

**NATIONAL FEDERATION
FOR
BIOLOGICAL RECORDING**

NEWSLETTER 38
March 2009



Find out more about the Natural History Museum collections on page 12

March 2009



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**NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR
BIOLOGICAL RECORDING**

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Editorial

As always, there are many projects and schemes going on but I have tried to include a good mix of national and local projects. I hope the articles included here will inspire some of you to look more closely at any centipedes you find, or maybe take a trip to your local beach to see what's new. Helen's article on Kent Goes Wild is inspirational. I'm sure all counties hold some kind of wildlife event, but the focus on recording, particularly encouraging young recorders, is perhaps what we should all be thinking of for the future. Meanwhile, Erica's article on the collections at the Natural History Museum reminds us of the historical record, voucher specimens and the link with recording groups active today.

I haven't included an update on ALERC, although many of us were at the launch in November last year. The establishment of ALERC as a community interest company is imminent so watch this space (or keep an eye on the website www.alerc.org.uk).

Thank you to everyone who has contributed. Articles for future newsletters are very welcome, particularly reports on any projects or schemes and news from recording groups and local records centres. The deadline for articles and pictures is **31st August 2009**.

Carolyn Steele

Cover photograph: ©The Natural History Museum

Marlin and the NBN Gateway

Guy Baker, Communications and Outreach Officer, Marine Life Information Network

The new Marine Act will help to ensure a more joined-up approach to managing the marine environment. There will, however, still be a vital role for NGOs, online networks and local initiatives to support better marine management and to convey the importance of looking after our seas. The Marine Life Information Network (MarLIN) is doing this by getting people involved in marine life recording. In this article, we consider:

- how MarLIN supports volunteer marine life recording;
- the Shore Thing project – supporting community monitoring;
- marine non-native species and marine life recording, and
- what happens to the marine life records people that send to us.

We also provide useful information for marine life recorders.

How MarLIN supports volunteer marine life recording

Now in its 10th year, MarLIN at the Marine Biological Association continues to collect records of marine life to contribute to the UK National Biodiversity Network. Quite apart from being a fun thing to do, marine life recording helps scientists to spot new arrivals such as non-native species, locate biodiversity hotspots, track seasonal changes and establish baselines against which to measure change. We encourage and support recording activities through online resources such as the Sealife Survey recording scheme which includes a ‘My recording’ homepage, species information pages and an online queries service. We also produce waterproof identification guides and run conferences for volunteer recorders.

The Shore Thing project – supporting community monitoring

The Shore Thing project is working with schools and volunteer recorders to collect information on the marine life of rocky shores

around Britain. The project objectives are:

- To create a national database of verified and validated intertidal species for the UK.
- To engage schools and volunteer groups through fieldwork in marine conservation and raise awareness of marine issues.
- To strengthen the links between education and marine research in the UK.

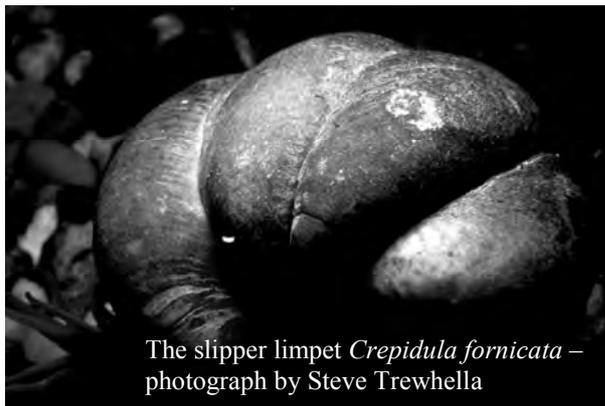


Shore Thing surveyors in action
- photograph by Fiona Crouch

Groups regularly survey their local rocky shores for 22 climate change indicator species and the accumulating data helps to build a picture of how things are now and provides a baseline against which to measure change in the future. About to begin its fourth year, the Shore Thing project has completed 93 surveys at 46 sites. One of the many Shore Thing participants to receive training and undertake shore surveys was Penelope Pinder from Wadham School in Crewkerne. She said “During our survey, one of the students in my class found a species that had never before been found on Lee Bay and I began to realise that climate change is going to have an effect much closer to home. “ All the information collected by Shore Thing surveys is made available online. A recent addition to the Shore Thing website is Google Map functionality. This shows survey locations and photographs of sites, and allows the download of survey data through the map interface.

Marine non-native species and marine life recording

Non-native species present serious threats to marine biodiversity and aquaculture. Many non-native species are considered 'pests' to the aquaculture industry due to fouling and preying on commercially valuable species (for example the American oyster drill *Urosalpinx cinerea*). Fouling organisms reduce the quality and value of many commercial species and by fouling structures, can inhibit maintenance and harvesting practices. The presence of non-native species may also hinder the achievement by 2015 of 'good ecological status' for all coastal waters required by the Water Framework Directive. Currently around 90 marine non-native species are thought to have become established in UK waters. Commercial shipping and aquaculture are two of the ways in which they can be introduced although recreational boating is increasingly recognized as an important route by which non-natives can spread by making short hops from port to port.



