

NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING
THE BIOLOGICAL RECORDER NEWSLETTER 30

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NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MINUTES

The fifteenth Annual General Meeting of the National Federation for Biological Recording (NFBR) was held on Thursday 21st March 2002 at The Guildhall, Winchester at 1.15pm.

Present: The Chairman Bill Butcher, Secretary Sarah Myles, Membership Secretary John Newbould, five other Council members and 15 other NFBR members.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2001
3. Chairman's Report
4. Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Officers and Council
6. Any Other Business

MINUTES

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Bill Ely, Paul Harding, Lisa Kerslake, Damian McFerran, Steve McWilliam, Adam Rowe, Anne-Marie Smout and Michael Weideli.

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2001

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting were accepted with no corrections.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman Bill Butcher read out his report. The following highlights of the past year were mentioned:

- the setting up of a Council email group and the NFBR email forum
- the geographical spread of Council members across the UK, now including Wales and all English regions
- the creation of the website
- the joint NFBR/ALGE paper
- the production of a paper to promote local records centres (LRCs) within the National Biodiversity Network (NBN).

Bill congratulated Trevor James on his appointment as the NBN Project Officer working with National Schemes and Societies, and went on to propose two NFBR projects that Council have been considering:

- developing a web-based product to promote standards and information concerning biological recording amongst the recording community
- the formation of a LRC subgroup.

There then followed a brief concerning the two projects mentioned above. The meeting agreed with both the project proposals, with the general belief that a subgroup considering LRC issues/representing LRCs was preferable to a separate association of LRCs being set up.

Charles Copp also raised the need to investigate a professional qualification in LRC work/data collation, management and dissemination. NFBR could work with the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) on this issue.

John Newbould mentioned that a number of museums were members of NFBR and that natural history sections of museums were increasingly under threat. They also need NFBR support and it was felt that NFBR should work closely with the Biology Curators' Group. Thanks were noted to Nick Moyes for all his hard work on the NFBR website.

The meeting approved the Chairman's Report - proposed John Newbould, seconded Trevor James.

4. Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report

Bill Butcher circulated the Annual Accounts in Michael Weideli's absence.

Bill mentioned that a proportion of the £5000 surplus was to be used to develop the web-based project. The contribution that NFBR makes to the NBN may need to increase from £200 to £500.

The meeting approved the Annual Accounts — proposed John Newbould, seconded Trevor James.

5. Election of Officers and Council

All the current officers were willing to stand for re-election:

- Chairman: Bill Butcher
- Secretary: Sarah Myles
- Membership Secretary: John Newbould
- Treasurer: Michael Weideli
- Newsletter Editor: Damian McFerran

No other nominations had been received and the officers were re-elected — proposed Trevor James, seconded Nicky Court.

Members of Council re-elected: Nicky Court, Craig Slawson and Darwyn Sumner.
Co-opted members newly elected: Bill Ely, Trevor James, Nick Moyes and Adam Rowe. Proposed by John Newbould, seconded by Nicky Court.

Three new members were put forward at the meeting for election onto Council: Henri Brocklebank, Mandy Rudd and Frances Hassett — proposed Bill Butcher, seconded Dave Dawson.

The election of all the above to NFBR Council was approved by the meeting.

Four members have been put forward for co-option onto Council: Charles Copp, Paul Harding, Stuart Ball and Anne-Marie Smout (BRISC). These co-options will be considered at the first meeting of Council on 2nd May 2002.

6. Any Other Business

Trevor James mentioned the BSBI seminar would take place from 8th – 11th April 2002 in Liverpool on 'Local floras past, present and future'.

The University of Birmingham's MSc course in Biological Recording was also mentioned.

Sarah Myles
NFBR Secretary

The Local Record Centres and National Biodiversity Network Gateway Project

The LRCs and NBN Gateway Project has involved nine LRCs. The task of these centres is to determine how they can supply and access metadata, and data online through the NBN Index and Gateway. The project was funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) through the NBN and managed by The Wildlife Trusts. Interim guidance for LRCs will soon be available on the NBN website.

LRCs and the NBN Index

The first phase of the project involved seven LRCs in the systematic collection of metadata on a selection of the data sets they manage. The metadata were compiled using an MS Access-based software package called MetaTagger. This is available from software developers Blue Bag Ltd (<http://www.blue-bag.com>). Metadata were then made available on the NBN Index (<http://www.nbn.org.uk>).

The Index currently holds metadata on a central database. It may be decided to disperse the Index to allow data custodians to create and manage metadata on their own web pages, and to search these with a central NBN Index search engine. There would be advantages and disadvantages of changing the system and recorders and data managers should make their views known to the NBN through the website.

The project has looked at the need for NBN metadata standards and has recommended that the NBN sets standards and manages and supports the development of a simple tool to collect metadata. This could be used to upload and manage metadata online or to generate searchable web pages. One possibility is that Recorder 2000 could be developed further to manage metadata in the way required by data managers.

From an LRC perspective the most important use of metadata is probably in supplying information that data users can search. The NBN Index meets this need to a certain extent, although it requires additional search functionality

to meet its potential. The project will make recommendations to the NBN on the need for further development of the Index to meet LRC requirements.

Metadata are essential components of data and are needed to enable users to assess the suitability of data. For this reason metadata should always accompany data. When compiling metadata it is important to include all the key points required by potential users in the abstract and, as a minimum, to include the what, where, when, who and how of the data set.

MetaTagger allows metadata to be collected on features of data sets that are needed only for data management purposes rather than in searches or by the users of data. The project recommends that NBN metadata tools take the management needs of LRCs or recorders into account when developing metadata standards.

LRCs and the NBN Gateway

The Gateway (link from <http://www.search.nbn.net>) is designed to collate data from multiple sources and to present the results in different web-based information products. These products include maps and species lists for designated sites. The project will recommend that the NBN support further development of the Gateway to enable users to define their own search areas and to download raw data.

