



NFBR

NATIONAL FORUM
FOR BIOLOGICAL
RECORDING



Newsletter 62 – November 2021

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Welcome to Issue 62 of the National Forum for Biological Recording Newsletter.

This edition includes links to various new reports which place emphasis on the need for biodiversity data (news snippets, page 23). A sign that the work of recorders is becoming more appreciated? The huge army of biological recorders in the UK is certainly an essential part in the seemingly never ending fight against biodiversity loss.

Excitingly, we are planning an in-person conference for 2022, as gathering in groups becomes a safe option once again. We will be releasing further details and booking in the new year, but I hope to see many of you in Oxford next May.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter; many thanks to all article contributors.

Elaine Wright (Editor) editor@nfbr.org.uk

As always, if you would like to make a contribution to a future newsletter, please get in touch at any time. The next edition will be out in spring 2022.



2021 Conference

Recordings of the talks from our 2021 virtual conference can be found on our website: http://www.nfbr.org.uk/?q=conference_2021

2022 Conference

Work is underway to organise the 2022 NFBR Conference, "*Curating the past, creating the future: legacies in biological recording*" at Oxford University Museum of Natural History. We are delighted to be organising an in-person event after two years of virtual conferences. However, the event will also be open to those who prefer to join online. The conference will take place on Thursday 5th & Friday 6th May 2022, with a field event on Saturday 7th May. Please SAVE THE DATE, and keep an eye on our social media and website for booking information early next year.



National Forum for Biological Recording Conference 2022

Curating the past, creating the future: legacies in biological recording

Thursday 5th May - Saturday 7th May 2022

Oxford University Museum of Natural History [and online]

NFBR Governance

NFBR has a board of 13 trustees who form the Executive Committee, plus an Advisory Council of 6. You can learn about the individual Trustees and Council Members on [the NFBR website](http://www.nfbr.org.uk).

iRecord updates

Martin Harvey, BRC

iRecord is maintained and developed by the UKCEH Biological Records Centre (BRC). iRecord and the related Indicia systems provide online tools to collate records for checking and sharing. Here are some recent updates.

Import of records from iNaturalist

iNaturalist (<https://uk.inaturalist.org/>) is a global online system for collecting wild-life observations. It uses a crowd-sourcing approach to provide help with species identification, and can also suggest identifications on the basis of image-recognition from photos. Use of iNaturalist in the UK has been growing, and in April 2021 a UK portal for iNaturalist was launched (launch announcement on the NBN Trust website <https://nbn.org.uk/news/inaturalistuk-officially-launched/>).

iNaturalistUK currently holds just over 2 million records (compared to around 15 million in the iRecord data warehouse). The NBN Trust is working with BRC and the Marine Biological Association to steer this project and make the records available more widely. In order to help this process we are importing records from iNaturalist into the iRecord data warehouse, so that they can be made available for verification and shared with national recording schemes, local environmental records centres and the NBN Atlas.

UK records get imported to iRecord once they reach “research grade” status on iNaturalist. During the import process the iNaturalist species names are matched to the UK Species Inventory, and UK grid references are added alongside the original lat/long coordinates used in iNaturalist. iRecord verifiers are able to accept or redetermine records in the usual way, but unfortunately it has not yet been possible to find a way of posting feedback on the verifier decisions to the original recorder in iNaturalist. Options to provide feedback are being investigated.

The iNaturalist records will be included in the downloads available to recording schemes and records centres. More information about the background to iNaturalistUK is available on the NBN Trust website, including details of the iNaturalistUK User Group.

Exchange of records with the BirdTrack online recording system

Many will be familiar with the excellent BirdTrack online recording system that is provided by the British Trust for Ornithology and partners, and is the main tool for bird recording in the UK. You may not realise that for some time now BirdTrack has included options for recording some additional species groups, as well as birds.

BRC has been working with BTO to develop a two-way exchange process, so that bird records added to iRecord can be shared with BirdTrack and verified at the BirdTrack end, while non-bird records from BirdTrack can be shared with iRecord for verification there.

This has been a complex piece of work but it is almost ready to go live, and we expect that it will be in place before the end of this year. The majority of records that will come through to iRecord initially will be of mammals and dragonflies/damselflies, which have been a part of BirdTrack for some years. From July 2021 coverage has been extended to include butterflies, amphibians, reptiles and orchids as well. For more information see the [BTO news page \(https://www.bto.org/community/news/202107-new-taxa-added-birdtrack\)](https://www.bto.org/community/news/202107-new-taxa-added-birdtrack).

Progress with verification and data sharing

It is extremely encouraging to see increasing numbers of records and recorders contributing to wildlife recording in the UK, but this increase also places additional demands on the verifiers who volunteer their time to check the records. The verification tools within iRecord can help in this process, and these continue to be developed. The number of recording scheme verifiers is also increasing, with over 750 active on iRecord, and between them an average of 65% of the records added to iRecord are being reviewed each year. BRC is enormously grateful to the people who contribute to this process.

As a result of all this activity, more records are flowing more quickly to the national schemes, local records centre and the NBN Atlas. Records are shared on behalf of the national recording schemes who check them, and currently over 2 million records are updated onto the Atlas every month or two via iRecord's direct export system, with an estimated 8 million further records routed through the schemes themselves to the NBN Atlas. For more information see the [iRecord/NBN Atlas data sharing page \(https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/nbn-sharing\)](https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/nbn-sharing).