The slipper limpet *Crepidula fornicata* – photograph by Steve Trehwella

So, what can we do? As outlined below, scientists are working with groups such as fishermen and the recreational boating community on projects that raise awareness and collect information that will ultimately feed into research and action to conserve native biodiversity. The overall aim is to identify the 'least wanted' species together with the routes by which they enter UK waters and, to borrow a phrase from the Wild West, to head them off at the pass.

Building on work by Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, Devon fishermen and the Bangor Mussel Producers' Association in North Wales, MarLIN in partnership with the industry body Seafish is working on an 'at sea' recording system. This will enable fishermen

to provide an early warning of the appearance of target species such as the slipper limpet *Crepidula fornicata* – a harmless-looking mollusc native to North America which, where it grows in large numbers, can change the nature of the seabed and smother commercial shellfish beds. The recording system under development will link to MarLIN's online database to provide early warnings and enable management action to ensure that humans do not assist invasive species on their travels.

The MBA is part of a research consortium that aims to shed light on the ways in which marine non-native species arrive and spread (see www.marlin.ac.uk/marine_alien). The hard surfaces of pontoons and the comings and goings of recreational boats at marinas provide stepping stones for the spread of a variety of marine non-natives. The Marine Aliens II project is developing rapid assessment methodologies to monitor marinas up and down the country, together with identification guides for boat owners and links to MarLIN's online recording system.

What happens to the marine life records people that send to us?

The enthusiasm and expertise of volunteers is a valuable resource. Networks of recorders and recording schemes such as the Sealife Survey which capture *ad hoc* records provide extremely useful background information. Range extensions of indicator species are often 'flagged up' to the scientific community by volunteer recorders. Recreational divers are supplying habitat data to Natural England via the Seasearch recording scheme, and the Shore Thing project is supplying data on UK climate change indicator species. As volunteer data becomes increasingly important, it is essential that we process the data appropriately. Records that MarLIN receives are checked for accuracy and against known species distributions. They are posted on the MarLIN website (www.marlin.ac.uk/rml/sightings.php) and archived at the MBA. Finally, to ensure widest availability, they are sent to the National Biodiversity Network (see data.nbn.org.uk) where they can be viewed alongside other biodiversity records.

Information for marine life recorders

There are many ways for the public to get involved in marine life recording:

- The Sealife Signpost provides a directory of UK marine life recording schemes:
www.marlin.ac.uk/rml/signpost.php
- MarLIN's Sealife Survey recording scheme welcomes all records of UK marine life. Records and photos can be uploaded via:
www.marlin.ac.uk/rml
- Queries about marine life or help with identification can be sent to:
www.marlin.ac.uk/contactMarLIN.php
- MarLIN runs shore survey projects for schools and volunteers collecting data on non-native and climate change indicator species. Please see the Shore Thing website for more information:
www.marlin.ac.uk/shore_thing
- The MBA runs marine non-native training courses. Please contact us for more information: sec@mba.ac.uk
- The Green Blue provides advice for recreational boat owners:
www.thegreenblue.org.uk

MarLIN has produced a new waterproof guide: Identification Guide for Selected Shore and Shallow Sea Species, which aims to support recording of Biodiversity Action Plan species and habitats. We have a limited number of the guides to give away for free on a first-come-first-served basis. Please email us at marlin@mba.ac.uk.

For more information on The Marine Aliens consortium, visit

www.marlin.ac.uk/marine_aliases

For more information on MarLIN educational activities, visit

www.marlin.ac.uk/learningzone



CENTIPEDES

Tony Barber, BMIG Centipede Recording Scheme

Centipedes, *Hundertfussler*, *Duizendpoten* - no, they don't have a hundred legs – nor even 100 pairs since, in fact, all centipedes have an odd number of leg bearing segments. In British species the number varies between 15 and 101 pairs although foreign ones may have many more. What is notable is that centipedes are found in all sorts of places from the truly wild though to the urban garden and even sometimes indoors and a few live on the sea shore. Almost any time you turn over a log or large stone that has been there awhile (assuming it is not too dry or too wet) you have a good chance of seeing one. They are generalist carnivores with a wide choice of food, usually invertebrates smaller than themselves.

Can they bite? – well, yes, the very largest of our specimens can just penetrate the skin with their poison claws giving a rather unexpected but relatively mild sting which soon goes away – but don't try the same trick with the big ones from the tropics!

A head, bearing antennae and mouthparts similar to those of insects, with or without eyes, is succeeded by the segment bearing the poison claws and then a variable number of leg-bearing segments before the final ones with the reproductive structures. They are distinguished from millipedes by both their very obvious poison claws and by the fact that each segment bears only one pair of legs, unlike the two pairs per segment of millipedes.

By now, many local record centres will have received an e-mail or letter from the **BMIG Centipede Recording Scheme** asking whether they hold records for this group and if so whether they can be made available to the scheme which is preparing a new atlas for Britain and Ireland (a Provisional Atlas dates from 1988). The reason for this is that, although in many cases, records go to both local centres and to the national scheme, there is always a likelihood that some go to one but not the other and for a group such as this, there are only a small number of recorders active anyway. We are trying to ensure that not too

much distribution data, often from local surveys, slips through the net and is therefore not included in the new atlas. This will show



Cryptops hortensis, back lane, Swansea. The commonest of our three species of *Cryptops* and commonly found in urban areas.