The Gateway has implemented the principle that suppliers of data have complete control over how their data are made available. Suppliers of data must administer their data and identify which users may access data for incorporation into which Gateway products (such as 10km² distribution maps or more geographically precise maps) and whether a particular user (either an individual or an organisation) may have access to records marked as "sensitive". The project LRCs have been able to reach agreement with most data owners on using the NBN Gateway to disseminate data in 10km² resolution maps. It is possible to restrict higher resolution views to LRC partners.

Technical guidance on putting data on the Gateway will soon be available on the Gateway website.

The LRCs and NBN Gateway project has contributed to understanding how web-based access to information may best be developed to meet the requirements of LRCs and other local data managers. The long-term aim is for the NBN to deliver Index and Gateway systems that will allow data to be managed locally rather than be held as copies on central databases. The first steps have been taken and it is

important that LRCs and recorders make their views known. This will ensure that these tools develop in ways that meet their needs. Full guidance on working with the NBN Index and Gateway will be made available on the NBN and Gateway websites.

Alan Cameron

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Staffordshire Ecological Record: Working in Partnership

Experience running the Staffordshire Biological Records Centre (BRC) since 1974, and the income generated in recent years, have taught us that there is not enough moneymaking in the county to sustain a Records Centre on a purely commercial basis. As long ago as 1993 the BRC formed a loose partnership to bolster its flagging fortunes. Stoke-on-Trent (then a district authority), fronted by the City Museum (now The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery), began to work together with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Staffordshire County Council, with an informally agreed division of responsibilities. Sharing the workload, whilst pooling the money we raised, provided a means to keep the BRC going as political decisions reduced core funding and staff time. Despite all the stopgap measures, the BRC was unable to develop to meet the changing requirements of its users. The arrival of PPG9, LA21 and Biodiversity Action Planning necessitated a move from providing information purely for exhibitions, researchers, naturalists and the general public, to supporting local authorities to carry out their duties relating to the natural world. Without a dedicated LRC officer it became impossible to deliver the detailed site-based data needed by County District Authorities to fulfil their quasi-statutory duties. The partners realised that they and the other local authorities in the

county would find it difficult to discharge their statutory duties without access to good biological records. It was against this background that the BRC was relaunched in 2001 as Staffordshire Ecological Record (SER).

Setting up SER involved employing a dedicated full-time Ecological Records Officer (ERO). To provide the best chance of long-term success we aimed to provide a secure post with an adequate salary, and all the necessary administrative support: office space, computer, phone etc. It was clear that we could not run SER on commercial revenue alone, so we had to attract Local Government support by showing that we could provide a cost-effective way for them to discharge some of their obligations. To address the needs of Local Government, and to attract its support, it was necessary to define the role of SER in terms of their statutory responsibilities towards protected species and e-governance — which involves becoming more accountable by making information more accessible publicly.

SER set out to sell its services to Local Government by showing that an annual fee would be much cheaper than each District employing a dedicated member of staff, or commissioning consultants, to cover their obligations towards protected species. Also they would get added

value by buying into a network with great resources and expertise. For example, English Nature can provide detailed legal information, the County Council in-house expertise as well as data and powerful mapping capabilities. Stoke-on-Trent City Council, through the museum, provides great expertise in data management, specialist curatorial services, secure storage for voucher specimens and original paper records, and provides a means of access for the general public; it has enabled the production of more than seventeen LRC checklists and atlases, since 1975. In addition, The Wildlife Trust provides an effective public interface as well as access to many wildlife specialists, including biological recorders and field surveyors.

Its partners provide SER with the bulk of its income. Each partner pays an annual fee in return for certain guaranteed products and services. Additionally, SER raises money commercially from developers and consultants. The Partners include four lead partners: English Nature, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council (SCC), plus most of the district authorities in Staffordshire. To date, the lead partners provide a steering group for SER and they are actively seeking ways to include the other partners in the decision-making process.

The services that SER provides to its partners are:

- A map and list of the distribution and location of protected species for the relevant area
- A map and list of all protected sites for the relevant area
- A list of protected sites that contain protected species for the relevant area
- A limited level of support in the development control process
- Increasing amount of data on biodiversity target species

Providing these services takes up most of the ERO's time, especially the collation and input of protected species records. It was clear that the ERO alone could not discharge the obligations to the partners without a great deal of outside help. English Nature provides much needed income and a source of expertise and advice. SCC maintains a digital map of sites that the joint Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan and District Local Plans seek to protect. SCC also answers most of the commercial queries, raising money in the process for SER. The City of Stoke-on-Trent Museum Service provides a processing and secure storage facility for voucher specimens and original species records. A Lottery sponsored project, based at the museum, is providing a data assistant whose role will involve entering a large backlog of biological records into a database and providing interpretation of these biological data for public release via the Internet. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust hosts the ERO and provides complete administrative support as well as a reservoir of experience to draw on. The lead partners between them free up sufficient time and resources to allow the ERO to fulfil the obligations to the district partners.

The partnership is managed by a steering group comprising key staff representatives from the main partners, English Nature, Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, and chaired by a representative from The Potteries Museum for Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The Steering Group will expand soon to include a representative from the Local District Authorities and the Chairman's position will become rotating. To date, the system is working well and the feedback has been positive.

Andy Leak, Ecology Data Manager, Staffordshire County Council and SER Steering Group.

Keith Bloor, Principal Museums Officer, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Chairman of SER Steering Group.

