

2010 International Year of Biodiversity UK launch

25 November 2009, Natural History Museum, London

Hundreds of organisations and groups across the UK are joining together to play a part in the global awareness campaign, **International Year of Biodiversity 2010** (IYB2010). From charities to farmers, councils to wildlife rangers, schools and colleges to zoos and museums and botanic gardens, the UK has one of the strongest programmes in the world to celebrate IYB2010.

Talks, exhibitions, public dialogues, art work, citizen science experiments and exhibitions encompassing both science and the arts are being planned between January and December 2010 under the banner of International Year of Biodiversity UK (IYB-UK). IYB-UK aims to help people discover the connections between themselves and the world around them and to realise the consequences of biodiversity loss, as well as the huge benefits that are shared if we conserve and use life on Earth in a sustainable way.

During IYB2010, the people of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will have an unprecedented opportunity to understand why biodiversity is important for our health and wealth, to enjoy it and learn how to preserve it. Opportunities include the chance to take part in surveys of farmland birds, butterflies, harvest mice, hedgehogs and water. There will be bat walks, bird watching, honey and apple sampling and orchard visits at blossom and harvest time. Summer highlights include pond dipping, insect trawling, bird box building and rambling. Hives will be introduced into the grounds of city churches and city squares will be transformed into gardens. Towns and cities will be going head-to-head, competing to map their local biodiversity. Hundreds of thousands of new plants and trees will be planted. New songs and music about bees will be commissioned and heard. A symbolic conference table and chairs, made from driftwood, will be built and shipped to Nagoya as a powerful call to action to the world's leaders as they hold the future of life on Earth in their hands.

It is hoped the partnership of key organisations in the UK and across the world will encourage people to understand the issues and learn about some of the success stories that indicate a way forward that can make a difference. IYB2010 gives people an opportunity to take time throughout 2010 and beyond to appreciate the natural world around them and join in the world-wide action on a local level.

The United National General Assembly has declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. The celebrations and events across the world will act to highlight the loss of biodiversity, which, as a result of human activities, is estimated to be as high as 1,000 times the natural rate, and is expected to rise further as a result of the impacts of climate change. The impact of biodiversity loss to the essential services that sustain human life is on a scale similar to the impact of climate change, an order of magnitude greater than the current global financial crisis.

In October 2010, governments will set new targets and steps needed to address biodiversity loss for the decade ahead, and it has been widely acknowledged that the original targets set after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 have not been met.

For information on how to get involved, or to find out about UK events during the International Year of Biodiversity, log on to www.biodiversityislife.net



Key dates during International Year of Biodiversity include:

13–14 January 2010

Inter-Academy Panel Meeting on Biodiversity hosted by the Royal Society, London

22 May 2010

International Biodiversity Day

18–29 October 2010

10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan

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To help plan your features, arrange interviews, for more information or pictures call Marie Clements on 020 7942 6655, or email m.clements@nhm.ac.uk

Notes for editors

The aims of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity are to:

- stress the importance of biodiversity for our wellbeing
- reflect on our achievements to safeguard biodiversity so far
- encourage a redoubling of our efforts to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 191 parties, the CBD has near-universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. The CBD seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services. Heads of State from across the world will meet on 20 September 2010 at the UN General Assembly to prepare for the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in October 2010.

International Year of Biodiversity (IYB2010)

The CBD has created the logo for the IYB and encouraged governments and organisations to celebrate the IYB worldwide. The Year will be inaugurated with official events in Brazil and Germany. The Paris Headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) will host an international exhibition which will be launched in January. The Year will officially end in Kanazawa, Japan in December 2010 with a ceremony marking the beginning of the International Year of Forests 2011.

IYB-UK (www.biodiversityislife.net)

The UK partner resource to the IYB2010 is led by a secretariat hosted by the Natural History Museum and supported by Defra, it includes hundreds of organisations across diverse sectors in all four countries of the UK.

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