



## Audio file

Episode 1: GB Invasives Strategy, IPCC Report & UN High Seas Treaty

Transcript

00:00:13 Speaker 1

Hello and welcome to the nature in a Nutshell podcast. This is the podcast which breaks down the latest ecology and environmental news. My name is Sophie and I work for CIEEM, which is the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, and I'm the Marketing Officer. You might be able to tell from my job title that I'm not an expert in ecology and environmental management, but luckily my two co-hosts are. So I've got Douglas and Jason with me to explain the big news items this month that are affecting nature and society. So do you guys want to introduce yourselves?

00:00:48 Speaker 2

Hi, my name is Douglas and I'm the CIEEM Policy Officer. Although I would hesitate to call myself an expert, but I know enough to get the job done. So this month we're going to be looking at the new Great Britain Invasive Non-native Species Strategy, the latest IPCC report and the UN's new High Seas Treaty.

00:01:07 Speaker 3

So I'm Jason and I'm CIEEM's Head of Policy, and equally expert might be an overestimation, but I think we have a good handle on things that are going on.

00:01:16 Speaker 1

So let's kick things off first of all, with the Great Britain Invasive Strategy. So Douglas, do you want to take us through this and what this means?

00:01:25 Speaker 2

Yeah, absolutely. So this is the Great Britain Invasive Non-native Species Strategy for 2023 to 2030. So it is a bit of a mouthful and I'll be repeating that a bit through this. So bear with if I do make a little mistake.

But this is a new action plan unveiled by Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Government, or working in coordination across the island of Great Britain.

The act is a refresh of the previous strategies and the aim is to provide a new framework for tackling the threats posed by non-native invasive species across Great Britain.

As the title suggests, and this is really important right now, globally non-native species are one of the top five drivers of biodiversity loss.

They're up there with things like, you know, habitat degradation and direct human impacts like hunting and poaching, and they're estimated to cost the British economy about £1.84 billion a year,



with around 2000 non-native species currently resident in Britain, so we've got a huge amount of invasive species that we do need to try and deal with and manage and there are lots of things going towards that legislation wise.

So when I'm talking about invasive non-native species, I'm talking about things like grey squirrels, American Mink and Japanese Knotweed. They seriously disrupt habitats and ecosystems. You know, grey squirrels outcompete red American mink hunt Water Voles and other sort of small mammals.

And they can cause significant damage to our native biodiversity. So the strategy is particularly important now with, you know, climate change advancing. We'll hear about that bit more with the IPC's latest report.

Climate change is expected to exacerbate the impacts arising from non-native species, so you can imagine when climate change degrades habitat, what you get then is a really vulnerable place which invades species, can more easily get a sort of a handle in, you know, they can get a sort of a foot through the door and start to pioneer and then they come in to take on habitats a lot more easy.

The overarching aim of the strategy is to sort of minimise the risks of introduction and establishment, reduce the negative impacts of invasive non-native species throughout Great Britain and it lays out seven key outcomes, so these are all to be achieved by 2030. So it's quite a tall order, but the biggest emphasis throughout the whole framework is on prevention. So there's a commitment throughout it to reduce the establishment and invasive non-native species by at least 50% compared to the levels they were in 2000.

So it's quite an important goal. It does put us in line with our international commitments that we made at the Convention of Biological Diversity.

So this is something we should be doing. The UK Government should be doing this. I guess you know, you should praise them for doing that, but also this is they're required to do it by our commitment. But this is just a framework. So we're still waiting for a proper implementation plan, I know Scotland's trying to get one out the door quite quickly. Wales as well. So we need one of those in place in order to really identify who will be the key leads.

Who's going to contribute to this and how we're actually going to monitor the delivery and its success sort of as time goes on towards 2030. You know, how are we going to know that they are reaching 2000 levels?

What's the monitoring going to be like? Who's going to be doing it? So there's still quite a few questions and this is quite new, but I think it's positive. You know, it's a good news story that we have this framework that builds on existing ones.

It's a big update, something to keep an eye on, but definitely something to keep applying pressure to make sure we're really keeping up with this and making sure it's the best it can be.

00:04:32 Speaker 3



Critical to this, as with so many other things that we come across in our sector is that funding is going to be seriously important in order to maintain monitoring and activity and management. But one of the nice things with this one I think is that it can really involve a whole host of people from the professionals in our sector to citizen scientists, local authorities, governments, you know, this could be a really collaborative endeavour, which would be really great.

00:04:58 Speaker 2

Yeah, exactly. And cause it's across, you know, three nations, it really opens up that border for sort of trans boundary management, you know, between Scotland and England, and Wales and England.