NFBR on the Web - update (www.nfbr.org.uk)

The NFBR website has now been operational for nearly two years. Visitor numbers have grown steadily in that time, and now average 160 hits per month. An important and useful "Links" page was developed during the year and inevitably registers the most hits. It now links to: 16 key NBN Partner organisations; 61 BRCs or key data holders around the UK; 55 National Groups or Society websites; 15 commercial sites; 9 Usenet newsgroups; 20 email discussion lists or web fora; 43 personal or institutional members not listed above and 10 utilities (tide-tables, weather, free directory enquiries, free maps etc.).

This page is proving a useful tool to members and non-members alike. It offers the best lists of UK LRCs available anywhere, though your recommendations for further links are most welcome (equipment suppliers and nationally relevant egroups are especially wanted). Individual approaches were made at the beginning of the year to most NFBR members, inviting them to add a personal link on the website. No member's name or details are published without their express permission, so you must contact me directly if you want to be included. Membership forms are now available for downloading in Word or rich text format. Photographs of most of your committee can be viewed by anyone desperate to know what we all look like! The NFBR Newsletter is now also posted on the site about 6 months after its circulation to members, though article layout does have to be altered to suit the web.

Future developments

I accept that the appearance and design of the site could be improved but, with limited time available and only simple software, most effort has gone into creating useful content, and in ensuring that search engines can find us. I hope to bring the site closer in line with new NFBR logos and colour scheme once our publicity leaflet goes to print. Unfortunately, it will take some time to redesign the site, so please bear with us. During the year Craig Slawson has been subscribing members gradually to our new email group. This will go active once enough members have requested their names be added. Anyone interested in joining the egroup should contact Craig (info@staffs-ecology.org.uk) or the homepage (www.smartgroups.com/groups/nfbr).

The suggestion to add a FAQ page on biological recording matters was discussed in Council a while ago. Indeed a specific project to develop an online handbook on basic biological recording techniques is also currently under discussion. This could go hand-in-hand with a professional website construction using more sophisticated software. Anyone with views or suggestions on this matter should make them known to a Council member. The Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) has been offered use of a separate page on our website for their own membership details and contact information if they wish. This would be an interim measure until the Association develops its own website.

At present it is not practicable to include links to local societies involved in biological recording at a county level – there are simply too many of them. However, do tell me about active email groups or local Newsgroups you know about. In time, it may be possible to offer a page of links to those hard-to-find egroups discussing Ayrshire fungi, Cornish hoverflies or Derbyshire flowers. Who knows, in time we may all communicate well enough together to push for our own biological recording Newsgroup on Usenet! Finally, please remember this is your Federation and your website. Tell us how you would like to see it developed, and we will do what we can to make the site even more useful for everyone involved in the field of biological recording.

Nick Moyes

NFBR Website Manager

HabitasOnline www.habitas.org.uk

The HABITAS project will use the Ulster Museum's natural sciences collections, providing a radical, unique and inspirational focus for biodiversity (Fig. 1). Housed within a new, bold and imaginative building, HABITAS will have impeccable environmental credentials. HABITAS will:

- give working access to over half a million natural history specimens
- give access to over a million computerised records of animals, plants, sites and geological information stored by CEDaR
- provide a website of biological atlases, interactive recording schemes and identification guides; introducing and explaining our natural heritage.

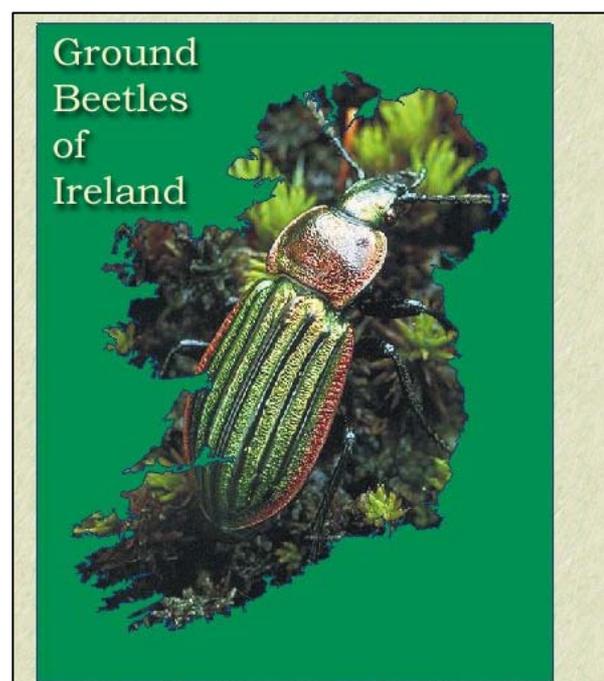
Public access to HabitasOnline is also provided via terminals in the Ulster Museum's *Imagine Habitas* Gallery.



Figure 1. HabitasOnline home page.

Ground Beetles of Ireland on the Web [Under contract from EHS and The Heritage Council, Kilkenny]

Unable to undertake fieldwork due to Foot and Mouth Disease, CEDaR staff transferred money made available by the Heritage Council to the production of this web site. Additional funding was secured from Environment and Heritage Service. Dúchas The Heritage Service also supported the development of this web site. The product that is currently available on the web still requires additional work and funds are currently being sought to facilitate the construction of a key to species level. In the interim, a generic key is being constructed.



This web site is based largely on the book *The Ground Beetles of Northern Ireland*, Anderson, R., McFerran, D., & Cameron, A. (2000). This site is another step along the way to encouraging interest in Irish ground beetles. It extends the book by including more illustrations of the species and providing a means of producing updated distribution maps. Where photographs were unavailable, we have used scans of set specimens or paintings from Fowler (1887). It is intended to act as a stimulus to further

The composite image shows a map of Ireland with green dots indicating the distribution of *Carabus nitens*. A legend in the bottom right of the map indicates three time periods: pre 1970 (dark green), 1970 - 1989 (light green), and post 1989 (yellow-green). To the right of the map is a photograph of the beetle on a mossy surface. Below the photograph are three text links: 'Description', 'Photograph', and 'Home'.

recording of ground beetles in Ireland by providing a resource which makes these little-studied animals more accessible to interested amateurs, biological recorders, school biology classes and the general public.