Lithobius variegatus, woodland, Devon. A very distinct centipede with variegated legs which is apparently absent from most of eastern Britain.



Strigamia matitima, upper beach, Seil Island, Scotland. A common seashore centipede, often found in large numbers. The swollen last legs indicate a male specimen.

All photographs provided by Tony Barber

centipede distribution at the 10km grid square level (i.e. the national pattern) and in no way replaces local mapping of these animals. At the time of writing a very positive response has been received from a lot of local record centres. To them, “Thank You”. Should centres wish, we plan an exchange of data in with LRCs in due course.

Why is their distribution of particular interest? Well, unlike most insects they don’t fly so there are questions about how they are dispersed, other than walking on their many legs – is it human activity? Also, they are much commoner in warmer areas of the world and our own species seem to have distribution patterns in which climate seems to be significant so climatic change could be reflected in changes in distribution (however they are dispersed!).

There are only about 50 British species, of which four are exclusively seashore and others quite restricted in their geographical distribution.

If you would like to have a go at centipede identification a new AIDGAP key to British Centipedes has just been published. The Centipede Recording Scheme is more than willing to help with identification or verification of specimens. Specimens should be supplied in 70% alcohol.

Contact: tony@barber-jones.com



Lichen records on the NBN Gateway

Janet Simkin, British Lichen Society
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So, when is the British Lichen Society going to do something about putting their data onto the NBN Gateway? The question has been put to us many times.

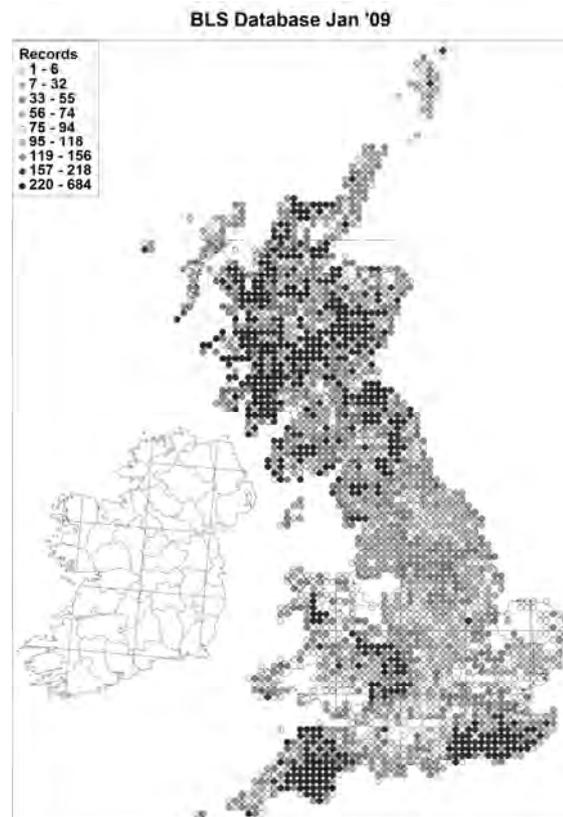
In fact, we have been working on it for the last eight years. Users of the NBN Gateway will already have come across our Scottish Lichen Database, which went on in 2007. They may also have noticed the Threatened Lichens Database and our 10km square Mapping Scheme dataset, but found that access to them was restricted. Both these will be updated and made public during the next year, and we are about to embark on the final stage to computerise the rest of our site-based lichen records for England and Wales.

This will increase our database from around 600,000 records to 2 million, so it was essential to get the technical environment and data flows set up and working well before we started. That has now been achieved, but it has been a long journey and one that has been dominated by frustration with systems that, despite the best efforts of their developers, simply couldn't meet our needs. Back in 1963 the society started a Lichen Mapping Scheme, an ambitious project that got the members out square-bashing and resulted in the development of our first computer database. This is still the main source of 10km square distribution maps for the BLS. Its success is largely due to Prof. Mark Seaward who founded the scheme and has run it ever since.

Lichen records for individual sites remained on paper cards until our first site-based system was implemented in 1999. That was BioBase, tailored for lichens by its author Mike Thurner. It was a good start but couldn't handle our volumes. For the Threatened Lichens and Scottish projects we moved onto Recorder 2002, but that couldn't cope either. Recorder 6 was the only option, but it was still in development and we had to wait until last year before it was able to meet our needs.

Since then all our databases have been brought together in a single Recorder 6 system, structured to support the production of local floras and the maintenance of different datasets on the NBN Gateway. A simple spreadsheet for record input is now available

on the BLS website, and nearly 40 of our members have been trained in its use in a series of workshops. A suite of reports and



automated procedures has been developed to support the database management. Habitat and abundance information has been coded so that it can be analysed. All this has been a lot of work, but the database is already showing its potential as a tool to support conservation and research. All we need to do now is complete it.

