

Research and analysis: West nile virus in owls in Germany

Updated: Added the updated outbreak assessment (17 October 2018).

Preliminary and updated outbreak assessments for west nile virus found in owls (*Strix nebulosa*) in Lower Saxony, Germany.

Notice: Competition guidance SBRI: finding a solution to *Hylobius abietis* in Scottish forestry

This is a Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) competition. It is open to organisations of any type and size, from any sector. 100% funding is available to successful applicants.

Please read the [full competition scope](#) before you make your application.

Press release: UK Minister Mark Field attends Pacific Islands Forum to lead global effort on climate change

Mark Field, Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will travel to Nauru for the three-day (3-6 September) Pacific Islands Forum where climate change is top of the agenda.

The UK is leading global solidarity on action to tackle climate change, and Mark Field's visit is the second successive year a UK Minister has attended the Pacific Islands Forum, where climate change is threatening the very existence of several island nations.

The Pacific Islands Forum comprises 14 countries, of which 11 are Commonwealth members. The UK will be stepping up its engagement in the region with three additional diplomatic missions in Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu. This

will enable greater joint working on climate change issues, as well as further regional work to promote the rules-based international system.

Minister Field said:

Britain has proudly led the way on tackling climate change around the world and, as a developed country, we have a moral imperative to help those around the globe who stand to lose most from the consequences of man-made climate change.

The message I am taking to this important Pacific Islands Forum is that unless we work together, with our Commonwealth friends and those who share our values in the region, we risk the very real tragedy of some of these islands literally disappearing off the map.

The UK is among the largest contributors of international climate finance and in the four years to 2020 will be giving developing countries over £5.5 billion to help them mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. This will build on commitments made at the Commonwealth Head of Governments Meeting in London earlier this year, including the Blue Charter and the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance.

Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Mark Field [@MarkFieldUK](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

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[News story: National Drought Group –](#)

Chairman's Statement – August

The National Drought Group (NDG), chaired by the Environment Agency's Chief Executive, brings together government departments, water companies, environmental groups and others to coordinate action to maintain water supplies and manage the other risks associated with drought. The NDG convened on Wednesday 29 August to assess the present situation and coordinate plans for the weeks ahead.

The present situation and the prospects

Rainfall across England over three months from May to July was 54% of the long-term average (LTA). Farmers, the environment and water companies faced considerable pressures caused by the rapid deterioration in water resources.

At the end of July, a band of wet weather brought some respite as it moved across parts of the country. United Utilities called off a proposed hosepipe ban in early August but continued with applications for 4 drought permits, should they be needed later in the year. These have been approved by the Environment Agency.

August has been unsettled with dry periods interrupted by wet weather. This has helped the situation.

The Met Office's 3 month outlook for September to November forecasts that above average temperatures and slightly lower than average rainfall are likely.

As we move into autumn the Environment Agency, the water companies and the other members of the NDG will continue to work closely together to reduce the risk of water restrictions and balance the needs of the public, businesses and the environment.

Action we are taking

Water Companies

Water companies have taken and will continue to take a range of actions to maintain water supplies for customers, including:

- Operational interventions such as installing new pumping stations, reconfiguring networks to reduce reliance on specific water treatment works, and accelerating work to bring sites back into operation.
- Tackling leakage by providing extra funding and resource to fix leaks, alongside use of technology such as satellite imaging and drones to find leaks.
- Implementing contingency drought plans as appropriate.

- Promoting water efficiency messages to customers through increased media activity, roadshows and community engagement.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has:

- Responded to a 330% increase in dry-weather related incidents compared with this time last year.
- [Introduced flexible abstraction for farmers](#) in emergency cases in order to safeguard food production and animal welfare, where it is satisfied there will be no adverse effects on the environment.
- Allowed farmers to trade water allowances – as set out in their abstraction licence – on a short-term basis, without the need to change their licences.
- Granted United Utilities 4 drought permits at locations in Cumbria, to enable them to be deployed quickly should they be needed.
- Used our powers to protect the environment by applying for a drought order. This is the first time we have used these powers due to the extraordinary dry weather this summer.

Other partners

Defra, the National Farmers' Union, Canal & River Trust, the Angling Trust and other NDG members are working actively to manage down the risks and support the needs of water users and the environment.

Advice to the public

Although we have received some rainfall during August, the overall outlook for the next 3 months remains drier than average. We encourage everyone to follow the advice of their water company and use water wisely. This will help protect the environment and the economy, and reduce the risk of further water restrictions.

Next NDG meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 20 September where we will focus on preparing for next summer as the drought may continue through the winter.

[World news story: Why would I like to meet my neighbours in the Falkland Islands?](#)

This regional competition offers winners the chance to visit the Falklands for a week with all the costs covered. To participate, contestants should send a one minute video answering the question: "Why would I like to meet my neighbours from the Falkland Islands?" in English.

Winners will be staying with a local family, to experience first-hand the life in the Falkland Islands.

The ideal winner should be active in social media and willing to share his/her experience about the Falkland Islands through these channels.

The contest is meant to promote the cultural exchange between the Falklands and the region, and to spread the knowledge about the Falkland Island and its people.

Find out more about the competition here:

[Regional Student Competition regulations](#)

(PDF, 108KB, 4 pages)