

Appendix i

Conservation Status Categories, Distribution and Abundance Terms for Invertebrates

Conservation Status categories

GB Conservation Status categories are in the process of being upgraded. This means that it is currently necessary to provide values for both systems as not all groups have been dealt with.

The old RDB (Red Data Book) Conservation Status categories were based purely on the number of 10km squares which a species was known to have been recorded from, with a base-line date of 1970. These categories are obviously susceptible to the progressive accumulation of new records over time. This is especially so as, for some species in particular, non-specialist recording has increased significantly. There are also known changes in range and abundance which have been increasingly commented on by specialists.

The old system graded species like this:

RDB 1. Endangered. Species currently (post 1970) known to exist in five or fewer ten-kilometre squares.

RDB 2. Vulnerable. Species in severely declining or vulnerable habitats, or of low known populations. Known to exist (post 1970) in ten, or fewer, ten-kilometre squares.

RDB 3. Rare. Species with small populations, not at present Endangered or Vulnerable, but which are felt to be at risk. Species currently known to exist (post 1970) in fifteen, or fewer, ten-kilometre squares.

RDB K. Species of undoubted RDB rank, but with insufficient information for accurate placement; includes possible recent arrivals.

Nationally Scarce. Species currently (post 1970) known to exist in one hundred, or fewer, ten-kilometre squares.

In some groups these are further sub-divided into:-

Nationally Scarce a. Species currently (post 1970) known to exist in thirty, or fewer, ten-kilometre squares.

Nationally Scarce b. Species currently (post 1970) known to exist in thirty-one to one hundred ten-kilometre squares.

The new IUCN-type Red Data Book Conservation Status categories are based on perceived threat, of which distribution is only one part, the other being related to the population trend over the 10 years previous to the assessment, for the species in question. Such trends may be inferred from accumulated specialist knowledge, but, as the quantity and quality of data improves increasing effort is being made to model such changes. The output of such modelling being then compared with the specialist knowledge. Species with a negative trend may not be inherently rare, it is the decline which is the significant factor.

The new system grades species like this (This is very much a summary, there is considerable detail to this, please consult the group-appropriate published Great Britain Red List for a better understanding of how the gradings have been arrived at):

Regionally Extinct (RE). See group-appropriate Red List for criteria. In general, a sufficiently long time has elapsed since the last record of this species.

Critically Endangered (CE). Species with a very severe decline in population trend or geographic range within the area considered.

Endangered (E). Species with a severe decline in population trend or geographic range within the area considered.

Vulnerable (V). Species with a marked decline in trend or geographic range within the area considered.

Near Threatened (NT). Species which are suspected to qualify for Vulnerable, but where the data does not quite support such a category.

Least Concern (LC). Species which show no marked negative population trend or geographic range. Indeed they may have positive values for either or both.

There will be a number of species where it has been considered that there is insufficient information to provide a supported grading, such species are called Data Deficient (DD). There are also categories for invasive (with anthropogenic agency) species, which are usually assessed as Not Applicable (NA).

The IUCN Red List system was primarily developed for assessing large mammal populations and fish stocks, adapting it for invertebrates is, inevitably, an experimental process and it is to be expected that there will be variability in its application and interpretation between groups. However, each published GB Red List has information on the actual way in which decisions have been arrived at. These should be consulted where necessary.

There is no inherent equivalence between the old and new systems

Great Britain has a considerable environmental gradient from north to south and, to a lesser extent, east to west. Species which are stable in their trend or geographic extent may still be considerably limited by the availability of suitable habitat resources. In order that such species do not get missed from conservation considerations a second, parallel, system of GB scarcity has been developed. This is similar to the old Conservation Status system in that it is based on the number of 10km squares which the species is known from, in a given time period, usually 30 years previous to the date of the assessment.

Categories for this National Scarcity rating are :

NR, with 1-15 10Km occupied squares

NS, with 16 to 100 10Km occupied squares.

Clearly both systems will require periodic revision if they are to remain relevant to the needs of a modern country and the conservation of its fauna.

Distribution categories

Distribution refers solely to the geographical extent of a species in the British Isles. Considerable confusion has been caused in the past by the varying meanings given to many assessments of species where geographic distribution has been confused with local abundance.