We already have 340,000 records for England and Wales that have been put onto the database by our members, but the coverage is very patchy and the records for many of the most important sites are still missing. Another 1,000,000 records have been traced, and we plan to add them over the next 2-3 years. We are grateful to the NBN Data Access Group who have put a funding package together to get us started, with contributions from Natural England, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Welsh Biodiversity Partnership and the Biological Records Centre.

To make the most of the initial funding we are starting with the highest priority data sources. These include records for SSSIs and BAP habitats, and of course churchyards. These are an important habitat for lichens, with a great variety of suitable habitats in a small

area, and we have about 6,000 churchyard surveys on record cards ready to be input.

There is much more to digitising records than just typing them in to spreadsheets. They have to be made legible, and site details and any doubtful identifications must be checked. Sometimes there are several site visits recorded on a single card. Professional surveys may be too detailed and the information has to be summarised from quadrats. All this takes time, and we depend on the expertise and local knowledge of our members to do it.

We also hope to tackle the difficult issue of data flows with local record centres. Like the LRCs we are committed to putting our data onto the NBN Gateway, but this does not address the whole problem. The BLS database contains more information than we can put on the web, and it only includes data that has been through our validation process. It will be fundamental to our own work in the future, so it is important to us that it includes as many lichen records as possible. We will, of course, feed back any corrections or queries and we hope that this will help LRCs who do not have a local lichenologist they can call on.



The Wiltshire Wildlife Sites Project and NI197

Rob Large, Wiltshire Wildlife Sites Officer, Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre
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County Wildlife Sites in Wiltshire and Swindon are currently overseen by the Wildlife Sites project (WSP), a partnership project of local authorities, government agencies and the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. The project has been running for more than ten years, and for the last couple of years it has been managed from within the Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC).



Compton Hill North – photograph by Rob Large

Currently one Project Officer visits, surveys and advises on approximately 100 sites per year out of a total of around 1,550. These have a total area of 21,510 hectares, almost all of which support some UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat. Approximately 95% of these sites lie within the Wiltshire Council area and 5% in Swindon borough.

Early in 2008, the new Local Area Agreements for each authority were signed. Both incorporated **National Indicator 197 Improved Biodiversity** with agreed improvement targets for 2008-2011.

This indicator measures the proportion of local (County) Wildlife Sites which have received substantive positive conservation management within the last five years. Each agreement sets a target of 5% improvement in the indicator for each of the years 2009/10 and 2010/11.

At the beginning of the year provisional baseline figures and fixed improvement targets were agreed for both Local Areas as follows:

- For Wiltshire, from a total of 1,475 sites, 39.9% were found to meet the positive management criteria and a target was set to improve this figure by 3% in the first year (representing 45 additional sites in positive management), and then 5% in each of the two subsequent years.
- For Swindon, from a total of 82 sites, 31.7% were found to meet the positive management criteria and an improvement target of 5% in each year (or 4 additional sites in positive management) was set, augmented by two additional new sites identified in the first year, also in positive management.

Guidance issued for the indicator defines positive management in terms of four simple criteria, each referring to the last five year period (i.e. if the criterion has been met within the last five years, the site is regarded as being in positive management).

1. Sites with a current and appropriate agri-environment agreement. *This will include management options appropriate to the interest features of the site from any of the following schemes: Higher Level Stewardship, Entry Level*

Stewardship, Countryside Stewardship, Environmentally Sensitive Areas and the England Woodland Grant Scheme (Woodland Management Grant).

2. Sites visited by an appropriate individual or organisation and found to be in positive management, or where remedial management advice has been given *and* acted upon.
3. Sites with a current and appropriate management plan, which is being implemented.
4. Sites with specific and appropriate Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

At present the Wiltshire BAP does not mention any specific sites, so criterion 4 does not apply. Of the remaining criteria, number 3 concerning management plans was felt likely to be the least significant as management planning is time consuming and costly and would rely on additional funding sources.

In the baseline assessment, agri-environment schemes made up the lion's share of the sites in positive management (in Wiltshire over 80%). It seems unlikely that there is much scope for improvement on this during the life of the current Local Area Agreement, since sites now in schemes will still qualify for the next two years. The majority of the burden of improvement was felt most likely to fall on criterion 2, concerning sites visited and advised upon.

The WSP is only one entity that regularly visits and advises on conservation management. Contributions to the data collection effort may well be provided by, for example, the AONBs, FWAG, NE and some private consultancies. However, the project is unique in targeting its work solely on Wildlife Sites and is in a position

to prioritise visits on those sites which do not meet the other criteria.

There was little time to produce the baseline figures, so these are likely to be a conservative estimate of the number of sites in positive management. Sites were only judged to have met criterion 2 if they had been visited in the last five years and had been judged to be receiving “optimal” management. That is to say that no effort was made to interpret any of the surveyor’s comments to determine whether management was “positive” (which is in effect a much lower standard than “optimal”).



Ben Lane Meadows – photograph by Rob Large

Furthermore, no effort was made to identify any management recommendations made following the previous visit, or to ascertain whether such recommendations were followed. Revisiting the data will likely cause the baseline to rise quite considerably (and consequently the target numbers may rise also). Such changes however, will not represent improvement in the terms of the indicator, only in the current state of knowledge about the indicator.

