, and reducing pressures on biodiversity and promoting its sustainable use. To help focus conservation effort and support the development of evidence-based metrics to measure progress on achieving international biodiversity targets, the CBD-mandated Biodiversity Indicator Partnership was established in 2007 to provide guidance to nation states in developing national biodiversity indicators.

In order to contribute towards the achievement of these international targets, Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan 2011-2016 includes the setting of national targets and the development of biodiversity indicators. Consequently, in 2013 the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht commissioned Tentera consultants to develop a list of biodiversity indicators that could summarise and communicate broad trends about the health of Irish biodiversity. These indicators were further refined by the National Biodiversity Data Centre in collaboration with the interdepartmental Biodiversity Working Group. The data supporting the indicators draws on information gathered from a cross-section of public and non-governmental organisations, and will be updated on a regular basis so that they can be used to track change over time.

The indicators are still under development and the current list will be reviewed in 2016 prior to the development of Ireland's next National Biodiversity Plan, this review will also take into account other ongoing processes such as recent updates to the CBD indicator list and those being proposed as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **Notes for Editor:**

A National Biodiversity Indicator media pack including graphs and infographics on the project is available from here: <http://indicators.biodiversityireland.ie/about>

- 50 out of 87 indicators have been populated with data.
- The current status of 16 are good, 14 intermediate, 16 poor and 4 unknown.
- The short-term (typically 5 year) status of 15 are good, 16 intermediate, 7 poor and 12 unknown.
- The long-term (typically 10 year) status of 13 are good, 5 intermediate, 5 poor and 27 unknown.

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### **About the National Biodiversity Data Centre:**

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a national organisation for the collection, collation, management, analysis and dissemination of data on Ireland's biological diversity. Biodiversity data are a key requirement for understanding our natural surroundings, for tracking change in our environment and for gaining a greater insight on how we benefit from, and impact upon, the ecosystem goods and services provided by biological diversity; a national asset which contributes at least €2.8 billion to the Irish economy each year. The Data Centre was established by the Heritage Council in 2007 and is funded by the Heritage Council and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Centre is operated under a service level agreement by Compass Informatics Limited, an information and location technologies company focussed on applications in natural resources and planning.

### **Web References:**

<http://indicators.biodiversityireland.ie/>  
<http://www.npws.ie/legislation/national-biodiversity-plan>  
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm>  
<https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>  
<http://www.bipindicators.net/>

### **Keywords:**

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