



Book of Abstracts
Conference on Health and Biodiversity
Galway, Ireland
23rd to 25th August, 2005

Urban Biodiversity And Human Health And Well-Being: An Integrative Case Study

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The growth in urbanisation poses numerous threats to, and some opportunities for biodiversity. Within urban areas, as well as in rural areas, biodiversity has been ascribed many environmental, social and economic benefits. However, the relationship between urban biodiversity and human health and well-being has not been clearly articulated. There is, as revealed by a critical review of published conceptual models which consider both the environment, and human health and well-being, no integrated theory addressing the contribution of urban biodiversity to human health. A post-positivist, naturalistic, epistemology has been applied in order to develop a grounded theory that links the dynamic and complex concepts of urban biodiversity, and health and well-being. This paper reports an in-depth case study focused on Birchwood, a New Town development in Warrington, UK, which combined ecological, observational and documentary analysis methods. The innovative approach of using surrogate measures for both urban biodiversity and human health and well-being is presented. Surrogate measures include the structural diversity of urban habitats; peoples' activities and local experiences; and other socio-economic, environmental and cultural aspects of the local community. Qualitative and quantitative data on these surrogate measures were collected. The data were summarised and non-parametric associations between themes and emerging relationships were explored. Results indicate that less bio-diverse urban habitats are associated with more healthy activity. Implications for urban nature conservation are discussed. This presentation will be of interest to urban conservationists, public health practitioners and urban sustainability researchers.