How iNaturalist users can help iRecord verifiers

There are a number of steps that iNaturalist users can take if they wish to make their records as compatible as possible with the UK recording schemes:

- Choose an open licence for your records: CC0 or CC BY will enable your records to be used as widely as possible; CC BY-NC (non-commercial) can prevent records being used by some schemes and records centres. Other licence choices (such as SA and ND) are difficult to interpret for individual records, and cannot be used in iRecord or the NBN Atlas (nor on GBIF). More info is on the iNaturalistUK blog (<https://uk.inaturalist.org/blog/58298-licensed-to-share>).
- Provide your real name if possible; this can be added as the "Display name" in your iNaturalist profile, and will then be used as the recorder name on iRecord
- Avoid obscuring locations unless absolutely necessary, as this can prevent them being linked to grid references of suitable precision for recording scheme use
- Now that the record import is in place, it is helpful if you can avoid adding the same record to both iNaturalist and iRecord, to avoid duplication of both records and of verifiers' time



Recording Scheme Spotlight

Each issue the NFBR newsletter celebrates one of the many and varied National Recording Schemes in the UK. These schemes help to ensure accurate species identification, help with dataflow and are an essential part of the British wildlife recording community.

This time we are featuring the UK Crane-fly Recording Scheme (CRS) with answers provided by Pete Boardman.

Tell us a bit about the scheme

The scheme was formed by Alan Stubbs in 1973 so isn't too far away from celebrating its 50th year, making it the oldest fly recording scheme in the world. Other 1973 babies are archaeologist and anatomist Professor Alice Roberts, the singer Pharell Williams, and the comedian Noel Fielding so the CRS will be celebrating its 50th in good company!!

The Scheme covers the four families of true crane-flies (*Cylindrotomidae* (damselfly crane-flies), *Pediciidae* (hairy-eyed crane-flies), *Tipulidae* (long-palped crane-flies), and *Limoniidae* (short-palped crane-flies). We also cover some of the families which are lookalikes, namely the *Trichoceridae* (winter gnats) and the *Ptychopteridae* (fold-wing, or as American dipterists call them, phantom crane-flies).

We have a webpage hosted on the [Dipterists Forum website \(https://dipterists.org.uk/crane-fly-scheme/home\)](https://dipterists.org.uk/crane-fly-scheme/home) and have a few resources available such as species group cribs and an introduction to crane-flies.

How is the scheme run?

At time of publishing there are three core members of the scheme: Alan Stubbs (inspiration, founder, and author of British Crane-flies), John Kramer (former recorder and current newsletter editor) and Pete Boardman (recorder / database manager / social media). We have a Twitter account ([@CRStipula](https://twitter.com/CRStipula)) (run by Pete) and a [Facebook group \(https://www.facebook.com/groups/1662885270502966/\)](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1662885270502966/) (run by Ryan Mitchell and Ian Andrews, plus ID help from a range of other folk - thank you!!!). We are currently looking for more recorder and social media help with the Scheme in response to the publication of British Crane-flies. As you would expect, we are all volunteers and do all crane-fly-related activity in our spare time. We'd also love more people to get into crane-flies, record them, and become advocates for them.

Do you run events such as field days or training courses?

Yes, in the past we have run occasional training courses but with the launch of the book we are looking to run a series of courses / workshops in 2022/23 around the UK. We are aiming for events in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and if you think you could host, fund, or help organise a training event - please contact Pete - pete.ento22@gmail.com.

We have also worked with the Tanyptera Trust to run an introduction to crane-flies via webinar and this is hosted on the Tanyptera YouTube site: <https://youtu.be/DP3XBnsTEB0>. We will be running a series of courses in the West Midlands in 2022 with the Field Studies Council's BioLinks programme.





Limonia nubeculosa



Tipula rufina

Do you publish a newsletter and or journal?

Yes, Cranefly News is published twice a year with usually a spring and an autumn edition (depending upon contributions). Any copy concerning craneflies is welcome. Back issues can be found on our [Dipterists Forum webpage](#).

Can you tell us about a particular species that readers can look out for?

Craneflies are at a premium at this time of year, but they can potentially be seen on every day of the year if conditions are suitable. Obviously winter gnats are out in autumn, winter, and early spring (plus the one species that flies in the summer - it didn't read the book!). I'll therefore flag one species that can be seen at any time over winter - *Limonia nubeculosa* - the three-banded Limonia (a short-palped crane fly) (above left) and the first large-palped crane fly that takes to the air in early spring, *Tipula rufina* - the strong-striped mottle (above right).

L. nubeculosa has the combination of spotted wings and stripy legs and is brown in colour, whilst *T. rufina* has spotted wings, an orange abdomen and an intense brown stripe along the side of the thorax (pleura). *L. nubeculosa* is found in shaded, mossy places such as woodland, shaded gardens, and similar places. *T. rufina* is often found in gardens as it can breed in the sludgy detritus in north-facing gutters, or other wet mossy places.

Any highlights or achievements you would like to share from the past year?

The publication of British Craneflies this year is a monumental moment for the Recording Scheme. Alan Stubbs has worked on the book on and off for around 30 years and it is a testament to his persistence that the book is now published by the British Entomological and Natural History Society (BENHS). It sits in the series alongside British Hoverflies (Stubbs & Falk) and British Soldierflies (Stubbs & Drake).

How should readers get in touch if they wish to know more about your scheme?

To find out more about the Scheme you can contact John Kramer or Pete Boardman via the contact forms on our [Dipterists Forum webpage](#) or Pete directly at pete.ento22@gmail.com. You can contact us via Twitter [@CRStipula](#)





Male Hairy-footed Flower Bee © Chris Barlow

Mapping the North East's bees and ladybirds

Charlotte Rankin, Natural History Society of Northumbria

Bees and ladybirds are familiar and well-loved insects but there is still a lot we can discover about them in the North East. In 2021, the Natural History Society of Northumbria launched two regional citizen science projects: the North East Bee Hunt and North East Ladybird Spot. Both projects aim to increase our understanding of these insects in the region, inspire the North East about bees and ladybirds, and support more people to take part in wildlife recording.

