



Free Public Lecture Series, Autumn 2006

“Conservation on the Grand Scale”

Birkbeck, University of London

in conjunction with the

Ecology and Conservation Studies Society

Major landowners and administrative agencies have responsibility for managing large tracts of the countryside. The policies of these organizations have great importance in the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity. With increasing isolation of many nature reserves and other conservation sites, it is significant that major players at the national level deal with land in large blocks, giving scope for a more integrated approach to their conservation commitments.

All welcome. Free admission

The lectures will be held in Birkbeck Main Building, University of London, Malet Street, WC1E 7HX

For any queries, please contact e-mail: wright@britishlibrary.net; tel: 020 7485 7903,

or contact e-mail: a.inniss@bbk.ac.uk; tel: 020 7679 1069

All lectures are from 6.30 to 8.30 pm on the following Fridays. Doors open at 6.00pm.

- 13 October** ‘Conservation on a Grand Scale: what, why and where?’ A scene-setting exploration of a 'landscape scale approach' to conservation
Dr David Bullock, Head of Nature Conservation, National Trust. Formerly NT Nature Conservation Advisor; and Dr Stuart Warrington, National Trust.
- 20 October** ‘Ministry of Defence Large Scale Conservation, including coastal and climate change issues’
Ian Davidson-Watts, Head of Natural Environment, Defence Estates.
- 27 October** ‘Rewilding: The Vision, Examples, Constraints and Benefits’
Toby Aykroyd, Co-ordinator of the ‘Wild Britain’ initiative;
and Jonathan Spencer, Senior Ecologist, Forestry Commission.
- 3 November** ‘The Foresters with Horns - large herbivores in the wildwood and modern naturalistic grazing systems’
Keith Kirby, Forestry and Woodland Officer, Natural England, Peterborough.
- 10 November** ‘The Wicken Vision - creating a new wetland landscape in Cambridgeshire, - progress and problems’
Dr Stuart Warrington, Regional Nature Conservation Advisor, National Trust
- 17 November** ‘Landscape: does it help or undermine the cause of conservation?’
Professor Adrian Phillips, former Director General of the Countryside Commission and former Chairman of IUCN's [World Conservation Union] World Commission on Protected Areas.

The Ecology and Conservation Studies Society welcomes new members. Details of the Society and application forms will be available at the door, and are on our website <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ce/environment/ecssociety/index.shtml>

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Notes on the Contributors and their Lectures

13 October ‘Conservation on a Grand Scale: what, why and where?’ A scene-setting exploration of a 'landscape scale approach' to conservation

Dr David J. Bullock is Head of Nature Conservation at The National Trust. He carried out research for his PhD on the ecology and behaviour of feral goats. He lectured in ecology at St. Andrews and De Montford Universities, before joining The National Trust in 1992 as a nature conservation advisor. His research interests continue to be in applied conservation science, especially of vertebrates.

Dr Stuart Warrington, see details below

Their lecture will cover the following themes:

This scene-setting presentation will explore what we mean by a 'landscape scale approach' to conservation. What do we mean by big areas? What are the ecological values of this approach? What are the opportunities and constraints and do they differ in uplands and lowlands, in the UK, Europe and other parts of the world? Is this 're-wilding' or 21st century conservation management? This will be an inter-active session. We will provide the ecological theatre; quite how the evening develops is up to the audience.

20 October ‘Ministry of Defence Large Scale Conservation, including coastal and climate change issues’

Ian Davidson-Watts is the Head of Natural Environment within the MOD agency Defence Estates. Ian studied Conservation Management at Sparsholt Agricultural College, Hampshire and is currently finalizing a part time PhD on the ecological differences of UK pipistrelle bat species. Following graduation he joined English Nature during the mid nineties and specialized in protected species and river sites of special scientific interest. He joined Defence Estates in 2001 and leads a team of ecologists delivering a wide range of work on one the most significant estates for wildlife in the UK and overseas.

His lecture will cover the following themes:

Tanks, planes, bombs and biodiversity offer an obvious contradiction in terms. Yet the MOD estate supports the largest area of SSSIs and internationally designated sites of any other terrestrial landowner in the UK. Indeed the MOD has protected many large areas from the agricultural intensification affecting much of the pre-WW2 UK countryside elsewhere. More importantly many of these training areas cover vast areas offering a challenge to conservation land managers when most conservation experience is based small highly fragmented sites. This lecture focuses on key MOD sites managed on a landscape scale where regular ‘damage’ from tanks and bombing, as well as areas hardly influenced by human activities are essential at maintaining their conservation value. The speaker will also discuss issues associated with dynamic coastal sites and the influence of climate change on the approach to land management at the landscape level.

27 October ‘Rewilding: The Vision, Examples, Constraints and Benefits’

Toby Aykroyd and **Jonathan Spencer** both promote the concept of rewilding. They will jointly present the case for rewilding, but will review the established difficulties in achieving this.

Toby Aykroyd studied macroeconomics, geography and development economics at Cambridge University and has an MBA from the Cranfield Institute of Technology. He was initially posted to the UN Development Programme in Central America where he worked on agricultural and SME business projects. His career since has mainly included commercial management both in the private sector and under contract to government. He has been involved in farming and forestry enterprises, directed a political lobby group and co-founded the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative.

The Wild Britain Initiative which he coordinates seeks to promote the restoration of large-scale natural habitat areas across 2 million acres in the UK over the next 25 years: making use of economic, social and political as well as conservation opportunities. He is Co-Chairman of the Population & Sustainability Network and Vice-Chairman of the Wilderness Foundation.