So there's really some opportunities here. Like you said, you know, it's quite exciting for collaboration and what CIEEM can really put itself in the position to do with our staff and with our volunteers.

00:05:12 Speaker 1

So now we're going to move on to the IPCC report. For those of us that might not know, Jason, what is this and what's the latest on this?

00:05:20 Speaker 3

The IPCC have published the latest element of the 6th assessment report.

The IPCC, for those who don't know, is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It's a UN body that looks at the science of climate change, brings together hundreds of scientists from around the world to pull together the latest research on climate and the most up-to-date modelling for future scenarios. The 6th Assessment report is the 6th time that they've put all of this information together and a series of reports looking at the science, the causes, the impacts and the potential counts as needed. And so they've published the Synthesis Report, which is one of the final stages of this 6th process, which includes a summary for policymakers and is an integrated view of climate change as the final part. As I've said, sixth assessment report.

So the report consists of a summary for policymakers, which is already up now and then a longer report, which will be out soon. So it's not necessarily great news, but there is some positives we could take from it.

So the report says that we're in trouble and basically we need action now, and we need urgent action. Action from Governments has not been enough until now. It hasn't been fast enough, and that global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. We're now at 1.1 degree Celsius of global warming above pre industrial levels. I've seen estimates at 1.2, so it's still going up and this rising has driven rapid global change, including more severe floods, more intense droughts, worse storms and obviously sea levels are rising as well.

And the result of this, as we know, is that it's impacting people's lives, livelihoods, the natural environment and one of the tragedies of this is that these impacts are often more severe on the most vulnerable people in the developing countries of the world, and those are the people who have contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions, so particularly unfair outcome of climate change



unfortunately. To add to this bit of bad news, unfortunately, is that we're currently on course according to the report, to reach 1.5 degrees of warming sometime in the 2030s, which isn't far away.

What they do say, however, is that the good news is that even if we overshoot and we hit 1.5 or potentially 1.6/1.7, we could put it back, but only if we start taking action now.

There is a caveat in that as well is that there are potential for tipping points in that continued rising that may potentially be irreversible, which just adds the urgency to act now.

Basically, the report is calling for industrialised nations to really step up and to take some responsibility.

And they're calling for developed nations to cut their greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and then to achieve net zero by 2050, which basically means to try and get their emissions to as close to zero as possible but any that are left to basically then try and offset them in some other way.

But basically, we come back to the point that to achieve a 50% reduction by 2030 is only seven years away.

So that's some huge action that needs to happen now and quickly and that includes making some very big investments in renewables, phasing out fossil fuels, particularly important is to redirect finance.

They're also calling on, this goes back to the responsibility element of it for the global North, the developed nations, to help the global South, the developing nations, with funding, knowledge sharing and technology in particular.

One other point, just to add in to all of this as well is that we have to remember that the climate and nature crises are interlinked, so one of the assumptions in the report is that we'll be able to remove a lot of greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere with something called carbon capture and storage technology.

The problem with this though is that that technology doesn't yet exist at scale. It's had trials and tests at small scale and they've worked, but there isn't yet anything on the kind of scale that we would need to take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

Certainly enough of it to have the kinds of impacts that we want or that are particularly anticipated in the report, but we do have other ways to take greenhouse gas emissions out of the atmosphere and that is for us to restore habitats and to let plants and soils suck up and lock carbon away in natural habitats. And that's something that's called nature based solutions.

So if you took a positive from all of this is that there is a real role for us as a sector and for ecologists and environmental managers in delivering these nature based solutions and CIEEM as an institute and as the way that we support the sector really has a role to play here in making sure that we have the right skills in the sector and that we're supporting our Members to do that.

00:09:34 Speaker 1



Cool, thanks for that, Jason. Now we're going on to our final news story of the episode, which is going to be all about the UN High Seas Treaty. So what's the latest here, Jason?

00:09:45 Speaker 3

Thanks, Sophie. So at the beginning of March and after nearly 20 years of negotiating, we've had international governments come together and finally sign an agreement on how to govern contacts in the Open Seas. For those of you who don't know, the Open Seas are the areas of international water that are not controlled by any one particular government or a particular country rather, sorry. Countries usually have control out to 200 nautical miles out to sea, and beyond that is what's known as the international waters...The open seas at the high seas.

But they're particularly important because those international waters or the higher seas make up about 2/3 of the ocean, so they're really important in terms of the habitats and the natural environment for what happens out there and then also governing human activity out there.

The Treaty is really important in that it delivers a mechanism for us to enable the 30 by 30 pledge, which was made at the UN Biodiversity Conference in December. So 30 by 30 means to protect 30% of the sea and the land by 2030 for nature.

