SPECIES on the EDGE
Gnèithean air an Oir

Our approach to species recovery and why it's working



Thematic review at a glance

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How Species on the Edge has strengthened the evidence, habitats and local action needed to support threatened species



Overview

Species on the Edge brought together targeted action for 37 threatened coastal and island species across Scotland.

The programme began from different starting points: for some species, established conservation measures were ready to be put into practice; for others, better evidence was needed before effective action could be planned.

Across nine species projects, partners expanded surveying and monitoring, managed and restored habitats, tested practical interventions and supported population restoration where appropriate. They also worked with land managers, volunteers and communities to build the local knowledge and capacity needed to sustain action. Full population recovery will take longer for many species, but Species on the Edge has strengthened the evidence, habitats, partnerships and practical approaches on which continued recovery depends.

Key impacts

- **Progress along the recovery pathway:** Of the 35 species with a final Species Recovery Curve score, 26 of our species moved forward from their 2021 baseline Species Recovery Curve scores and 18 met or exceeded their programme target.
- **Stronger evidence:** Expanded surveys and monitoring improved understanding of where species are found, the habitats they need and the pressures affecting them.
- **Flexible support for habitat improvements:** Species on the Edge provided crofters and smaller land managers with practical advice and flexible resources to improve habitats, while supporting locally led initiatives that may not have been eligible for, or accessible through, existing agricultural schemes.
- **Practical approaches tested:** Partners trialled and adapted conservation measures to identify what was feasible and appropriate for different species, sites and land management contexts.
- **Greater capacity for continued action:** Staff, volunteers, land managers and local groups developed knowledge, skills and relationships that can support species recovery beyond the programme.

What made the difference

Species on the Edge combined specialist knowledge with action tailored to individual species, habitats and places.

Species Project Plans provided clear recovery priorities, while local teams adapted delivery to ecological conditions, land management, access and opportunities within each area. Surveying and monitoring helped teams locate populations, understand pressures and focus activity where it could make the greatest contribution.

The programme brought together specialist conservation knowledge and the practical knowledge of farmers, crofters, land managers, volunteers and communities to develop action suited to each place. These relationships helped projects understand local needs, identify workable approaches and respond to opportunities as they emerged.

Flexible resources were important in enabling teams to adapt plans, test ideas and support locally-appropriate action rather than relying on fixed measures established at the outset. This participative approach helped ensure that habitat management, monitoring and protection measures were both ecologically informed and practical for the people involved in sustaining them.

> **"The programme has enabled us to test, trial and implement practical conservation actions, significantly improving the evidence base for future recovery work."**
>
> **Delivery partner**



Key findings

1 Recovery starts with understanding what each species needs.

Targeted surveys strengthened understanding of where species are found, the habitats they depend on and the pressures affecting them. This helped projects focus action where it was most needed and choose approaches suited to each species and place, with continued monitoring helping to refine action as the evidence develops.

2 Conservation action must fit the species and the place.

Established techniques still needed to be adapted to local habitats, environmental conditions and land-management practices. Changing, delaying or stopping an intervention was sometimes the right decision where new evidence showed that it was unsuitable or unlikely to provide lasting benefits.

3 Species recovery takes longer than a funded period.

The Species Recovery Curve shows important progress in knowledge, monitoring and the development and deployment of recovery measures, but this is not the same as demonstrating full population recovery. Habitats need continued management and species responses must be monitored over several seasons to understand whether progress is being sustained.



Species on the Edge has improved the prospects of threatened coastal and island species.

It has strengthened the evidence, habitats, practical approaches and local capacity needed to carry recovery forward.

Read the full *Our approach to species recovery and why it's working* Thematic Review

Explore the evidence, practical examples and learning from action across 37 threatened coastal and island species. Coming soon - available from our website: **www.speciesontheedge.co.uk**

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