His lecture will cover the following themes:

Great opportunities are now emerging for restoration of very large natural habitat areas. Falling subsidies resulting from ongoing CAP reform and problems with the forestry sector point to diminishing financial viability of traditional land use in many marginal areas. Equally, there is growing appreciation of the benefits of natural "wildlands" - for local communities and landholders as well as conservation interests. Climate change, nature-tourism and the growth of new markets in healthcare, youth at risk and education all offer opportunities for direct income, as well as funding support for wildland environmental and social "services". Many excellent restoration initiatives are underway in individual locations, but there is now potential to develop these into a linked network on a much bigger scale - matching rural opportunity with urban need and engaging a higher level of political support in the process.

Jonathan Spencer is the Senior Ecologist for the Forestry Commission in England. Having studied botany and zoology at Nottingham he worked as research assistant in the Genetics Department of Cambridge University before embarking on a career in woodland conservation with the Nature Conservancy Council in 1981, working to George Peterken and Keith Kirby. After many years of compiling the NCC Ancient Woodland Inventory, he moved to Regional duties as Conservation Officer for Buckinghamshire, though with woodland work continuing across the country in the form of various projects. His chief accomplishment in this time was the restoration of Greenham Common Airbase to wildlife habitat and commonland. A secondment to the FC in the New Forest matured into a permanent appointment as senior ecologist FC England, where he continues to work. With 268,000ha of land under its direct control and with forest and woodland creation and management policy and support across the rest of the country as key parts of the FC's role, the post continues to provide challenge and interest.

His lecture will cover the following themes:

Jonathan Spencer will contrast the radical ideas of Toby Aykroyd with a more establishment approach to what is practicably possible, given relevant potential and constraints. He will draw out the issues and opportunities that lie out there, and explore some of the examples of restoration.

3 November 'The Foresters with Horns - large herbivores in the wildwood and modern naturalistic grazing systems'

Keith Kirby read a degree in agriculture and forestry sciences (Oxford) followed by research for D. Phil on brambles in Wytham Woods, and a couple of years phase 1 survey work in Cumbria. He then joined NCC in 1979 as apprentice woodland ecologist to George Peterken. He has remained as a woodland officer ever since, through the English Nature period 1991-2006, and from October 2006 as part of Natural England.

His lecture will cover the following themes:

The pre-Neolithic forests of Britain contained large mammals such as wild ox, deer and wild boar. Did these horny foresters create an open park like landscape as Frans Vera in the Netherlands has proposed, or was it predominantly wooded? The question is relevant to our understanding of the origins of our flora and fauna, but also to ideas for creating new wild landscapes in the future. Research for English Nature by CEH and Bournemouth University suggests that Frans Vera's ideas have been overstated as far as the pre-Neolithic landscape is concerned. There is however considerable scope for using large herbivores to help create future diverse landscapes. Whether we can let these 'run wild' in the way that is done at Oostvaardersplassen will depend on resolving a variety of ecological, ethical and social issues.

10 November 'The Wicken Vision - creating a new wetland landscape in Cambridgeshire - progress and problems'

Dr Stuart Warrington, has worked since 2003 for the National Trust as an advisor on all aspects of nature conservation, in the East of England region. Previously he was a lecturer in ecology at the University of Hertfordshire.

His lecture will cover the following themes:

In 1999 at Wicken Fen, the National Trust embarked on an ambitious, long-term 'Vision' to create a wetland extending over 10,000 acres from Wicken down to the city of Cambridge, primarily by buying farmland and reverting it to wetland. So far the NT has more than doubled the size of the original Wicken Fen nature reserve. The aim is to allow water level management and an extensive, naturalistic grazing regime to determine the habitats created. This talk will look at the philosophical, as well as practical management, issues of such a scheme, and review some of the barriers and opportunities of the Vision.

17 November ‘Landscape: does it help or undermine the cause of conservation?’

Professor Adrian Phillips was trained as a planner and geographer. He worked in London on countryside topics for the UK government, in Kenya for the United Nations Environment Programme and in Switzerland for IUCN - the World Conservation Union. He was Director General of the Countryside Commission between 1981 and 1992. Since then, he has held a professorial post at Cardiff University, written numerous articles on conservation and landscape themes and edited a 12-volume series of Best Practice advice on the management of protected areas. Between 1994 and 2000, he chaired the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, and from 2000-2004 worked with IUCN on the World Heritage Convention. He now advises the UK Heritage Lottery Fund and is on the board of several national and local nature conservation, countryside and heritage NGOs in the UK, including the National Trust and the Woodland Trust.

His lecture will cover the following themes:

Landscape is a powerful idea that has recently received a boost in policy terms when the UK joined the European Landscape Convention. But it can cause confusion, as it is used both to mean a scale of action and an integrated way of understanding the environment. Some also fear that its incorporation into protected area strategies (as protected landscapes – or IUCN Category V), and the promotion of an approach like the UK National Parks, will undermine efforts to protect places in their more natural state. Indeed, some critics believe that these are not really protected areas as far as biodiversity conservation is concerned. The speaker will debate these issues, show how they are related to different cultural and professional perspectives and strongly argue that the landscape approach - whether it refers to scale or an integrated approach - is essential for conservation in the 21st Century.

The Ecology and Conservation Studies Society aims to foster interest in conservation based on sound ecological principles by arranging lecture courses, field visits and meetings, and by keeping its members up to date on literature, new concepts, research and practical field studies techniques. Membership is open to all who have relevant experience and interests. Non-members are most welcome at these lectures series.

Web site : <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ce/environment/ecssociety/index.shtml>

The Spring 2007 Free Public Lecture Series will be held on Friday evenings from 9 February to 16 March incl., on the subject of **‘Conservation of Resources: recycling and regeneration’**