Over 8,500 bee and ladybird records have been shared so far with the two projects. To date, 401 recorders from across the region have helped put bees and ladybirds on the region's map. Both online and outdoor events have been held to discover and learn more about these insects together. Volunteers have also contributed blog posts, shared their discoveries and knowledge with others, and online identification resources have been created.

The North East Bee Hunt

Returning for its second year, an amazing 4,600 bee records were shared by 184 recorders in 2021. From March through to October, recorders captured the activities of spring specialists, summer fliers and the autumn-flying Ivy Bee. Events were also held in search of the rarer Broken-belted Bum-

Bee Hunt 2021 at a glance

4,665 records
17 confirmed
bumblebee species
26 confirmed solitary bee
species
184 bee hunters





Eyed Ladybird © Chris Barlow

blebee and Moss Carder Bee, with success! Sightings of 45 bee species were shared in 2021 including:

- Springtime specialists including Hairy-footed Flower Bee, Northern Mining Bee, Small Sallow Mining Bee and Clarke's Mining Bee.
- Summer fliers including Gold-tailed Melitta, Fork-tailed Flower Bee and Wool Carder Bee
- All six cuckoo bumblebees including new areas for the Red-tailed Cuckoo Bee
- New areas discovered for the Ivy Bee, a very recent arrival to the North East

The North East Ladybird Spot

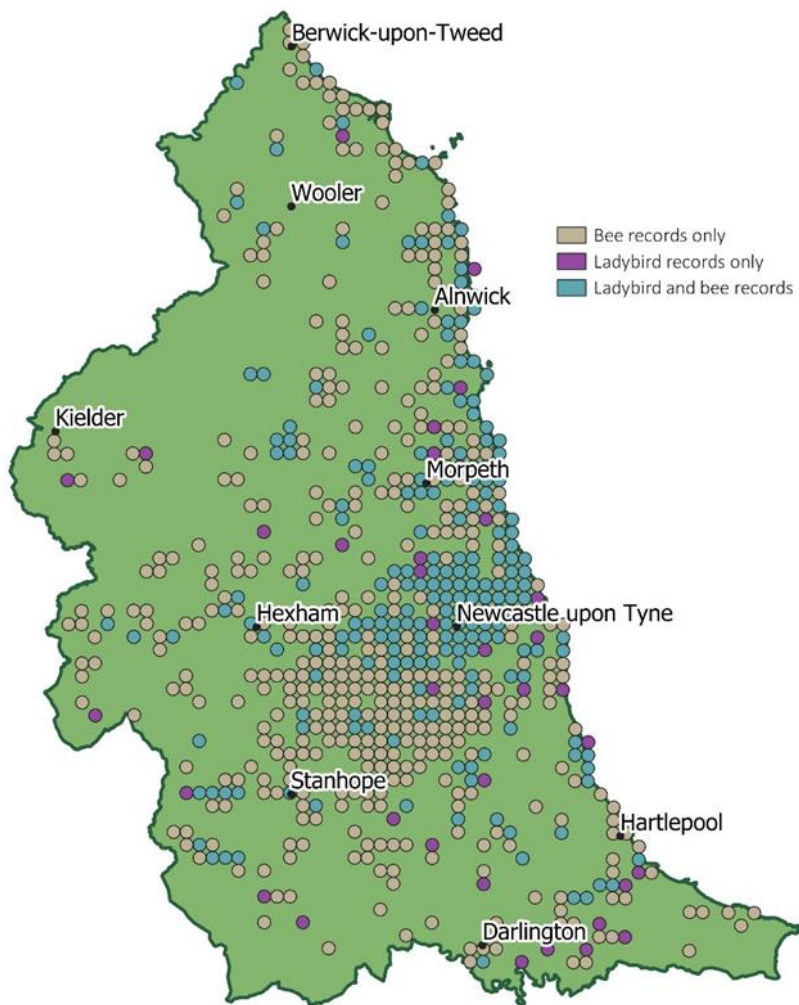
Across the North East, over 1,400 ladybird sightings were shared by 148 recorders in 2021. From the iconic Seven-spot Ladybird to the smaller and inconspicuous species, volunteers have shed new light on ladybirds and their distributions in the region. Online, Helen Roy and Pete Brown from the UK Ladybird Survey also provided participants with a fascinating insight into ladybirds and their ecology. Sightings were shared of 18 ladybird species during the Ladybird Spot, including:

- Conifer specialists including Eyed, Larch and 18-Spot Ladybird
- The elusive Water Ladybird was discovered at urban wetland sites
- Grassland-associated species including 22-spot and 24-spot Ladybird
- Adonis Ladybird, found both inland and at the coast
- Seven-spot, Harlequin and Two-spot Ladybird were the most frequently observed

Ladybird Spot 2021 at a glance

1,413 records
18 confirmed ladybird species
148 ladybird spotters





The distribution of records shared with the North East Bee Hunt and North East Ladybird Spot projects

Submitted through designated groups on iRecord, all project records are checked by experts on behalf of the UK Ladybird Survey and Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society (BWARS), and made available to inform monitoring, conservation and research efforts.

Results and highlights of both projects will be available to view on the NHSN blog at www.nhsn.org.uk/category/invertebrates-in-the-north-east/. A huge thank you to all participants, event leads and attendees, ERIC North East, and iRecord verifiers for their support in identifying and checking records. Both the Bee Hunt and Ladybird Spot will return in 2022, alongside a new botanical citizen science project.