For the next two years the target has been

agreed for five percent improvement *per annum*, which is at the lower end of the range that Defra and Government Office would allow for such a large suite of Wildlife Sites. Even if there was no significant increase in the baseline, this would require 74 additional sites to be brought into positive management.

In order to meet the improvement targets in 2009/10 and 2010/11, a number of significant changes will be needed to the structure and operation of the project. Initially, the sites selected for survey must be prioritised to maximise likely positive outcomes. This will probably necessitate increased effort to identify, contact and persuade owners of sites which have not been visited for a long time. Mechanisms must be created which will facilitate collation of data from external advisors, in itself not a straightforward task, since there may be confidentiality issues and also a need to raise awareness among those advisors of the existence and location of Wildlife Sites and the requirements of the indicator.

Meeting NI197 is not without additional cost and the relatively low, but nonetheless ambitious targets agreed for improvements over and above the agreed baseline for 2008 will necessitate an expansion of the operational capacity of the Wildlife Sites project. Consequently funding for a second member of staff has been requested of Wiltshire County Council (soon to be Wiltshire Council) and Swindon Borough Council.



National collections and local recording

Erica McAlister, Department of Entomology, Natural History Museum

The British collections in the Entomology Department at the Natural History Museum have sometimes been underused by UK recorders. This has been for several reasons including lack of information of, and easy access to, the collections. This is not the case with all the groups, for example the Lepidoptera division ran macro- and micro-lepidoptera genitalia workshops specifically with the idea of aiding biological record keeping; the Hymenoptera Division are running a Nocturnal Ichneumonidae recording scheme from the department to name a few things. There is a great wealth of information tied up with the specimens and this could be useful to many recording schemes.



One of the many drawers of specimens - photograph by Erica McAlister

The New Darwin Centre, which will house most of the Entomology collections as well as some of the Botany collections, will hopefully encourage more people to use the collections. This new building will open its doors to the public in September although the collections and staff are beginning to move in already.

Within the new building, the collections will be contained within a giant cocoon at the bottom of which will be the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity (AMC). Within the AMC there will be all of the British collection of Lepidoptera, and hopefully a synoptic collection of most of the other orders. It is hoped that this facility will provide a starting point for most people to enable comparisons of species *etc.* For recorders that need to see

those UK collections not held in the AMC, these will be accessible through contacting the curators who are responsible for the different groups. We often have insects sent to us for verification for recording schemes via the Insect Identification Services at the Museum. Most of us are very approachable and welcome recorders to use the collections themselves for identification checking. A recording scheme for Surrey Lepidoptera has been checking the collections for the last 2 or 3 years, to ensure that their records are up to date and correcting some of ours! Having the historical data published on the web by recording schemes is providing enormous benefit to other collectors.

It is this geographical as well as temporal information about the UK fauna contained on the labels that is vital. They provide a model, albeit one biased by where people liked to collect, of the localities of different species throughout the UK. What we would like to see is these collections being developed, with specimens being deposited at the Museum to enable other people to garner information from them. We are making it easier for people to donate voucher specimens etc. to the department and often donate material useful for the staging and pinning of insects.

As well as the new Angela Marmont Centre, the NHM are about to launch an online database which will contain a catalogue of all of the species that we have, and for several of the departments, all the specimens that are in the museum. Many have photographic records attached to the data and it is hoped that this will be built upon.



A recent fieldtrip to Wales with the Dipterists forum, many of the records went towards various recording schemes © K.Goodger.

In summary, UK recording schemes are essential to understanding the distribution of wildlife in this country, and we hope that the use of the collections can contribute towards documenting this as well as the recording schemes enhancing the national collections.

How Kent Went Wild!

Helen Forster, Natural Environment and Coast Team, Kent County Council

Kent Goes Wild, the county's annual wildlife recording event, returned to Shorne Woods Country Park for the second time on the last weekend in September 2008. The event once again proved popular and, with glorious weather, saw over 2,500 people attending across the two days.



Displays and stands – photograph by Will Moreno

Kent Goes Wild is free event designed to increase the public's awareness of biological recording in Kent and engage people in their local wildlife. Recording groups and non-profit making organisations who are all directly involved with biological recording, nature conservation and/or education are all invited to exhibit at the two day event.

The event has been running since 2005, and aims to raise awareness of the importance of biological recording; provide a venue for recorder groups to display their work, network and recruit volunteers to assist in the collation of records; and highlight the work of the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre

Twenty-five groups and organisations attended the event this year with every stand having a

display to showcase their work. Local experts manned the stand to answer any questions fired at them and offer advice to any budding naturalist about how to start recording. Many of the stands had activities for both children and adults to enjoy. Activities included 'The Rat Catcher' at the RSPB stand, where the aim of the game was to throw plastic rats in to the mouths of hungry cardboard owls, pond dipping with BTCV and making butterfly headbands with Butterfly Conservation. The Kent Bat Group even brought along one of their rescued bats to show people just how small bats really are, a real show stopper for children and parents alike.