So the Treaty sets up legal mechanisms for us to be able to create marine protected areas in international waters which didn't exist before.

So that's a really great step forward, but it also creates mechanisms for us to be able to assess the environmental impacts of activities in international waters.

There are, however, concerns still, so some conservationists worry that activities that are regulated by other treaties that already exist could continue without having to assess their environmental impacts.

And unfortunately, these include big ones, so it's fisheries shipping, deep sea mining, for example, which potentially have huge impacts on marine life and ocean habitats. So still some concern there. We'll have to see how that carries on.

And then just one final thing to add on a new UN High Seas Treaty is that we're going get a new series of COPs.

So we've already got COPs which are Conference of the Parties, we've already got them for climate and for nature. Climate's every year, nature's, every other year.

We haven't yet, as far as I'm aware, been told how often the High Seas Treaty COP will meet to look at governments and biodiversity, but it's another one to add to our calendars.

00:11:42 Speaker 1

Phew, so after all that I think we might need a bit of a pick me up. So should we end the episode on some positive news? So I'll go first so firstly, Sir David Attenborough is back, which is really exciting. So he's back with his latest series called Wild Isles. So this is as beautifully shot as shows like planet Earth, but Wild Isles focuses on nature in the UK and Ireland.



So while Sir David opened the series, sort of acknowledging that Britain is one of the most nature depleted countries in the whole world, it's great to see him reminding people about how important it is to invest in our wildlife and also about the incredible nature that we can find right on our doorsteps.

00:12:22 Speaker 3

I've really been enjoying the series and I think one of the things we need to remember though is that there is a 6th episode, so there's five episodes airing live on BBC One. There is a 6th episode that will be available on the BBC iPlayer and that's the one all about the causes of nature loss, but also about the people working behind the scenes in nature conservation organisations and citizens generally as well, helping to protect and restore nature. So I think we all need to make sure we watch that 6th episode as well online.

00:12:47 Speaker 1

Yeah, I think if anything that one is the most important of them all. So Doug, you've got a positive news story for the month as well.

00:12:54 Speaker 2

I do. So I'll be taking us to Ireland, where I'm going to talk a little bit about Ireland's first Hope Spot, which is on the greater Skellig coast. So don't worry if you've not heard about Hope Spots before. I actually hadn't before this one came up, so this was really interesting for me.

So a large sort of portion of ocean off the South West coast of Ireland, which is usually classed as the greatest Skellig coast, has been added to a list of Hope Spots by the Marine Conservation Movement which is called Mission Blue.

So this sort of joins the ranks of 148 other Hope Spots, which are also hotspots for biodiversity around the globe, and they really aim sort of inspire public awareness, access to wildlife and nature and support for a worldwide network of marine protected areas. Really important and it's really positive to see one in Ireland. I think it's just great.

So I mean it joins the ranks of the Great Barrier Reef, Galapagos islands, parts of Antarctica. So you know, Ireland's really, really sort of putting itself out there.

The Greater Skellig coast is sort of, stretches from County Kerry to Loop Head and covers around 7000 kilometres square of Irish coastal waters and it's home to endangered sharks, really important seabird colonies which we have a lot of in the UK and lots of animals threatened with extinction, sort of from fishing. So this is a really important breeding area, which is one of the reasons they've sort of earmarked it.

So you know, it's really hoping that this pushes forward some more implementation within the Irish Government about marine protection and the importance of the marine world within Ireland.

So yeah, really great to see just a really nice positive news story. So yeah, definitely check it out. I mean, it's quite a lot of fun just jumping around the different Hope Spots and seeing what's there.



00:14:21 Speaker 1

And people can find that on Mission Blues website, is that right?

00:14:26 Speaker 2

Absolutely. So Mission Blues website, you can sort of zoom around the world and, and see wherever there is. There are a couple of interesting ones just in the middle of the Atlantic that I think is called like a shark hotel or something. So quite fun.

00:14:35 Speaker 1

Well, that sounds great. So Jason, do you have anything to add?

00:14:38 Speaker 3

Just to say that at the time that we were recording this is quite a bit that's come out on Biodiversity Net Gain and we know that that's a really hot topic so we will be covering that in next month's episode.

00:14:48 Speaker 1

Well, if you've made it this far, thank you very much for listening. We will be back next month for another episode. Don't forget to subscribe wherever you're listening to this so you don't miss that and also leave a nice comment and rate the podcast as well. But I think that's it from us. Thanks again for listening and see you next month.

00:15:08 Speaker 2

Bye. Thanks guys.

00:15:09 Speaker 3

Thanks very much.