More information on NHSN citizen science projects can be found at www.nhsn.org.uk.



Local Environmental Records Centre Spotlight

Each edition the NFBR newsletter celebrates one of the Local Environmental Records Centres [LERCs] in the UK. These organisations are centres for the collation, management and dissemination of biodiversity data on a local scale, making biodiversity information available to decision makers throughout the UK, alongside supporting Biological Recorders in a myriad of ways.

Answers provided by Abigail Pedlow (Assistant Manager) & Tim Corner (Manager).



Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC) covers what was the county of Avon (1974-1996), and is now the Unitary Authorities of Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset – they are collectively known as the West of and are part of vice counties 6 (North Somerset) and 34 (West Gloucestershire). The administrative boundary of Bristol includes the Bristol Channel down to Steep Holm.

The BRERC office is in Blaise Museum, one of the Bristol Museums, a mansion house in the Blaise Estate parkland on

the north-western edge of Bristol. The large estate has woodland, grassland and a limestone gorge as well as more amenity-type features – short grass, planted trees, play park etc. Most of the estate is designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site with historic and archaeological designations – it's a really nice place to be and having the estate on our doorstep is a fantastic resource to help us engage with the public locally. The Museum and associated buildings are also used for filming movies and TV programmes such as *His Dark Materials*.

Although we're in a grand building we are definitely in the servant's quarters; what was more recently the caretaker's flat – there are high-ceilinged rooms with space for 10 workstations, 25 filing cabinets, cupboards and shelving, plus a kitchen, bathroom and small room for our server and photocopier/printer. We also have use of sheds for storage and an enclosed courtyard. As well as our staff and volunteers we get to see Museum and Operations staff as well there which is really nice, especially at the moment when most meetings are via digital media.

Tell us a bit about your LERC

BRERC was established in 1974 as part of the Museum Service by Charlie Copp, an Assistant Curator in Natural History at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery and later Manager of BRERC. He wanted recent data to add context to collections and exhibits. It was essentially a filing cabinet of information until the job creation schemes of the 1980s which led to a vast expansion of staff and an Avon-wide Phase 1 survey.

Charlie was a pioneer in using computers for biological data and an early use was for the Common Butterfly Survey in the 1980s. He and a colleague, Anne Hollowell produced the White Paper recommending the establishment of a national network or local Environmental Records Centres. He helped produce the original Recorder database and was instrumental in the establishment of the National Biodiversity Network.





Blaise Museum, home of the BRERC Office

At first everything was entered into BASIC, then Recorder was used until Tim Corner became Manager in 1999, when, a bespoke database was written in Lotus Approach. Things have moved on and current systems include Postgres, MapInfo Professional, and Geoserver. We still use Approach as a data entry front-end although this is being phased out.

Currently, there are nearly 3 million records on the database – and paper files with over 10 million records that haven't been digitised. Examples of the historic paper records include bird cards from the 1950s, diaries from eminent recorders, research papers and invertebrate site registers. We now receive between about 200,000 digital records per year.

Our earliest records are some fish from 1491 and we will be adding more historic data from Museum collections as they are digitised. We hold habitat information on most land parcels in our region with approximately 30 -50,000 polygons digitised. We also cover geological records including 1070 sites of which 236 are RIGS (Regionally Important Geological Sites).

In the 1990s as Avon County was broken up BRERC became a partnership organisation funded by the four UAs plus English Nature and the Environment Agency. In 2020 we came back under the control of the Culture and Creative Industries part of Bristol City Council which we feel is a more natural base for us and we're enjoying being able to move public engagement up the agenda. We have a good relationship with the Natural History, Archaeology and History curators some of whom are based partly at Blaise, and increasingly we can feed ideas into exhibitions, and be part of the walks and talks programming of the Museum, Bristol museums are a Hub for the South West. We currently have Service Levels Agreements to provide data to 3 of the 4 UAs in our region, Wessex Water, EA and Mendip AONB.



Tell us about your team

2.6 staff – Manager Tim Corner, Assistant Managers Abigail Pedlow and Daniel Marshall. Abi is the newest member of staff, starting in 2002 – so between us we have a lot of years' experience of BRERC! Neill Talbot, an experienced surveyor, is a casual member of staff currently. We used to have a much bigger team of casual staff – up to 16 part-timers but in the last decade or so there has been very little funding for surveying.

Tim loves all wildlife and has expertise in botany, mammals, herps, butterflies and birds as well as having been a forester and also a tree surgeon for the Royal Parks. Abi, while originally a botanist, has years of experience in dragonflies and butterflies, and is excellent at recognising handwriting which comes in handy when so many staff have worked at BRERC – we initial everything these days! Daniel is interested in all wildlife and has specialist ICT skills.

Volunteers have been a really important part of BRERC for a long time – most of the data entry has been carried out by volunteers over the years and there are now hundreds of people who have volunteered for BRERC – some of the current ones have been with us as long as the staff. Amongst our long-standing volunteers we have a few who have particular expertise in flora, birds and moths, and within the Museum staff are experts in bees, beetles, moths and geology.

Ray Barnett, Museum Collections Manager and the line manager for BRERC is a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society and Vice-President of the British Entomological and Natural History Society.

COVID affected the number of volunteers, but we are building numbers back up and have up to 12 office and three home based ones. Previously we typically had between 20 and 30.