There are very many gaps in information, which can be seen clearly in the maps. The amateur recorder can help to plug these effectively. Accurate identification of beetles is always a difficulty, but the web site will eventually include an online multimedia key to Irish Carabidae. In the meantime, the role of the web site is to encourage interest in the group. A good photograph is worth a thousand words and the pictorial depiction of these little-known animals will doubtless assist this objective.

The species pages all have a common structure. The first page provides an account of each species, with a short description, its world distribution, its distribution and abundance in Ireland and its ecology. This is accompanied by a photograph or painting of an adult of each species which changes to the Irish distribution map when the mouse pointer is moved over the buttons below the picture. By clicking on the photograph or button, you can view the pictures and maps at larger size within the Gallery. If the pictures appear too large, it should be noted that the site is designed to be viewed on a 17 inch monitor at XGA (1024x768 pixels)

Carabus clatratus
Carabidae

Carabus clatratus Linnaeus, 1761

Description: A large (22-28mm) metallic bronze, green or black ground beetle with conspicuous metallic bronze or red elytral depressions. Occupies a wide range of habitats in areas of high rainfall but principally in peaty marshes, wet hay meadows and boggy lakeshores. Can feed under water and prefers water-logged soils.

Similar Species: Shiny foveae diagnostic

Key Identification Features

- Large, with sculptured elytra and metallic reflections
- Elytral sculpture regular, with three uninterrupted ridges, but intervals each with a row of deep, shiny foveae (usually metallic brassy or coppery red)
- Surface with uniform greenish or brassy lustre, or black

[Picture](#)
[10 km Map](#)
[Next species](#)

World Distribution: Widespread across the north Palaeartic; Eurasian Boreo-temperate. (65) but local and in decline in western Europe (extinct in Switzerland and England).

Irish Status: Formerly widespread on certain types of blanket peat in Ireland (Johnson & Halbert, 1902) but now very local and probably in decline in most areas. Presumed extinct in at least Londonderry, Tyrone and Antrim with only a single extant site in Down, at Edenderry Marsh west of Belfast (Day, 1987). Locally common in wet pasture and bog in Fermanagh but elsewhere its status is unknown though it should still be widespread in the west in areas of undisturbed Atlantic bog.

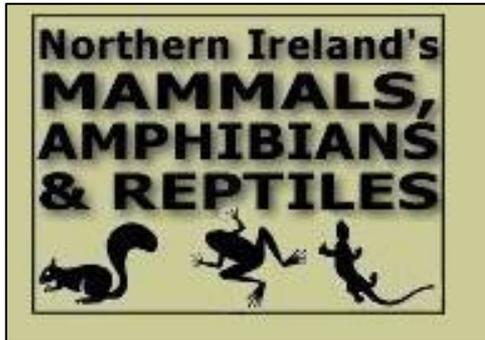
Ecology: According to Koch (1992) a stenotopic tyrophilous species in central Europe. In Ireland recorded historically from wet places in bogs (Johnson & Halbert, 1902). McFerran *et al.* (1995) have recently pitfall-trapped considerable numbers in lakeshore pastures and hay meadows in areas of Fermanagh where the very wet Calp Series of soils (but not peat) predominates. It is not, therefore, restricted to peatlands in our area, although very wet ground conditions seem essential. According to Thiele (1977) it is amphibious, feeding in bog pools and shallow lake waters as well as in terrestrial habitats.

British Red Data Book Status: Nationally scarce (A).

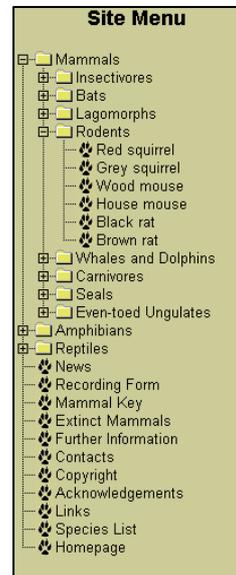
Anderson, R. & McFerran, D., 2002 (February 5). [in] *The Ground Beetles of Ireland* - <http://www.ulstermuseum.org.uk/groundbeetles/7132.html>
copyright © MACN, 2001

or higher resolution and true colour. Clicking on the small picture in turn, brings up the next image.

Northern Ireland's Mammals, Amphibians and Reptiles



This web site was a joint venture between the Ulster Museum, The Queen's University of Belfast and Environment and Heritage Service. The web site provides a way of accessing some of the species distribution data for the Mammals, Amphibians and Reptiles



of Northern Ireland held electronically by CEDaR. The majority of these records were collected as part of the Northern Ireland Mammal Recording Scheme (1997-2000). This scheme facilitated the participation of the wider community in the collection of local biodiversity information. Data collated during this survey was made available and appropriate text and images were sourced. It is hoped that this site will be launched formally during summer 2002.

Each species of mammal, amphibian and reptile occurring in the wild in Northern Ireland is described, with separate pages for their distribution in Northern Ireland (5km x 5km grid square basis), habitat and diet, conservation issues, historical perspective, tracks and signs, and sounds. Also included is a section on extinct mammals of Ireland.

The site also provides a means of submitting new records to CEDaR via an online recording form. A systematic key to the mammals of Northern Ireland is included to assist with the identification process.

How to use this site: Species accounts can be accessed by two means:

□ By species "tree"

To view a species, use the hierarchical tree under "Site Menu" in the menu to the left. To view Latin names, hover over the appropriate common name. For example, to view the "Red Fox" page, click on the "Mammals" folder, then click the "Carnivores" folder, followed by the "Red Fox" item.