Children meet a rescued bat – photograph by Liz Holliday

On previous years stands had generally featured fun, creative or educational activities for children but this year a more co-ordinated effort was made to increase the number and variety of activities available. 'Spike the Spotter' made his debut at Kent Goes Wild. The aim of this spotter mascot was to encourage children, or our 'Junior Recorders', at the event to become more interested in and excited by wildlife recording. On arrival at the event every future junior recorder received a Spike the Spotter Passport which was stamped every time they completed an activity at one of the 14 stands who were hosting junior recorder activities. There was a huge variety of activities for the junior recorders to take part in including a bat quiz, making clay hedgehogs, leaf and bird identification, looking for reptiles under refugia and self guided walks. Once they had carried out as many activities as they wanted to complete they were able to claim their prize, A Junior Recorders Pack. The Junior Recorders Pack was jam packed full of information to expand on, and sustain, the enthusiasm and interest they had gained carrying out the activities. It was produced to

encourage children to become more involved in biological recording and included species fact sheets, information on how to make biological records and suggestions of places to record.



Junior recorders - photograph by Liz Holliday

The Spike the Spotter passport was designed to be the junior recorder's first recording note book, to try and encourage them to start recording once they had left the event. The passport included extra pages for the Junior Recorders to fill with records and pictures of wildlife they spot when they were in their garden, on the way to school and out exploring. Some of these pages were designed to be removed from the passport and sent in to Spike (care of the team at Kent County Council) for the records to be logged at the county's BRC.

Both parents and stall holders were very enthusiastic about the Spike the Spotter Passport. It encouraged the Junior Recorders to visit every stand as they went looking for the activities and spend time at each stall as they carried them out. While the Junior Recorders were engrossed, parents had the opportunity to look at the displays and speak to the volunteers on the stands. When the Junior Recorders came to claim their prize they were always extremely excited about the things they had done and many of them had carried out every activity at the event! Some families even visited the event on both days because the junior recorders never had time to complete all the activities in one visit. Even the older children who seemed reluctant to take the passport at the entrance seemed to have rediscovered their childish enthusiasm by the end of their visit. Parents were full of praise for all the stands and volunteers, especially for the time they had spent filling

the children full of enthusiasm for wildlife.

Additional attractions at the event included the sounds of local folk band The Skinners Rats, who wowed everyone with their music during Sunday afternoon, and a photography exhibition. For 2008 the theme was *Trees in Kent*, with members of the public invited to send in photos taken in the county. The photos were displayed in County Hall, Maidstone the week before Kent Goes Wild and were on display at the event for the entire weekend. The winning and highly commended photos can be viewed online at <http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment/wildlife-and-landscapes/how-you-can-help/kgw-winners.htm>

In the spirit of sustainability, solar panels were used to provide the electricity required. They were a big feature of the event with many of the visitors showing a keen interest in their presence.

Preparations for this year's Kent Goes Wild are well underway and hopefully it will be as much of a success as last year! The majority of the stands who participated in 2008 will be joining us again and are eager to meeting more junior recorders. We are all looking forward to our big event which allows us to show our enthusiasm for wildlife recording and to try and instil it in others.



VILLAGE PLANS – an opportunity for a biodiversity audit

John Newbould, Dorset Environmental Records Centre

The Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Draft framework 2009-12 states that: some 53% of the villages have completed a “village plan”. The process of developing a village plan is based on a concept developed by the Countryside Agency to encourage residents to express their views on how their local community should develop and the services which should be provided. Each village receives a small grant towards the process, which in some cases is started by producing a design statement based on local consultation. There is however, a considerable amount of work for the small committee of volunteers taking on the project. My own village, Sutton Poyntz, completed its village plan in 2007.

In many instances residents express a concern for “the environment” and want to see, for example, greater numbers of birds, butterflies *etc.* People wish to keep their village pond, thatched cottages, hedges and trees. They do, however, need to collect evidence in a structured way. In other instances, they want to know how to gain increased protection for cherished places.

Within *Dorset Environmental Records Centre*, we recognise the importance of these citizen initiatives. There is evidence that citizen science can fill in many gaps in data collected by ecologists. Two articles in *the Journal of Applied Ecology* **42** 2005, highlight the importance citizens of gathering information. Cannon *et. al.* (2005) 659-671 reports on data of bird populations from gardens. Lepczyk (2005) 672-677 demonstrates the importance of citizen lists in compiling bird data using all available sources to get a complete picture across a landscape. Two of our trustees are involved with villages’ plans. One trustee is working with the local community to collect the data from land adjacent to the River Piddle to promote designation as a second tier site. The

author has been involved with providing training to encourage another village to collect data for their village, submitting it through the local leader to the records centre electronically. In another instance a lady came for training (having being involved with a Biodiversity Group in Overton, Hampshire) wanting to set up something similar for Wareham. This will be interesting if she can get the project off the ground as SY98 has one of the highest numbers of plants recorded in *Atlas 2000* of any square in Britain. The parish also is adjacent to Poole Harbour with good bird populations.



