SPECIES on the EDGE
Gnèithean air an Oir

Learnings from a multi-taxa way of working



Thematic review at a glance

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What Species on the Edge has taught us about making multi-taxa conservation work in practice.



Overview

Species on the Edge set out to test a more joined-up approach to species recovery, bringing specialist organisations together to work across species, habitats and places.

The programme combined specialist species expertise with area-based delivery, coordinating action across species where this added value while retaining targeted species work where this was most appropriate. This review explores what made that possible in practice. It finds that multi-taxa working can provide real benefits, but it depends on more than programme structures. Strong partnerships, shared expertise, local flexibility, community relationships and dedicated coordination were all important in turning the ambition of multi-taxa conservation into practical delivery.

Key impacts

- **More joined-up conservation:** Area-based delivery created opportunities to coordinate action across species, habitats and landscapes while retaining specialist species expertise.
- **Expertise travelled further:** Partners shared knowledge and skills across organisational boundaries, allowing specialist expertise to support a wider range of species and places.
- **Greater reach and capacity:** Shared local teams enabled organisations to contribute in areas where they would have struggled to maintain the same presence independently.
- **A simpler local offer:** Coordinated working gave communities, volunteers, landowners and crofters a more joined-up way to engage with conservation across different species.
- **Stronger conservation partnerships:** Trusted relationships between organisations strengthened knowledge-sharing, problem-solving and confidence to work together in future.

What made the difference

Multi-taxa working was made possible by combining specialist expertise with flexible, area-based delivery.

Rather than expecting staff to become experts in every species, the partnership made specialist knowledge available across organisations while local teams identified where joint working made sense.

Shared landscapes provided opportunities to coordinate habitat management, engagement and conservation advice, while flexibility allowed targeted single-species work to continue where ecological needs did not align. Relationships were equally important - regular communication, joint activity and informal knowledge sharing built trust between organisations and helped teams respond to local opportunities. Engagement with communities, landowners, crofters and volunteers also became part of how multi-taxa conservation was delivered, connecting action for individual species to wider conversations about habitats, biodiversity and place.

> "In practice, multi-taxa working often looked like different organisations and staff working together within the same communities and landscapes, rather than separate projects operating independently."
>
> **Delivery Partner**

Key findings

1 Multi-taxa does not mean everything has to be multi-species.

The strongest approach was to look for places where working across species added ecological or practical value, while keeping specialist action where individual species required it. Future programmes need clear multi-taxa principles, but enough flexibility to respond to different species, habitats and local circumstances.

2 Place provides the bridge between species.

Organising delivery around shared landscapes helped teams spot connections between species, coordinate habitat management and give local communities and land managers a more joined-up experience. Area-based working was therefore a key part of turning multi-taxa working from an ambition into practical delivery.

3 Collaboration needs to be properly resourced.

Multi-taxa working relied on trust, communication, coordination and the willingness to share knowledge and capacity across organisational boundaries. These relationships take time to build, so partnership development and coordination need to be treated as core parts of conservation delivery rather than additional overheads.





Multi-taxa working is about making connections, not making every activity fit every species. Species on the Edge worked best where specialist knowledge, shared places and strong partnerships came together, with enough flexibility to respond to what species and communities needed locally.

Read the full *Learnings from a multi-taxa way of working* Thematic Review

Explore the evidence, practical examples and recommendations on what it takes to make multi-taxa conservation work. Coming soon - available from our website: **www.speciesontheedge.co.uk**

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