Tell us about the local recording scene

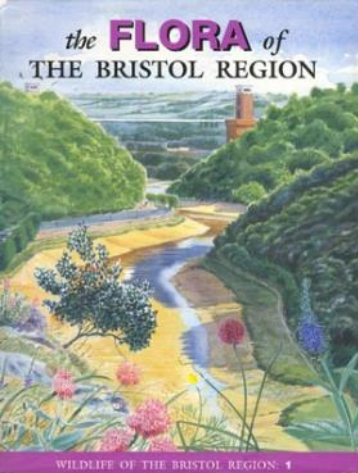
Bristol and Bath both have active naturalists groups, Bath Natural History Society are celebrating their 80th anniversary this year, and Bristol Naturalists Society were founded in 1862. The latter, who cover a wider area than the city of Bristol, produce the Nature in Avon. The Avon Ornithological Group publishes the Avon Bird Report. YACWAG (Yatton and Congresbury Wildlife Action Group) are an active group who own reserves in the North Somerset Levels, The Cam Valley Wildlife Group cover part of bath & North East Somerset and there are many other local groups who send in records.

The BRERC team working with local recorders have produced 5 atlases covering their area, all based on the data held by BRERC – Flora of the Bristol Region (2000), Butterflies of the Bristol Region (2003), Moths of the Bristol Region (2008), Dragonflies and Damselflies of the Bristol Region (2013) and Geological Sites of the Bristol Region (2018). We are currently working on updating the Flora and reprinting Geological Sites which sold out!

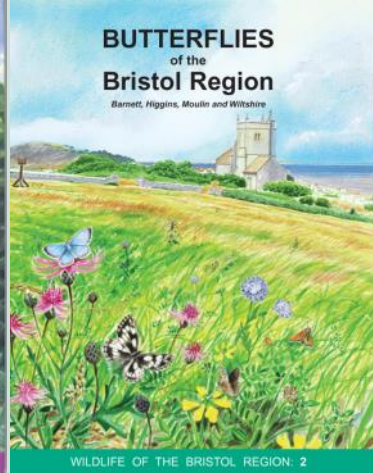
The atlases published by BRERC are collaborations with many individuals and organisations. For example the latest book has about 35 contributing writers, illustrators and photographers.

The Bristol Museums hold the largest wildlife and geological collections in the South West and have exhibition galleries of local wildlife and galleries of world-wide wildlife. They host the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition and along

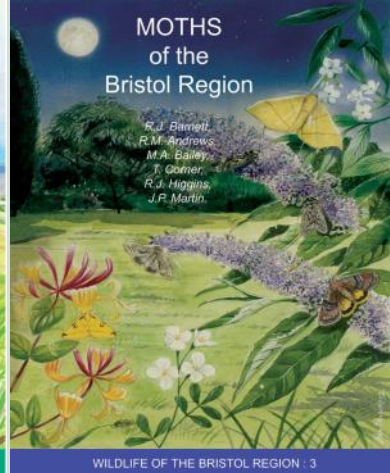




WILDLIFE OF THE BRISTOL REGION : 1



WILDLIFE OF THE BRISTOL REGION : 2



WILDLIFE OF THE BRISTOL REGION : 3

with BRERC have a regular marque at the Bristol Festival of Nature.

Bristol is home to the BBC Natural History Film Unit and has a continual working relationship with Bristol Museums and to a lesser extent with BRERC.

The Natural History Consortium hosts the Festival of Nature and Communicate (environmental communication conference), City Nature Challenge and Bioblitz, which they have rolled out across the country. BRERC provides data management of the Bioblitz and iNaturalist data for our area.

BRERC provides a database front-end at the Avon Wildlife Trust to enable them to capture their reserves data to our standards. The Trust is the primary organisation dedicated to local wildlife conservation, with reserves, education and outreach facilities and a large volunteer force. It has a flagship food growing project, Grow Wilder and a plant nursery.

Bristol Zoological Society has recently moved from the Zoological Gardens within Bristol to a new site known as Wild Place. This affords more space for the animals and focuses more on the conservation, research and animal welfare aspects of the zoo. The site has a dedicated local wildlife area.

In 2015 Bristol was the European Green Capital and more recently became the first in the UK to announce a Climate Change Crisis and an Ecological Emergency. The other authorities in our region quickly followed suit with their own strategies. BRERC have been providing data and expertise to support strategies and planned monitoring schemes.

Tell us about how you support local recorders

Apart from daily correspondence with recorders sending in data it is important to us to disseminate our records as much as possible via interactive maps on our own website www.brerc.org.uk/imaps/map-index.htm where anyone can see what is on the database for their area, or the distribution of a species or species group. Our species data is also available via the NBN Atlas and Global Biodiversity Information Facility – apart from recent notable records all our records are available there at capture resolution.

BRERC provides data management expertise for several recording and community groups. We also provide workshops on species and habitat identification, survey



methodologies, recording packs and bespoke maps and forms.

We provide the chair, co-ordination and secretariat for the Avon RIGS Group, which was originally set up through BRERC. Our website includes an on-line recording form and we have dedicated recording pages for local initiatives such as Bathscape.

BRERC receive the data for local Bioblitzes organised by the Natural History Consortium, and were instrumental in ensuring that the data collected at these was used when they were first set up. The Consortium moving to using iNaturalist has created some challenges, but we do still take on the large amount of reformatting involved and add the data to our databases.

BRERC provide regular walks for community groups, education and health organisations such as the Princes Trust. We had previously held Recorder Forums/conferences. We use our Big Map at events to introduce people to wildlife recording generally and to gain records – particularly Otters, Badgers, Fox and Hedgehogs, but people also love to tell us about what birds they see in their garden.

What are the top three sites you would recommend to visiting wildlife recorders?