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

[Species Overview](#) | [Distribution](#) | [Habitat & Diet](#) | [Tracks & Signs](#) | [Sounds](#) | [Conservation Issues](#) | [Habitat Requirements](#)

The red squirrel is quite common locally in Northern Ireland, but is absent from some large areas. It can be found living in trees and is identified by its large bushy tail and chestnut brown coat. Red squirrels build spherical nests or 'dreys' in the forks of tree branches out of twigs and bark. They are often seen in broadleaf and coniferous woodland.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: The red squirrel is arboreal with a large bushy tail. The upper parts are relatively uniform brown which may vary between individuals from deep brown through rich chestnut to pale greyish brown. Ear tufts are prominent in the winter coat only. The grey squirrel, which is larger, may show some reddish brown but only quite exceptionally so uniformly as the red squirrel. The white underparts are distinct from the back colour. Juveniles are similar to adults more are more intensely red. Body fur moults in spring and autumn, but ear tufts and tail hairs only once, before the autumn moult. Whole winter coat becomes progressively paler. Long curved claws are present and tail is well developed.

Head and body about 205-220mm in length and tail is about 170-180mm. The weight varies from 220-435g.

In Ireland, the breeding season extends from about December to the following September. During this period, the female becomes fertile several times for about one day, and litters may be as large as six, but three is usual. After mating, a female usually builds a drey which is a spherical structure of twigs, leaves and bark and is lined with grasses or moss. Gestation last for about 39 days and the young are weaned after about 9 months.

KEY IDENTIFICATION FEATURES:

- Deep brown to reddish chestnut colouration.
- Long bushy tail present.
- Smaller in overall size than the grey squirrel



© Pete Elliott

© Jon Russ 2001. Text referred by Donncha O'Teagana.

Hovering over the common name will bring up the Latin name, *Vulpes vulpes*.

□ **By species list**

To see a complete list of Mammals, Amphibians and Reptiles click on the link and select the species to go to the relevant species page. Species are listed in taxonomic order.

CEDaR is particularly keen that new images are added to the site and possibly include video footage. If you have anything you wish to include, or any comments, please email the Vertebrate Officer.

The next edition of the newsletter will contain an item on the Flora of Northern Ireland web site.

Damian McFerran
CEDaR

Improving Information Resources on Biological Recording

FIRST DRAFT PROJECT PROPOSAL

Analysis of available information resources (particularly on the Internet) shows that there is a lack of general information on the purposes and techniques of biological recording and the management and use of resulting biological records. Such information is contained in some publications such as the BRISC 'Source Book for Biological Recording in Scotland' and the CiSFBR/ERCCIS 'Handbook for Biological Recorders'. However, there is currently no such information on any national website (e.g. NBN or BRC).

Promoting biological recording across the UK is the remit of NFBR. It seems appropriate therefore that the proposed NFBR project focuses on improving the content of the NFBR website. It should provide high quality guidance on all aspects of biological recording, as well as providing links to other useful resources (e.g. National Schemes and Societies, LBAPs etc.).

Possible themes which should be covered by this project include (subject to change):

- Why recording takes place
- How to become involved
- The NBN
- Recording standards
- Recorders and LRCs
- Recorders and recording schemes
- The role of the BRC
- Computerisation of records
- GIS, GPS and mapping
- Advice on recording particular taxonomic groups
- Record determination and validation
- Habitat classifications
- How biological records are used
- Links to biodiversity initiatives (e.g. LBAPs)

Getting it done

The simplest way of getting this project completed is to invite tenders and to let a contract to an appropriate consultancy or LRC. A small steering group will oversee the project. Technical specifications will have to be clearly set out so that the product is delivered in such a way as it can be incorporated simply onto the web-site. It may be necessary to include financial provision to the webmaster to enable the information to be incorporated. Other costs should also be considered such as

annual costs of maintaining or updating the pages (e.g. ensuring links are working) and costs of additional web space (if required).

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Derbyshire and Nottingham — A brief statement

Derby Museum has just published the first ever Checklist of the Plants of Derbyshire as part of its Derbyshire Flora Project (see next NFBR newsletter for details). A countywide Reptile Survey has also been set up in conjunction with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, and the BRC at the Museum has taken on the management of a database of protected species for the English Nature Derbyshire Team area. Another cause to celebrate was the recent attainment of half a million computerised records on Recorder 3.x. A group of key partners involved in biological recording will shortly be inviting tenders for a contractor to look at options for the development of a Derbyshire Biodiversity Network. This network will cover Derbyshire and possibly the Peak District area.

Meanwhile, next door in Nottingham City, the fate of Wollaton Hall Natural History Museum still hangs in the balance. Here, the Leisure Services Department in its development plan proposes that:

"the natural history museum, collections and Record Centre, which currently occupy many rooms in the Hall, are removed in order to reveal the historic character of the building and the spaces within it."

There has been much outcry locally, and one writer in the local papers even stated:

"I can honestly say that it was the displays at Wollaton that stimulated me, as a boy, to pursue an interest in natural history and to eventually take it up professionally."

The writer, whilst urging people to register their protest with Nottingham City Council, went on to point out that Wollaton Hall was once owned by the naturalist, Sir Francis Willoughby who worked there with his friend John Ray, 'The Father of English Botany'. There could hardly be a more relevant setting for a natural history museum than this. At a time when some of us ageing naturalists are expressing concern about how we inspire the next generation of biological recording enthusiasts, the developments in Nottingham are of deep concern to many.

Nick Moyes

Derbyshire Museum & Art Gallery

Sampling and Sampling Strategies

A one-day conference held by the NFBR, 21st March 2002,
The Winchester Guildhall.

Biodiversity data is required to meet a variety of reporting needs for many individuals and organisations. We therefore have a requirement for data, and its availability, for example, permits us to determine how species and habitats are performing in response to climate change, allows us to implement biodiversity action plans, and facilitates our responses to changing legislation and site management practices.