The Mill Pond, Sutton Poyntz © J.A. Newbould (2008)

In my own village, I was approached in the late summer with a view to establishing a Biodiversity Group. Fortunately the “team leader” had recently retired from an MOD science research establishment and understood the need for good data collection and analysis. He is also brilliant at networking with other organisations across the County and has already arranged a grant from Dorset Biodiversity Forum. He has also arranged an official OS License at no cost. What he did lack was the importance of keeping notes of **what, where, when** and by **whom**. This was relatively easily taught along with the need for records to be accompanied by grid references. Our small groups meet monthly to sort out essential administration and consider records. We have also established a small network of people who will not only walk the fields keeping notes, but collect natural history data from their gardens. This comes to me for processing into Excel for onward

transmission to DERC. In this way, the group assists Alison, our data processing officer, by doing an initial verification. From a standing start, the group has produced a comprehensive bird report, not only as a species list, but also analysed by national biodiversity priority habitats. It also contains maps (produced using Power-point) showing distribution of key species and important refuges. (Campbell, *et. al.* 2008).

Such groups have great potential. There is, however, a danger that the costs associated with servicing such groups can be so great that local record centres will think carefully about involvement. With so much bird data going to Birdtrack and not into LRCs and ultimately the NBN Gateway they provide a great opportunity to correct the balance. Handled properly, there is an opportunity to collect a considerable amount of farmland bird data that is at present available to the agencies and the Gateway (Newbould *et.al.*, 2008). If successful this will become one more negotiating tool in the funding available from Natural England for Local Biodiversity initiatives.

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PUBLICATIONS REVIEW

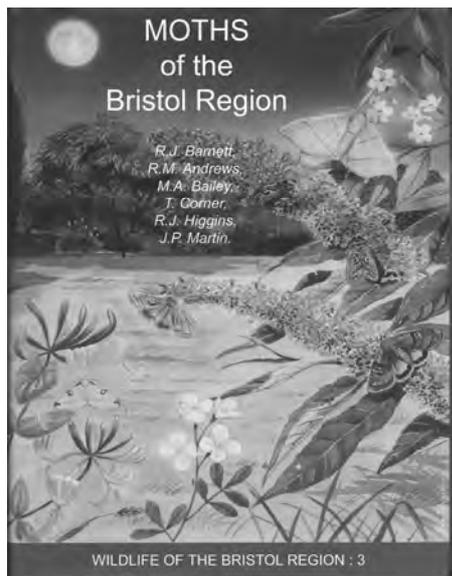
Moths of the Bristol Region

R.J. Barnett, R.M. Andrews, M.A. Bailey, T. Corner, R.J. Higgins & J.P. Martin (Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre, 2008). 526pp. £29.95 excluding postage (hardback). ISBN 978-0-9545235-1-0.

This is a splendid new book about the moths that occur in the Bristol region today. The attractive dust-jacket or should it be dusk-jacket? painted by Brin Edwards shows moths flying and nectaring in a garden setting and like a moth-trap lures the reader in to see what's inside the book. The survey period is from 1990 - 2006, with some additional important records from 2007. The area covered is the old County of Avon and this means it does not exactly correspond with the Watsonian vice county boundaries and covers VC34 plus bits of VC6 and VC7. This is probably a nightmare for a VC moth recorder but a doddle for a Records Centre with modern GIS software.

The introductory section has chapters on Habitats; Moth studies; Moth hunting, then and now; and Conserving our moth species. The chapter on moth studies focuses on the Avon Gorge area, a biodiversity hot-spot famous for its endemic Sorbi, the personal experiences of five of the authors recording moths in their gardens; and the autoecology of the Twin-spotted Wainscot *Archanara geminipunctata* at Chew Valley Lake by Mike Bailey, analysed using life-table analysis.

There follows a brief historical account of Lepidoptera recording in the Bristol region, information about the Bristol & District Moth Group and a very useful introduction to photographing insects using digital cameras.



The main section, (425pp) is devoted to species accounts. For each species there is a brief summary of the moth's current status in the Bristol region, the number of 1 km squares and number of records received during the survey. Historical perspective is provided by reference to publications of key lepidopterists living in the area and by reference to the Somerset Victorian VC History Lepidoptera list. Maps at a 1 km scale are included for many of the larger moths and selected micros, together with a small histogram showing the flight period(s) if sufficient data warrant it. The authors state that the book is not intended to be an identification guide and so information on how to distinguish similar species is not included. Even so there are a quite a large number of close-up colour photographs and black and white illustrations of both micros and macros for the reader to enjoy. Distributional status of local rarities are described in greater detail. Additional maps are included for moths such as the Straw Dot *Rivula sericealis* which have shown significant changes in population numbers in recent times.

The final section includes references and a bibliography, gazetteer and Indexes to English and scientific names which makes cross-referencing relatively easy. The gazetteer of local sites is a wonderful boon

to those like myself and visiting entomologists who are not familiar with the region.