Lower Woods in South Gloucestershire –managed jointly by Gloucestershire and Avon Wildlife Trusts is one of the largest ancient woodlands in the south-west with Herb-Paris orchids, and a long list of invertebrates -

www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/nature-reserves/lower-woods

North Somerset levels – a landscape of fields and rhines which hold an abundance of aquatic flora and fauna.

The Bristol City area (which extends into North Somerset and South Gloucestershire) has some amazing sites – the Avon Gorge and the Downs, Leigh Woods National Nature Reserve managed by the National Trust, and the large parklands of Ashton Court and Blaise have veteran trees and associated dead-wood beetle fauna.

Any highlights or achievements you would like to share from the past year?

Just as lockdown started we began a new project working with the West of England Combined Authority to identify important habitat that hadn't been captured in the Priority Habitat digitisation of the early 2000s. Lockdown made things quite a bit more challenging but we were able to devise a supporting method using data of indicator species to identify a significant amount of potentially important habitat that was unmapped previously.

Despite the pandemic and the need to save lives people still maintained their interest for the natural world, their desire to record it and to be in it, and to not let up on voicing their concerns regarding biodiversity loss.

Contact info

Phone number: 0117 9349833

Website: www.brerc.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/WestofEngland/

Twitter: https://twitter.com/BRERC_Official

Instagram: www.instagram.com/b.r.e.r.c/





The survey team

The Ridgeway: Baseline Biodiversity Assessment

Caitlin Coombs, Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre

With a bit of extra attention, some sections of The Ridgeway National Trail have potential to be enhanced for their biodiversity interest. Targeted conservation management could really increase the number of wildflowers and insects along the Trail! Our field surveyors have been busy walking from Streatley to Avebury (yes- 44 miles!) to pin down these areas.

The Ridgeway National Trail passes through a surprisingly remote part of southern central England. From its start in the World Heritage Site of Avebury, it follows a ridge of chalk hills in a north-easterly direction for 87 miles to reach Ivinghoe Beacon. Popularly known as ‘Britain’s oldest road’, The Ridgeway still follows the same route used since prehistoric times by travellers, herdsmen and soldiers.

It is thought that many of the habitats directly adjacent to The Ridgeway have remained relatively undisturbed for many years and may retain areas of Lowland Calcareous Grassland that form biodiversity hotspot pockets along the route.

TVERC is working with National Trails and North Wessex Downs AONB to undertake a baseline biodiversity assessment of the Ridgeway; from Avebury in Wiltshire to Streatley in Berkshire. Our botanists Yolanda Vazquez, Julie Kerans and Caitlin Coombs are currently walking the stretch and identifying and mapping existing





Sainfoin



Dropwort

habitats along the route, their extent and botanical species composition. Sweaty! This exciting project will provide an up-to-date picture of the type, location and area of habitats along the Trail; and will be crucial in informing the Trail Team of areas which are in favourable condition and which areas could be targeted for conservation management.

So far, a range of biodiversity hotspots have been identified along the route, supporting a diverse plant assemblage including a range of calcareous grassland indicator species such as dropwort, kidney vetch, common twayblade, knapweed broomrape, wild carrot, common milkwort, sainfoin and fairy flax (amongst many others!)

There are some very nice stretches of chalk grassland communities which must often go overlooked by today's mountain bikers and serious hikers!

Mapping is being carried out to UKHabs classifications instead of JNCC Phase 1, as the second phase of this project will focus on monitoring habitat condition in areas identified by survey work for management and restoration efforts; therefore, it will be more suitable to map habitats to this classification system as this is what is currently being used in the DEFRA metric and Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.

Quoting the Lawton Report, we need wildlife sites to be 'more, bigger, better and more joined up'. Due to the location of The Ridgeway, it is ideally placed to act as a significant and uninterrupted wildlife corridor across the south of England.

This interesting project will improve understanding of the Trail's biodiversity value as a whole, with the potential for positive impacts on a landscape scale.



NBN Conference - last chance to book!

If you haven't already booked, time is running out, as this year's NBN Conference is taking place online on Wednesday 24 November. The theme is "Biodiversity data – from collection to use".

Following the successful collaboration with the Open University and the iSpot team last year, we are delighted that we are running this as a co-hosted NBN Trust and iSpot/Open University event again in 2021.

The programme is primarily 10 minute talks plus Q&A, as well as a keynote presentation, given by Craig Bennett, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts and the annual Sir John Burnett Memorial Lecture, given by Professor Rosie Hails, Director of Nature and Science at The National Trust.

The announcement of the winners and runners up in the NBN Awards for Wildlife Recording will also be made on the day.

Find out more and book: <https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/nbn-conference-2/nbn-conference-2021/>

New lead developer for NBN Atlas

We are delighted to announce that after six months working as a contractor for the NBN Trust, Helen Manders Jones has accepted the role of Lead Developer for the NBN Atlas.

<https://nbn.org.uk/news/new-lead-developer-for-nbn-atlas/>

NBN Atlas Project Page

Over the last few months, we have been giving regular NBN Atlas updates via Network News as well as on our Project Page. You can now see the latest status and work we have been undertaking on the NBN Atlas Project Plan.

<https://nbnatlas.org/project-page/>

iNaturalistUK and its place in biological recording data flow

The NBN Trust is the co-ordinator of iNaturalistUK, with the support of the Marine Biological Association and the Biological Records Centre. Together we want to support and promote the use of iNaturalistUK as one of a suite of recording tools available to the UK's biological recording community. We have a new page to explain how iNaturalistUK complements the other tools available and what we're doing to ensure that iNaturalistUK data meets the needs of the UK's biodiversity data community.