A distribution classification, based on the known distribution range, is used here. Where possible a provisional national distribution range status under this system is given, based on published distribution maps, updated where necessary by specialist information. The basic system has been to divide the British Isles into thirds, largely ignoring the influence of altitude. The lines delineating these thirds run approximately:

- i). Along a line from the Wash to the Severn and including South Wales.
- ii) Along a line running through the Scottish Borders.

Universal. Distributed throughout England and Wales, with at least some extension into central and northern Scotland.

Widespread. Distributed in about three-quarters of England and Wales, perhaps with a few records in southern Scotland, but not significantly found in the northern third (Southern Widespread) or southern third (Northern Widespread) of the British Isles. (NB Northern Widespread species are found in Scotland as well.)

Restricted. Distributed in the southern (Southern Restricted) or northern (Northern Restricted) third of the British Isles only.

Abundance Comments (in Notes)

These often form the first part of the 'Notes' in the species information. An attempt has been made to

make something akin to the well-established DAFOR system for botanical abundance recording, but with just four categories. These rate the expectation of finding the species, if all its life-cycle resource requirements and temperature and humidity regimes are apparently met on a site.

i) Commonly found. An experienced observer would expect to find the species 90% or more of the time where all its requirements are met.

ii) Frequently found. An experienced observer would expect to find the species 60% or more of the time where all its requirements are met.

iii) Infrequently found. An experienced observer would expect to find the species 10% or more of the time where all its requirements are met.

iv) Rarely found. An experienced observer would expect to find the species less than 10% of the time where all its requirements are met.

These may be modified by a comment as to the degree of restriction to localities, even within its known range and when its requirements are met, often something like Locally frequently found.

Abundance comments are much more subjective than distribution comments, being dependent upon the precise timing of survey visits and the timing of emergence of the insect species, as well as the experience of the observer. The method of recording, e.g. by sight or hand-netting, sweeping, beating, malaise trap, pan trap, may also affect the observed abundance. It is assumed that recording takes place under favourable conditions of habitat, weather and season. Often a species appears to be rarely found, until the particular way of looking for it is discovered, when it proves to be much more prevalent than previously thought.

Some species, however, seem to exist in low numbers at all times in all suitable places. This may reflect the species' position in its particular ecological pyramid. The abundance may have no connection with the conservation status; some species are numerous in their particular locations: others may only ever be found as singletons. Comments under this heading rely heavily upon the observer's accumulated experience as the rating given is a measure of the expectation of finding the species in a suitable habitat. Species living towards the edge of their range are often less frequent than they are in the middle of their range.

Specialist Terms for Ants, Bees and Wasps

Cleptoparasitic: A species taking over the stored provisions of another species to feed its young. This usually involves the cleptoparasite laying an egg in the nest of the host, but may involve oviposition on prey being transported by the host.

Socially Parasitic: The queens of some social aculeates do not initiate their own nests from scratch, but take over established nests of other species. Sometimes this results in the gradual replacement of the workers of one species by another. In other cases the parasite does not produce its own workers and the nest just produces males and females of the invading parasite before it dies out. In some ant species the chain of socially parasitic species may have several links.

Nesting situations: Bees and wasps may construct their nesting chambers in the ground (ground nesting) or in aerial situations (aerial nesting). Such aerial nests may be constructed in dead wood (dead-wood nesting), dead bramble stems or similar pith-filled stems (stem nesting) or in a variety of cavities (cavity nesting).

Nest provisioning terms: These relate (in bees) to the preferred sources of pollen for provisioning the nest. Such resources may be very specific for some species. Nectar sources are not so clearly defined, although bees with longer tongues can forage at flowers with longer nectaries. Such flowers often have more concentrated nectar. The structure of the anthers and stigma is often related to the length of the tongue of the preferred pollinating insect.

Oligolectic: Bees which confine their pollen gathering activities to one species of plant, or a closely-related group of plants.

Polylectic: Bees which forage for pollen at a variety of different plants and show no particular preference.

Social organisation: The majority of bee and wasp species are solitary. One female provisions the nest and lays her eggs on the provisions. A number of solitary nesting insects may use the same small area when they are said to nest colonially. Eusocial species have a founding female who lays all the eggs, but

the first insects to hatch (females) stay and help run the nest. At the end of the season males and females are produced. These mate and the newly mated females start their own nests. Usually only mated females overwinter. Some ant colonies have several mated females (queens).