

Dear Scrutiny Member

Wildlife (Jersey) Law 20XX

I am writing to urge you to support the draft Wildlife Law.

You will no doubt be aware of the catastrophic declines of wildlife across the globe. The World Wildlife Fund, published their Living Planet Report (<https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-us/>) last week which announced that populations of wildlife have declined by an average of 68% since 1970. **That is a 68% reduction in populations of wildlife across the globe!**

Wildlife in Jersey is not faring any differently.

Wild Birds

Declines in recent years include;

Yellow Hammer

Stonechat

Linnet

Turtle Dove

Meadow Pipit and many more. Even once common birds such as thrush are declining.

<http://www.birdsontheedge.org/2014/02/11/north-coast-breeding-bird-survey-2013-results/>

We have less shore birds than we used to, and whilst some of their problems occur overseas in their breeding grounds, when they are in Jersey they suffer continual disturbance in their overwintering sites.

Marine wildlife

We are proud of our dolphin and seal populations, but the increase in RIB trips to the offshore reefs is causing them increased disturbance and as much as we want people to behave responsibly the guidelines are continually being broken. Without a stick, carrots such as the voluntary Code of Conduct just aren't working and we need some means of requiring people to behave responsibly rather than relying on their goodwill. The disturbance is even being carried out by the professional tour operators who, whilst they know better, are trying to give their clients a closer wildlife experience than their competitors.

Invasive species

We have seen the problems that Asian hornets are causing across the island, but there are many invasive species which need to be controlled. Japanese Knotweed already causes a significant financial burden on developers and home owners. Hottentot Fig is destroying our coastal grasslands and Pampas Grass is spreading and becoming a huge problem which will cost this island significant sums of money if it is not dealt with soon. Some of these, and other problem plants, are still for sale in our garden centres despite warnings that garden plants escape to the wild.

Our pet shops sell a number of species such as corn snakes and terrapins which often turn up in the wild, where they have a negative impact on our native wildlife, then have to be treated and rehomed by the Animal Shelter with further cost to the charity and our environment.

Reptiles and amphibians

Our national animal the Crapaud, our Jersey toad is suffering declines. There are many reasons for these declines, but we are not acting to reverse them. Our only frog is still existing in tiny numbers, and populations of wall lizards and our only snake, the grass snake, are in decline. We may no longer see any grass snakes in a few years time.

Insects

Insects are declining in significant numbers. Butterfly populations are in decline <https://www.gov.je/government/pages/statesreports.aspx?reportid=1514> and whilst we have no data, due to the lack of monitoring, ad-hoc evidence suggests that populations of bees and other pollinators are also in decline.

These declines demonstrate an urgent need to protect our local wildlife, as currently the existing protections are simply not working.

The new Law

There may be some confusion in regard to certain provisions in the new Law, and some consideration is required of these;

In Part 4 of the Law, Articles 27 and 30 appear to be controversial, however, in actual fact, these provisions are simply to enable Government Officials to deal with wider Island problems on private land.

For example, in the past it has been difficult to track down the owner of land which, for example may support an Asian Hornet's nest. Such a landowner may live abroad, and is only contactable through their legal representative. It can take weeks to gain permission to enter onto such land, by which time a hornets' nest may have matured and 200 queen hornets could have been released.

The provisions in the law simply make it possible to enter onto land for a specific purpose with the relevant Minister's approval to ensure that emergency measures can be undertaken.

Article 35 may also be viewed as controversial, however there are very important reasons for this approach.

The reasoning behind this article is not to intrude on landowners' private enjoyment of their land, but to ensure that rare and vulnerable species are protected from harm during the most vulnerable stages of their life cycles. There is no intention to remove land owners rights and responsibilities, but is simply a way to ensure that the Government, as a last resort can fulfil its international responsibilities towards rare and endangered species.

Our International responsibilities

Jersey has had several Multilateral Environmental Agreements extended to us, the most pertinent of which, in regard to wildlife, are;

The Rio Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity

The Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and

The Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

These conventions, Particularly the Bonn Convention make it absolutely clear that parties should cooperate with their neighbours to create collaborative projects for the benefit of wildlife. The provisions in the law simply enable Government to protect species in their habitats. As you will be aware, many animals and birds depend upon different habitats for different stages of their life cycle and it is a waste of resources, for example if France protects a bird in its breeding site, but Jersey does not protect it in its overwintering grounds.

We must remember that it is not just our wildlife that is under threat, it is that of our children and of our neighbouring countries.

Wildlife is under an urgent threat, 2020 is the end of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, and of the 196 Countries who have signed the Convention, none have achieved the targets for biodiversity conservation enshrined in the Aichi Targets; <https://www.cbd.int/gbo5>

You may wish to read the Guardian article, which summarises it well, here; <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/15/every-global-target-to-stem-destruction-of-nature-by-2020-missed-un-report-aoe>

We must act to protect our wildlife. If we are to ensure a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, if we are to reduce the catastrophic loss of wildlife and if we are to see any progress towards climate change mitigation, I urge you to support the Wildlife (Jersey) Law 20XX.

Thank you for your time.

Yours faithfully

John Pinel