<https://nbn.org.uk/inaturalistuk/inaturalistuk-and-its-place-in-biological-recording-data-flow/>



Record wildlife - a fun way to help nature

In addition to the above article, we have also produced some guidance giving more information to those who are new to recording, focusing on iNaturalistUK and iRecord.

<https://nbn.org.uk/record-share-explore-data/record-wildlife-a-fun-way-to-help-nature/>

iNaturalistUK User Group

We would like to know more about how individuals, organisations and groups are using iNaturalistUK to gather data and engage people in recording wildlife. The NBN Trust has therefore set up an iNaturalistUK User Group.

The first meeting of the group took place in September 2021 and you can read the notes from the discussions online at the link below.

If you would like to join the group, you can do so before the next meeting takes place on 15 December.

<https://nbn.org.uk/inaturalistuk/inaturalistuk-user-group/>

'Precision' citizen science

Two projects led by UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) are providing information for wildlife recorders to help them choose where to record – based on where records are most valuable. Both projects invite your feedback and involvement.

<https://nbn.org.uk/news/precision-citizen-science/>

Request for Sawfly Records

Andy Musgrove

Work is underway to produce the first ever conservation status review of British sawflies

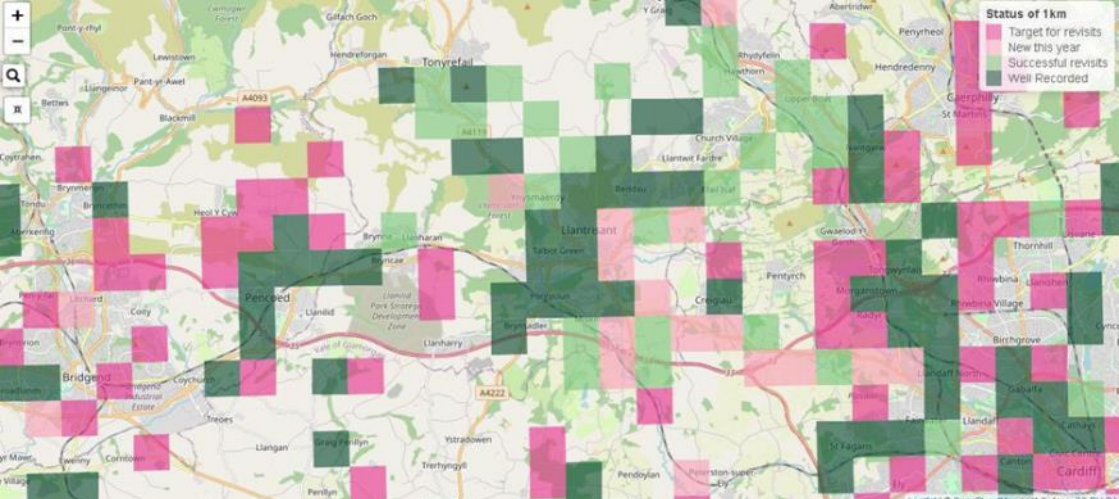
('Symphyta'), using IUCN Red List criteria to describe threat status, alongside the more traditional (10 km square based) Nationally Rare/

Scarce approach to describe rarity/localisation within Britain. Many sawflies are poorly recorded and all records from all years are valuable. Records will be accessed from the larger repositories such as iRecord (which is the preferred route of data submission), but I am also very happy to receive records directly instead (ideally in Excel, but I can convert other formats as required).

If you're not sure whether any records you have previously sent in (via various routes) will get through to me, then please check - I'd rather get things twice than not at all. Phase 1 needs to be complete by March 2022 so time is of the essence and I could do with receiving data as soon as possible, to give me time to undertake the necessary assessments.

If you think you can help, or would like to discuss the project in any way, please get in touch via the online Contact form at www.andymus.org/sawfly-red-list.





A snapshot of the map in Wales © BRC

Orthoptera Hunting with the Grasshopper Targeted Revisits Map

Elaine Wright

In 2020 the Biological Records Centre (BRC) created the Grasshopper Targeted Revisits Map (https://shiny-apps.ceh.ac.uk/targeting_revisits_grasshoppers/). This live map is linked to records submitted to the Grasshoppers and Allied Species Recording Scheme (including via iRecord), and highlights 1km squares which are in particular need of Orthoptera records.

Background

BRC uses records submitted to UK Recording Schemes to calculate species trends. However, because they are looking for changes over time, the trend analyses only include records from sites* visited in more than one year**. There are many sites across the country that only have records from one year. If recorders revisit these locations, then BRC are able to include more sites in their analyses, and gain a more accurate picture of how our wildlife is changing. To this end, BRC created the Targeted Revisits mapping tool which clearly shows where these sites are, and encourages recording by changing colour once records are added.

*A 'site' is a single 1km square

**Analyses include records from 1990 to the current day

How it works

The map (shown above) is broken up by a 1km square grid, with 5 different types of square:

1. Bright pink squares are 'Targets for revisits': They have records from only one year in the past – if these sites are revisited then they can be included in BRC trend analyses.
2. Pale pink squares are 'New this year': They, for the first time, have records this year. Next year these will become targets for revisits.





Long-winged Conehead in a Tesco car park, and well camouflaged Speckled Bush-cricket © Elaine Wright

3. Dark green squares are 'Well recorded': They already have records from multiple years – these sites are already included in BRC trend analysis, but records from these sites continue to be valuable.
4. Pale green squares are 'Successful revisits': They used to only have records from a single year, but since this year have visits from multiple years and will now be included in BRC trend analysis.
5. Blank squares are 'Unrecorded': So far, don't have any records of grasshoppers and allies in the scheme database.

You can search for a location name within the Targeted Revisit map tool, or navigate around it with a mouse (similar to a Google map). Once you have picked a bright pink square to visit, head out into the field and see what species you can find.

