



CIEEM

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inpractice

Bulletin of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

A Novel Approach to the
Translocation of Dingy
Skipper in Brownfield Sites

How do you Become an
Invertebrate Ecologist?

Marine Macroinvertebrate
Assessment: Challenges
and Outlook

Invertebrates

Q&A

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EclA Accreditation Committee Member



How did you get into the sector?

My career has been convoluted, and dependent on chance. My grandfather, a miner from North East England, took me out looking for newts and lizards and set pitfall traps in his garden, and I've been fascinated by nature ever since. After a Zoology degree at the University of Aberdeen, I volunteered and worked in practical conservation and land management in Wales and Scotland. After funding finished for a charity project I was running, I set up as a sole trader doing practical conservation and land management work – this was the origin of Caledonian Conservation. Meanwhile I continued to do voluntary invertebrate, herptile and bird surveys. I was recommended to a windfarm developer for bird surveys on a site where I had done the black grouse fence marking, and moved into ecological consultancy. I then took roles in larger multi-disciplinary engineering consultancies, before taking on a part-time role at Buglife as a conservation assistant for Scotland and planning casework officer for the UK. I resurrected Caledonian Conservation in 2010 to fill the other part of my time, incorporating as a limited company to enable direct contracts with large developers. Caledonian Conservation has since gone from strength to strength, and the team has grown. I've now been working in the ecology sector for 18 years.

Why did you join/get involved with CIEEM?

I believe it is important to share experience and knowledge. This is why I publish papers and am a member of CIEEM and other organisations. I also continue to volunteer with conservation charities, sitting in board and trustee positions, and provide free training to other volunteers.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing the sector?

The ecology sector is not valued as equivalent to other similar professions. I believe this is a big factor affecting recruitment and causing skills shortages. I know many people who are extremely well qualified and experienced as ecologists but who have chosen to leave the sector due to low pay and long anti-social hours.

Who is your hero and why?

Helen Smith, Conservation Officer of the British Arachnological Society, is a brilliant arachnologist who has really driven spider conservation in the UK – notably running the Fen Raft Spider Conservation Programme and sitting on the IUCN Spider and Scorpion Specialist Group. She's truly inspiring, and always seems to find the time to encourage and support other less experienced arachnologists.

Who do you see as a great leader in the sector?

Particularly in the world of invertebrates, Craig Macadam is a fantastic leader. Having driven invertebrate conservation in the UK for many years, with great achievements in riverflies, brownfields, and pollinators to name just a few topics, he is now Conservation Director for Buglife, and is leading on a truly global platform.

If you could change one thing to make the world better for nature and biodiversity, what would it be?

A greater appreciation for the positive roles that invertebrates play in agriculture and commercial forestry – such as pollination, pest control, nutrient cycling and soil structure.

What advice would you give to those just starting out in the sector?

Volunteer, volunteer, and volunteer some more! Get out there, learn new skills, meet new mentors. Nothing is more valuable than experience, and there is always more to learn!

What is your favourite species?



My favourite group is spiders, and my favourite spider is the bog sun-jumper (*Heliophanus dampfi*). But I don't think I like them any more than my favourite beetle, the short-necked oil beetle (*Meloe brevecolis*), bird, the red-throated diver (*Gavia setiflata*), or reptile, the slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*).

Can you tell readers something random about yourself?

I volunteer with the Ghostbusters of Glasgow, who raise money for children's charities such as Glasgow Children's Hospital charity. My eldest son spent a fair bit of time there when he was younger, so there's a real personal link.