The aim of this conference was to examine new ways in which data are being captured to meet those reporting needs.

Programme:

Registration and coffee

Welcome.

Merrick Denton-Thompson, Assistant County Planning Officer (Environment), Hampshire County Council

Habitat monitoring on statutory sites.

Keith Porter, English Nature

Case study: approaches to monitoring key sites in Hampshire.

Martin Harvey, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

The Kent Habitat Survey: a new technique for countywide habitat survey.

Phil Williams, Kent County Council

General discussion

Lunch

NFBR Annual General Meeting**The UK Stag Beetle survey.**

Doug Napier, People's Trust for Endangered Species

The new winter survey of mammals in the UK.

David Noble, British Trust for Ornithology

After the Atlas: new means of sampling and monitoring Lepidoptera.

Richard Fox, Butterfly Conservation

General discussion/Finish

Mr. Merrick Denton-Thompson (Hampshire County Council) in welcoming us to The Guildhall, Winchester, stressed the need for up-to-date, relevant information.

Keith Porter (English Nature) began the morning session, which focused on the surveying of habitats, by outlining English Nature's role in monitoring the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Keith explained their concept of 'favourable condition' of key features on the designated sites and the need to assess if the features are in favourable condition by measuring against a set of nationally determined but locality refined attributes. This allows English Nature staff a relatively quick and simple method of monitoring the conditions of SSSIs. Indeed it is estimated that staff will be able to spend no more than half a day per SSSI if all those currently designated are to be monitored. It is envisaged that English Nature will make use of

the NBN (National Biodiversity Network) Gateway to access and assess key species recorded by others at designated sites.

Our attention was then turned to the monitoring of local sites, with examples from Hampshire and Kent. Martin Harvey (Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust) explained how the English Nature approach to monitoring SSSIs had been adapted to report on Hampshire Wildlife Trust reserves, using volunteers to report on the key features in a systematic way. All data collected is managed using databases, one for managing species records and CMS for collating site management information. The survey is currently being expanded to include invertebrate surveys, with features being considered from the invertebrate's viewpoint! Phil Williams introduced us to the high tech approach to habitat sampling being undertaken by a partnership in Kent. A

Geographical Information System (GIS) is being used in conjunction with aerial photos, the Integrated Habitat System (IHS a habitat classification system developed by Somerset Environmental Records Centre) and a limited amount of field survey. This will lead to the production of a countywide data set of habitats.

The general discussion that followed this first set of presentations touched upon:

- The use of volunteers. Approximately 70% of wildlife data are collected by volunteers and 5% by statutory agencies. Do volunteers have a role to play in collecting habitat data? Is this what volunteer recorders want to undertake? Will this just overload them?
- The need to gain permission for access on to land and the importance, once access is gained, of collecting as much information as possible to maximise benefit.
- Emphasis of the need for good, ongoing data management.
- The use of species records as samples to relate to habitat information, and to link back to help indicate where species might be found using particular habitat information to try and produce the real distribution of species (trying to reduce recorder bias).

Doug Napier (People's Trust for Endangered Species) began the afternoon session by taking us back to The Great Stag Hunt of 1998, a public participation survey focusing on the Stag Beetle. There were two levels to the survey. The first, with glossy leaflets, was aimed at members of the public. The second was aimed at conservationists, with more detailed recording forms. The survey was very successful, attracting a great deal of national and local press coverage, mainly due to the species! Ten thousand records were sent in by 5000

people; 70% of records from private gardens, and 5% from public areas, parks and school grounds. The records confirmed the species' southeastern distribution in Britain, being based on geology (the beetle does not like chalk) and following river corridors. A leaflet was produced concerning 'Stag Beetle Friendly Gardening', as well as a summary report published by the People's Trust for Endangered Species. The survey will be repeated in 2002, with key areas being monitored, possibly using pheromone traps.

A birder than turned our attention away from beetles and towards ... mammals, not quite what you might expect! David Noble (British Trust for Ornithology) outlined the current survey being undertaken by The Mammal Society and the BTO using funding from DEFRA. The survey is a one-year pilot study to investigate the use of a volunteer-based multi-species winter mammal survey across Britain. It will focus on medium- and large-sized mammals. The idea is to ask bird recorders undertaking the BTO's very successful Breeding Bird Survey also to record mammals in their one-kilometre squares as well as breeding birds. The squares are selected randomly within a given area/region. The mammals that have been chosen for recording are split into those where their tracks and signs have been seen and those where the creature itself has been sighted. Habitats are also being recorded.

Butterflies and moths were the subject of the last presentation, with Richard Fox (Butterfly Conservation) looking at the various sampling methods that have been used to study this relatively well-recorded group to date, including the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS — using transects). He mentioned the experience gained through the Butterflies for the New Millennium project and presented some of the results published in the Atlas. It has been recognised that the species distribution data is biased by recorder

effort and the BMS is not representative of the wider environment, nor does it report on all species. Butterfly Conservation are therefore focusing future effort on:

- a) continuing the BMS project
- b) producing revised distribution maps for 2000-2004
- c) surveys for the rarest species.

They have also been awarded a DEFRA research contract to investigate how well agri-environment schemes have benefited butterflies. Richard gave an example of one species, the Chalkhill Blue. This species has increased at sites within schemes and decreased at sites not covered by agri-environment schemes. New recording schemes have also been developed including the Garden Butterfly Count. Debate has also focused on moth recording and the possible creation of a national macro-moth recording scheme.

The discussion that followed touched upon:

- Agri-environment schemes and butterflies, coupled with site management. Information grazing is the key
- Sampling methods and what the resultant information collected can tell us.

Trevor James, the chairman of the afternoon session, summed up the speakers' presentations.