Records can be added using iRecord in its various iterations (other recording routes are not directly connected to BRC, so do not appear on the map). You can then revisit the Targeted Revisit website to see the newly green square! (The change normally happens overnight, so do be patient if it takes a little time for the change to take effect.)



My Targeted Revisiting

Since the creation of this tool, I have had a great time tackling the pink target squares near home in Rhondda Cynon Taf, and further afield. Ever the obsessive when it comes to recording, I even created some Google Map layers showing the target squares, to check if I can include an Orthoptera hunt when planning navigation to various errands! I use a bat detector to track down Orthoptera, particularly bush-crickets which generally have calls outside the range of human hearing.

When I first looked at the map back in 2020, there were plenty of target squares close to home, and I spent much of that season walking to nearby locations and finding many of the common species (particularly Dark Bush-cricket, which seem to be in every hedgerow in the south Wales valleys). This year I started to venture further afield, with a couple of manic days square bashing, even managing to visit 14 squares on one July date. I recorded Orthoptera on 38 days during 2021, in 110 different 1km squares - 55 of which were successful revisits.

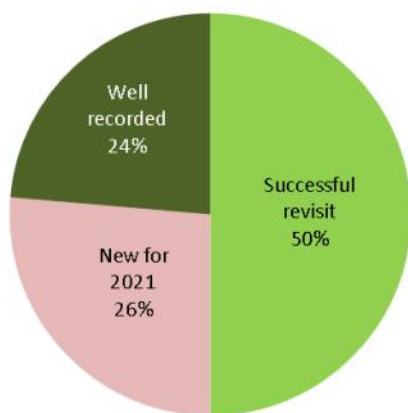
Highlights include finding Long-winged Conehead in a Tesco car park (photo previous page); adding Stripe-winged Conehead to my life list during a visit to Norfolk; and finally tracking down several species in a particularly difficult square near home (after 4 failed attempts!).

The grasshopper and Bush-cricket season is reasonably long, but begins late (adults generally don't appear until July and can last until November), so I'm just about ready to hang up my bat detector for the year. However I have realised that Groundhoppers (*Tetrigidae*) can be found throughout the year, so maybe I will even be able to do a little square bashing this winter.

For 2021 BRC developed Targeted Revisit maps for three more groups: Craneflies (https://shiny-apps.ceh.ac.uk/targeting_revisits_craneflies/), Soldierflies (https://shiny-apps.ceh.ac.uk/targeting_revisits_soldierflies/) and Ground Beetles (https://shiny-apps.ceh.ac.uk/targeting_revisits_ground_beetles/) so even if I run out of Grasshopper targets, I know there will be plenty to keep me busy in 2022.

You can find out more about the project on the BRC website: <https://www.brc.ac.uk/article/targeting-revisits-maps-grasshoppers-craneflies-and-ground-beetles>

Breakdown of the 110 Squares visited by author during 2021



News Snippets

A short round up of some news from the UK biological recording community and other items of interest.

DECIDE, a new tool for guiding recorders to places where data is needed most, has been launched as an early access prototype. The system is currently available for butterflies and day-flying moths, and uses modelling and maps to highlight poorly recorded areas. Find out more on the DECIDE website: https://decide.ceh.ac.uk/info/decide_info

The Geospatial Commission have launched a new report Mapping the Species Data Pathway: Connecting species data flows in England. You can find more information and read the report in full here: www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-report-assesses-species-data-in-england

UK's five statutory nature agencies have jointly published "Nature Positive 2030", a report which places emphasis biodiversity data as an essential evidence base for reversing biodiversity decline in the UK: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-role/the-uk/nature-positive-2030/>

A Wales-wide nature recovery programme, Natur am Byth, is currently in development: <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/our-projects/nature-projects/natur-am-byth/?lang=en>

Butterfly Conservation launches 2021-2026 strategy "Saving Butterflies and Moths" <https://butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/our-strategy>

Stuart Ball of the Hoverfly Recording Scheme has produced a series of videos on using R to analyse biological records. You can find a list of the videos and links via the Scheme's Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/609272232450940/posts/3480194635358671

The Lacewings and Allies Recording Scheme has recently updated their website and relaunched their newsletter Neuro News: <https://lacewings.myspecies.info/>

UK Wildlife Podcast has 63 episodes, including conversation with various recorders, naturalists, recording schemes and wildlife organisations: <http://www.uk-wildlife.co.uk/uk-wildlife-podcast/>

Blog posts and papers which may be of interest:

[Making conservation evidence from citizen science accessible](#)

[70,000 species in the UK; who records them, and where are they all? The importance of knowing what species are where.](#)

[occAssess: An R package for assessing potential biases in species occurrence data](#)

[Big Butterfly Count 2021 sees lowest ever number of butterflies recorded](#)

[State of Dragonflies 2021](#)

[Street lighting has detrimental impacts on local insect populations](#)





NATIONAL FORUM FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING

The National Forum for Biological Recording is the premier UK organisation for practitioners engaged with biological recording across the UK. Membership includes individual naturalists, national organisations and recording societies, local records centres and their staff. This gives it a unique perspective and an important role.

Whether you are an experienced naturalist or taking your first steps in biological recording, we want to hear from you.

To offer an article for a newsletter, please contact our Newsletter Editor: Elaine Wright on editor@nfbr.org.uk

To join the NFBR, please contact our Membership Officer and Treasurer: Clare Langrick on membership@nfbr.org.uk

For all other enquiries about NFBR please contact our Chair: Sarah Whild on chairman@nfbr.org.uk

Join the discussion on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).