This is a benchmark book for field naturalists living in the Bristol area, one of several new publications on the local flora and fauna. Looking back we have made great strides in our understanding of our wildlife heritage over the past 50 years. When I took up entomology as a teenager in the 1960s in the west Midlands, there were just a handful of widely available books on moths, the South series and Stokoe's Wayside and Woodland Moths. My thirst for knowledge about the micros led to my parents having to library order probably the only copy of Meyrick (1895) in the Midlands. It did cover all the micros, but all the figures of the different types of moth were of wing venation diagrams in black and white, oh so dull and far removed from how moths look in real life. Because of its rarity I wrote shorthand accounts of each species and traced the venation diagrams using kitchen greaseproof paper – 1800 or so species. This kept me quiet for quite a while over my school holidays. Then as the years rolled by a succession of books illustrating our native Lepidoptera has been published and today with the web at our disposal we can find a colour image of just about every species occurring in the U.K. within minutes. Thus today's budding entomologists with wonderful books like the *Moths of the Bristol Region* at their disposal will be able to discover a lot more about our native fauna. There is a huge amount of fieldwork still to be done; we know very little about adult moth behaviour except when they come into view at a light-trap or where the larvae feed and their true preferences for host plants, as much of the reported information in the literature is based on breeding in vitro. The authors are to be congratulated for producing a treasure trove of information.

John Badmin

True Weevils (Part II) (Coleoptera: Curculionidae, Ceutorhynchinae). Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects Vol. 5 Part 17c.

M.G. Morris, 136pp. (Royal Entomological Society, 2008), The Mansion House, Chiswell Green, St Albans, AL2 3NS. Softcover. Price £25.00. ISBN 978 0 90154 687 6.

This is the fourth handbook in the series that deals with the identification of British weevils. Ninety-three weevils are described including one presumed extinct species.

Brief accounts of various aspects of the biology, life history and phenology of weevils are given in the Introduction, together with a short list of species of economic importance (basically four *Ceutorhynchus* species which attack brassicas). It appears that the Ceutorhynchinae are essentially a southern group in the British Isles, though this may partly reflect a measure of under-recording in the north. Very few species are exclusively northern. *Coeliodinus nigrirarsis* is a Scottish species that extends into England but is very local. Amazingly, *Ceutorhynchus insularis* is known only from St. Kilda and Iceland. More widespread and familiar species include the nettle feeding *Parathelcus pollinarius* and *Nedyus quadrimaculatus*. Some species are spreading: *Ceutorhynchus turbatus*, which feeds on Thanet weed, was not known in Britain before 1950 but is now known from Kent westwards to Dorset and Wales and northwards to Norfolk and is spreading in mainland Europe.

The couplets in the main key are clearly and concisely written (having been field-tested first to avoid confusing phraseology) and arranged neatly on the page, often accompanied by text figures to make the key more user-friendly. One is also aided in the identification process by the inclusion of 15 superb whole insect figures drawn by John Read and 18 colour plates prepared by James Turner.

More detailed information is given in the individual species accounts. These consist of a brief description of any morphological differences between the sexes and detailed notes on biology, host plant preferences, life history and distribution, both in the British

Isles and abroad. Conservation status is included where appropriate.

The handbook concludes with two meticulously compiled tables. The first lists weevils by 'taxonomic order' and gives their known and suspected foodplants and feeding sites, and the second lists the foodplants alphabetically with their associated species of weevil. These tables alone are worth buying the book for.

The RES Handbook is of a very high standard and the author is to be congratulated, especially after having written four books on British Curculionidae, surely a record that will not be surpassed for a long time to come.

John Badmin



**National Federation of Biological Recording
2009 AGM and Conference**

Habitats and Habitat Recording

To be held Thursday 16th – Friday 17th April 2009
At the Bowden Hall Hotel, Gloucester

Day 1 will begin at 1.30 pm and includes a workshop on using volunteers in habitat survey and recording with an introductory talk by Gary Lewis (Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly)

Day 2 includes a programme of talks on habitat surveying, using habitat data, Opal online recording toolkit, habitat data on the NBN Gateway plus the NFBR AGM.
(10 am – 4.30 pm)

Booking forms with the full programme are sent to all NFBR members. Non-members are welcome. Please contact John Newbould (NFBR Membership Secretary & Conference Administrator)
john_newbould@btinternet.com



NOTES FROM LOCAL RECORD CENTRES

Greenspace Information for Greater London's partnership continues to grow, with 39 organisations now signed up as partners, including 23 of the 33 local authorities in the London region.

GiGL has many interesting projects underway at the moment, including a new partnership project with London Wildlife Trust which aims to research and establish the current use of London's gardens and identify key habitat changes over a period of 5-10 years. The project has been funded by the Greater London Authority and Mary Smeiton fund and hopes, amongst other things, to determine the biodiversity value of London's gardens and their defence against climate change.

Boris Johnson pledged in his manifesto that if elected he would invest in planting 10,000 street trees to improve the local neighbourhoods that needed them most. GiGL has been working with the Capital Woodlands Project to identify 40 key areas in Greater London for the new trees to be planted. The areas were identified by assessing small geographic areas (the lower super output areas identified in the most recent census) for levels of air pollution, heat island effect, noise, multiple deprivation, deficiency in access to nature and street tree density. The areas that the data model identified were agreed by an expert panel and have now been sent out to the London Boroughs to be ratified.

For further information on the above projects, or to see details of some of the other tasks we are undertaking with our partners, our newsletters can be viewed on our website at:
<http://www.gigl.org.uk/Resources/TheGiGLer/tabid/64/Default.aspx>

Mandy Rudd, Director, Greenspace Information for Greater London