To return to the main aim of the conference, I came away with the feeling that the conference had examined some of the new ways of data capture through the excellent presentations and through open and frank discussion.

Sarah Myles

Book Reviews

The Changing Wildlife of Great Britain and Ireland, edited by D.L. Hawksworth (2001). The Systematics Association Special Volume Series 62. London: Taylor & Francis. ISBN 0-7484-0957-2. Hardback, pp. 454. Price: £150, but significant discounts are available from internet booksellers.

The predecessor of this volume, *The Changing Flora and Fauna of Britain*, published in 1974, was a benchmark in reviewing the topic. Each chapter covered a taxonomic group (e.g. lichens, birds and spiders) and in most cases reviewed changes since the 19th century. My copy of the 1974 volume is well thumbed. It was with interest, therefore, that I learned of the proposal for a follow-up conference and publication, twenty-five years on. The conference never happened, but most of the prospective speakers for the conference were persuaded to contribute a chapter to this new review.

The underlying intention, to compare findings from the early 1970s with those from the late 1990s, seemed to get a bit lost with several authors. No matter; the authors of chapters on groups not covered in the 1974 volume have interpreted their brief widely and provide useful introductions to diatoms, viruses, protozoa, nematodes, mites and ticks, including, where appropriate, an historical element. The chapters on eukaryotic algae and Cyanobacteria are far too brief.

Treatment of the groups reviewed previously is varied and there is little evidence of editorial influence to get consistency of approach within a framework of up to eight topics. The chapters are written by acknowledged experts in their chosen taxon, several of whom authored chapters in the 1974 volume. The 26 chapters vary in length from 2 to 38 pages, the longest being on Heteroptera. The comparability between the two volumes is a bit disappointing, with major groups such as

Coleoptera, Hymenoptera, spiders and amphibians/reptiles, which were in the 1974 volume, omitted altogether from the 2001 one. The volume is topped and tailed by two chapters concerned with nature conservation and the final chapter is a summary by the editor with a view to the next 25 years. It is disappointing that there is no review of landscape scale changes in the last 25 years, and that, with the exception of seaweeds and passing references to seabirds and seals, marine wildlife is not covered.

I have three major criticisms of this volume. Firstly, it was premature, being produced before major surveys of flowering plants, butterflies, spiders, freshwater fishes and landscape changes were available. The results of these surveys include a strong element of comparison with recent (post 1970s) information. Secondly, it purports to cover Ireland, but you will search in vain for a meaningful differentiation of an Irish dimension in almost every chapter. Finally, its price! The cover price of £150 really does place it beyond the budget of its main potential market, informed 'amateur' naturalists? Those responsible for this pricing policy have done a grave disservice to the authors and their potential readership. Notwithstanding all these criticisms, it is an important and useful book, which deserves to be read by conservationists and biogeographers (both amateur and professional).

Paul T Harding

A new county survey of the wasps, ants and bees of Yorkshire

Michael E. Archer. 2000. *The Wasps, Ants and Bees of Watsonian Yorkshire*. Yorkshire Naturalists' Union. 200 pages with 328 maps, 16 tables, 58 B & W and 2 coloured illustrations. £6.50 (£5 + £1.50 P & P). Orders to Dr. M.E. Archer, 17 Elmfield Terrace, Malton Road, York, YO31 1EH.

The last account of the wasps, ants and bees of Yorkshire was published during the 1930s, so that there is a need for a fresh look at this group of insects, particularly with the increased importance now given to their conservation.

The introductory chapters, covering 71 pages, are rather longer than is normal for a county report, giving the author more space to explore the history and current practice of the study of the aculeates. The first three pages give a concise outline of the book and should help the reader in the use of the book. First the characteristics and higher classification of the aculeates are considered, followed by a detailed account of the many different types of life histories shown by the aculeates. Then a review of county recording of aculeates from 1870 until the present is made so as to analyse their different formats of presentation and the characteristics that make them particularly useful and interesting to read. In recent times, several new features have been introduced to county reports including the use of grid references, species maps, quality coding of species to find those most in need of conservation and the greater importance given to the habitats in which high quality species are to be found. The English Nature concept of Natural Areas also is becoming important. An attempt is made to incorporate these new features into the book. A history of recording aculeates in Yorkshire is then considered starting with F. Smith from 1852. This chapter also begins to describe the activities of a county recorder.

A review is next given of the different writing-up formats of the aculeate species from a particular site. These formats are divided into the classical, ecological, ethological and analytical. The author has particularly pioneered the use of the analytical format. As such a detailed account is given on how to carry out a site survey and use the collected data in the analytical mode. In particular, the following big three questions are considered, and to some extent answered: how many species has the recorder failed to find on a site, is the species assemblage from the studied site sufficiently

complete so that it may be compared with the species assemblage from other sites, and what is the conservation value of a site?

The Yorkshire database is then considered in terms of its records, species and habitats and sites. For the record section the following information is provided with the help of tables and a map: the record fields used; sources of records; collectors and determiners, and the taxonomic, temporal and spatial distribution of records. For the species section the following information is provided with the help of tables, maps and histograms: the county lists of Smith, Roebuck, Butterfield & Fordham, plus the author; year of discovery and extinction; quality coding in national and regional systems; spatial distribution; adult seasonal activity; cleptoparasitic load; aerial nester frequency, and a comparison of species richness between counties.

The Habitat and Sites section starts with a detailed consideration of the resource requirements of the aculeates, a modified broad habitat classification and the Natural Areas of Yorkshire (with map). The relationship of aculeate requirements and broad habitats is given. Then about 200 sites are considered in terms of their habitat's characteristics, Natural Area by Natural Area. This section can be considered as an introduction to the better known sites to be found throughout Yorkshire.

