
Natives, Aliens and Re-introductions: Opening Remarks

Roger Downie

Glasgow Natural History Society and University of Glasgow

E-mail: roger.downie@glasgow.ac.uk

I would like to welcome delegates to our conference on behalf of all the organising team which included representatives from GNHS, Glasgow Science Festival, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Museums, SWT, RSPB, Froglife and the University of Glasgow. I would like to thank all for their work in putting the meeting together, but especially Richard Weddle who bore the brunt of a huge amount of work with remarkable cheerfulness.

We started thinking about a theme for this conference back in the summer of 2011. It seemed a good idea to run a follow-up to our successful 2001 conference on 'Alien species: friends of foes?' which was the centrepiece of GNHS's 150th anniversary celebrations (full proceedings published as *The Glasgow Naturalist* 23 supplement 2001, 113 pp). We noticed that the British Ecological Society (BES) was planning to celebrate its centenary in the summer of 2013 by means of a nationwide Festival of Ecology and had announced a competition for organisations who wished to take part in the festival. It therefore seemed sensible to make a funding application to this competition and we broadened the theme to *Natives, Aliens and Re-introductions: how does ecology inform wildlife conservation in Scotland?* The main components of our contribution to the Festival were to be a two day conference, a schools poster event and themed excursions through the summer. Our application was submitted in December 2011 and success was notified in March 2012, along with two other Glasgow events, the Alexander Wilson bicentenary celebrations (in Glasgow and Paisley, his birth town) and a rainforest exhibition in Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery. Serious planning for our contribution began in April 2012 and included approximately monthly meetings with partners and a meeting in October with Julie Hodgkinson of the BES for an overview of all the Festival of Ecology events in Scotland.

An issue for us was the date. We were keen to be part of Glasgow Science Festival as well as the Festival of Ecology, but technically this ended just before the Festival of Ecology started. We wanted to include a schools event, which meant mid to late June at the latest and even if this was separated in time from the conference, we did not want to have a conference in summer holiday time. Since the Alexander Wilson

University of Glasgow event got fixed for 14th June, we decided on the following weekend for our conference, and Glasgow Science Festival kindly agreed to include us in their programme, despite being late. By happy coincidence Scottish Natural Heritage declared 2013 the Year of Natural Scotland, so our event fits under three headings.

The issues facing natives, aliens and re-introductions in the context of wildlife conservation are current, relevant and contentious, as I'm sure these two days of talks and workshops will demonstrate. As a taster, here are some recent research paper titles from conservation-related journals:

- Will extreme climate events facilitate biological invasions (*Frontiers in Ecology & Environment* 10, 2012).
- How successful are plant species re-introductions? (*Biological Conservation* 144, 2011).
- Dying for conservation: eradicating invasive alien species in the face of opposition (*Animal Conservation* 13, 2010).
- Assisted colonization: evaluating contrasting management actions (and values) in the face of uncertainty (*Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 24, 2009).
- Translocation or bust: a new acclimatization strategy for the 21st century (*Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 26, 2011).
- Impacts of biological invasions: what's the way forward? (*Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 28, 2013).
- Towards a more balanced view of non-native species (*Conservation Biology* 26, 2012).
- Do invasive species perform better in their new ranges? (*Ecology* 94, 2013).
- The elephant in the room: the role of failed invasions in understanding invasion biology (*Oikos* 122, 2013).
- Protected areas act as establishment centres for species colonizing the UK (*Proceedings of the Royal Society* 280B, 2013).
- The history of public participation in ecological research (*Frontiers in Ecology and Environment* 10, 2012).

I would like to thank all our funders who have made it possible to make this conference almost free entry, especially the British Ecological Society, the Glasgow Science Festival, Glasgow City Council and GNHS's Blodwen Lloyd Binns bequest.

Now, I have pleasure in introducing Julie Hodgkinson who will give us a brief account of the background to the BES Centenary Festival of Ecology.