The science of saving nature

Title
BirdLife's UK Partner, the RSPB, is launching a new initiative, the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science – which includes an online science hub - dedicated to discovering solutions to 21st century conservation problems, reinforcing the BirdLife Partnership as a world leader in conservation.

The RSPB has a team of more than 60 scientists in the UK and overseas involved in field research, species monitoring, testing conservation solutions and then publishing their findings in peer reviewed journals – pushing back the boundaries of our knowledge on wildlife.

This year sees a busy programme of projects including plans to attach cameras and GPS trackers to Lesser Black-backed Gulls to look at their interaction with wind farms, and utilising thermal-imaging drones to count birds. Other research aims to get to the bottom of declines in European Turtle-doves, Northern Lapwings and Nepal's Red-headed Vultures.

Dr David Gibbons, Head of the new Centre, said: "These projects are fantastic examples of researchers using the latest technology to investigate why species are declining and how we can save them".

"The threats to our wildlife are serious – last year's State of Nature report, which our scientists played a key role in compiling, revealed that 60% of UK species are in decline. Now more than ever we must pull out all the stops to investigate the issues and develop robust methods to restore their numbers. That is why we are embarking on one of our busiest periods of research yet, with scientists spread across the UK, and further afield."

"Our research can help solve problems for people as well as wildlife. We are building on around 50 years of history from the first field researchers employed at the RSPB so I am very proud to be launching this new venture which will take our scientific work into a new era."

BirdLife's Head of Science, Dr Stuart Butchart said "This great new initiative by the RSPB is a perfect example of how the BirdLife Partnership is developing innovative conservation action through scientific insight. It provides a new platform to strengthen the close collaboration between RSPB, the BirdLife Secretariat, and other Partners on international scientific research. Ongoing projects cover topics as diverse as climate change impacts, invasive alien species eradications, fisheries bycatch, ecosystem service evaluation, and protected area effectiveness."