



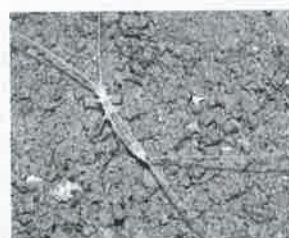
In brief

Devon's new cirl haven

The RSPB is creating a new reserve in Teignbridge to help secure the future of the nationally rare cirl bunting (above). Land totalling 40 hectares was bought for the new Ashill reserve, to be managed as low-intensity mixed farmland. This sparrow-sized bird almost became extinct in the UK in the late 1980s but, thanks to work by conservationists and farmers, 2017 surveys indicate the population now exceeds 1,000 breeding pairs (33% of them in Teignbridge) – up from just 118 pairs in 1989.

New species found in Central Asia

A curious troglodyte bug has been discovered during a study of a cave in the Central Asian nation of Turkmenistan. During 2015 RSPB researchers undertook the first new survey of the Kaptarhana caves in nearly 43 years; in September 2017, a two-pronged bristletail they collected was identified as belonging to a completely new genus – *Turkmenocampa* (Turkmenistan) – and species: *mirabilis*, which means “amazing”.



A sample photo of the two-pronged bristletail of the family Campodeidae.

INNOVATION

Specialist tractor helps breeding birds

In January a Soucy-tracked tractor – with caterpillar-like tracks generating less pressure than the human foot – was floated by pontoon to Lower Lough Erne Islands to mow soft rushes. Using this during the winter months means we can manage habitat to ensure optimum conditions for breeding birds such as curlews, lapwings and redshanks.



The project will restore woodlands, peatland, wetlands and rivers.

Restoring Cairngorms habitats

A groundbreaking new partnership will transform 60,000ha of Scottish uplands over the next 200 years. The RSPB, Forest Enterprise Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Wildland Limited together form

Cairngorms Connect, which encompasses RSPB Abernethy and Insh Marshes reserves, plus three other landholdings. The project will enhance forest, floodplain, lochs and other habitats. Visit bit.ly/2FLgp4O

SPECIES FOCUS

Spoon-billed sandpiper

Tiny satellite tags fitted to Critically Endangered spoon-billed sandpipers have revealed details of wintering, staging and breeding grounds, helping tackle illegal trapping and supporting calls for habitat protection. And, at a December meeting in China, governments from China, North Korea and South Korea agreed to join a working group for the conservation and management of the Yellow Sea's coastal wetlands. Importantly, the boundary of the proposed Yangcheng World Heritage Site may be extended to include Tiaozini, the species' most important

staging and moulting site, previously slated for destruction by the world's biggest coastal land claim project. On 17 January, China announced tough new regulations to ban most coastal land claim and restore some destroyed coastal ecosystems. The RSPB is part of the spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force working to conserve this species of fewer than 228 breeding pairs.



RESERVES

Spot spoonbills at Fairburn Ings

Head to West Yorkshire to spot spectacular wetland birds – including spoonbills, which bred successfully at Fairburn Ings last year. From February a trail guides visitors to view more than 100 cormorant nests, some 25 heron nests, little egrets and, we hope, spoonbills – four adults, and perhaps 2017's three fledglings, known as “teaspoons”. RSPB management of water levels and habitats has created an enticing breeding site.



Nature's Home

CLIMATE WATCH

5 ways we're working on water

Managing water on our reserves and around UK shores is increasingly important for the welfare of both wildlife and people.

Drought planning

We're planning for anticipated summer droughts in south-east England, which could affect our wetlands. Drought can make it difficult to maintain desired ditch and field water levels, adversely affecting feeding and breeding success for wetland bird species. The RSPB has been working closely with the Environment Agency and advising reserve managers in affected areas on how to reduce any impacts, such as holding back more winter water on site. We can all play our part by reducing water use, particularly in drought-prone areas.

protect the unique habitats on the island – made possible by a £50,000 Natural Flood Management Grant.

Channelling freshwater

A £2.1m project in Norfolk will provide a reliable supply of fresh water for agriculture and create new wetland habitats. The two-year EA-funded Halvergate Marshes Water Level Management Improvement Scheme will create a revised route to move water along 4.5km, creating over 60ha of land to help offset the impact of climate change. It will also secure the future management of RSPB Berney Marshes.

Catching seawater surges

A pioneering RSPB project in Suffolk will help to reduce flood risk along the Alde-Ore estuary. The scheme will create “spillways” to allow surge tide water to enter Havergate Island nature reserve's lagoons. Additional storm surge storage will be offered in the lower Alde-Ore. Measuring up to 1.5 million cubic metres, this will benefit nearby communities and

Rewilding to reduce risk

At Haweswater in Cumbria, a 1km stretch of Swindale Beck, artificially straightened 200 years ago, has been restored to a curving course in a partnership project between the RSPB, the Environment Agency, United Utilities and Natural England. This slowed the flow during heavy rainfall and, along with tree planting, helps reduce flood risk. Elsewhere, Fairburn Ings

Solar saviours for waders

Three solar pumps installed at Rainham Marshes last winter are keeping areas damp and muddy through spring and summer, helping breeding lapwing and redshank (left). RSPB staff have struggled to combat the effects of climate change and maintain optimal site conditions in part of the reserve, with many nests

failing. Now staff have sourced Aqua Delta pumps from the Netherlands, with funding from Veolia Environmental Trust through the Landfill Community Fund, and from the Land of the Fanns Landscape Partnership Scheme through the HLF. We hope that increasing numbers of young lapwing and redshank will prove the value of the time, effort and £50,000 investment – saving threatened species in an eco-friendly way.



Nature's Home

£48bn

estimated value of services provided by coastal habitat, including leisure, fisheries and flood protection

>60ha

predicted annual intertidal habitat loss without action

15%

saltmarsh lost from UK shores since 1945, along with 18% of sand dunes and 46% of shingle habitat

Sustainable Shores shows state of coast

In February 2018, the RSPB's UK-wide Sustainable Shores report revealed the importance of coastal habitats to wildlife and people, damage to these habitats from climate change, and actions needed to counter these problems (visit rspb.org.uk/shores). One-third of RSPB reserves are on coasts and estuaries, and over 25% of Birds of Conservation Concern rely on coastal habitats – but our report estimates that without action the UK risks losing at least 60ha of intertidal habitat per year. We're calling for more action from government and regulators to protect coastal habitats.

2,500ha

coastal habitat created over the past 25 years

880ha

– area of UK coastal habitat created by the RSPB and partners through projects such as Medmerry and Wallasea Wild Coast

0%

– of UK internationally important coastal habitats reported to be in favourable conservation condition (2013), prompting the setup of Sustainable Shores

Plus! New photo hide

Get covert shots of Rainham Marshes' wildlife from a new hide! Built by volunteers in a woodland area, the hide can be booked in advance, is close to a feeding station and reflection pool, plus photography tuition is available. Email rainham.marshes@rspb.org.uk for info. Find our top tips for hide photography on page 18.