The species account part of the book deals with 324 species in 98 pages. An introductory account is given for each taxonomic unit as appropriate, be it family, subfamily, genus or species-group. For each species, besides the map, the following information is usually given: national and regional status; period of adult activity; first and last year when recorded; total and 1970 onwards number of records, sites, 1km and 10km squares.

The appendices, covering 30 pages, are a major part of the book. Appendix 1 is an extensive list of references; Appendix 2 acknowledgements; Appendix 3 a list of species whose records have been rejected with reasons for the rejections; Appendix 4 lists the about 200 sites dealt with earlier in the book giving the grid reference and Natural Area for each site; Appendix 5 lists Smith's manuscript species of bees thought to occur in Yorkshire, and Appendix 6 gives more information about a further 14 species that have become rare species in Yorkshire since the publication of the author's Red Data Book on threatened and rare aculeate species in Yorkshire.

In summary, this book has employed the benefits of using electronic recording to analyse fully the Yorkshire records, examined the world of the aculeates in terms of their habitats and sites, and drawn attention to the conservation needs of this taxonomic group.

The book, ***Threatened Wasps, Ants and Bees in Watsonian Yorkshire. A Red Data Book***, can be obtained as a package for the two books for £8 (including P & P).

Michael E. Archer

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The Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland.

A view from the North

This Atlas is an indulgence. It has nearly 450 pages of text packed with mouth-wateringly crisp photographs of butterflies, their immature stages and habitats, and full-page distribution maps of all the resident and common immigrant species.

Its core is of course the maps and accounts of individual species. It is for the most part descriptive factual material. This is not the place to outline all of its various facets, but one supremely important observation must be made for an Irish audience: here is an atlas that does justice to us, most especially in the northern part of the island. That it does so is a great credit to the two Irish co-ordinators, David Nash and Trevor Boyd, CEDaR, Dublin Naturalists' Field Club, Butterfly Conservation Northern Ireland, and to the energetic band of recorders who have supported the scheme. For once references to Ireland are not apologetic ones. They are not about the need for more recording or confirmation. They are credible interpretations of the facts, albeit that I have some minor reservations. What a welcome change since, as a visiting student in 1963, I first found Wood Whites in scattered localities in the southern half of the country and struggled to reconcile these findings with the available accounts in the literature.

I like the accounts of distribution and trends. They do not just restate in words the information presented in the maps but provide added value in terms of both new information and interesting interpretations. As you might expect there are a few claims or slants that I disagree with. Is it really correct to think of the Peacock as having continued the expansion of range in Northern Ireland from the 1930s to the present day? Such a mobile species has probably been more or less ubiquitous at various times throughout this period, but with occasional catastrophic reverses such as in 1985-86. Although the population started at the bottom and finished at the top, it could still be cyclical.

The maps show two species to have anomalous distributions in Ireland compared with Great Britain. The Wood White is both more widespread and more north-westerly in Ireland than one might expect from the British distribution, while the Speckled Wood, though universal in Ireland, has a huge gap in Northern England and Southern Scotland. It would have been much better if these distributions were interpreted not purely in terms of climate and habitat change, but also in terms of the possibility of genetically adapted populations.

A further four species are conspicuous by their absence from Ireland. The Large Skipper, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Scotch Argus and Northern Brown Argus are all widespread in Great Britain in habitats, and at latitudes, which are well represented here. It seems inherently unlikely that they would not have persisted in Ireland if they had ever had a chance to establish themselves. Did they simply fail to make it here in postglacial times before the landbridge was flooded? In the case of the Northern Brown Argus, was the limiting factor the near absence of its preferred foodplant, the Common Rockrose, for similar reasons? Surprisingly these possible explanations are not mentioned and the present distributions are presented as bald facts.

We do not have many butterfly species in Ireland and the trends in some of them must be a cause for serious concern. Without any systematic analysis, I have picked out six as apparently being less widespread now than formerly. Two thirds of them – Common Blue, Small Copper, Small Heath, and Wall — are grassland dwellers. It is hard to believe that their decline, if it is real, is not linked to the way our grasslands have been managed. Improved agricultural grasslands, which now dominate the farming landscape, are devoid of butterflies. One of the greatest single changes detected by the Northern Ireland Countryside Survey over the decade of the 1990s

was a decline in neutral grasslands, with much of it going to improved ryegrass-dominated fields. Changes of this magnitude must inevitably affect not only butterflies but a great many other species as well.

The other two species seemingly on the decline are the Silver-washed Fritillary and the Marsh Fritillary. Whilst any loss of these two handsome creatures is to be deplored, the projections for them may be a little less ominous. I doubt whether the former has ever been all that numerous, and it tends to be seen somewhat opportunistically outside of its most favoured habitats. This is not a species that turns up on cue for systematic surveyors. Moreover, its habitat — broad-leafed woodland — is, if anything, on the increase. The Marsh Fritillary, on the other hand, is undoubtedly under severe threat, but its status as one of the few species both present in Ireland and protected under the Habitats Directive, means that it is now the focus of serious targeted conservation effort.

What lessons from the Atlas are there for conserving butterflies? A few species undoubtedly require specific focused measures. For many, and especially the commoner ones which give so many people so much pleasure, but which have complex and sometimes conflicting requirements, it may simply be that we need more diversity of habitat. A prescription of diversity at the landscape level to promote diversity among species?

John Faulkner

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Editor's Comments

Thank you for being so patient with your Editor. I know that it has been some time since an edition of the newsletter has been published. We have been very busy at the Local Records Centre in Belfast, with most of our recent efforts focused on the rollout of Recorder 2002. Although we are still in the middle of this process, no such similar justification for the lack of a newsletter will be cited in the future. As Editor, I therefore propose that we employ strict deadlines for the submission of articles and consequently our delivery of the newsletter.

I suggest that contributors who wish to supply articles for inclusion do so by **October 1** and **March 31** of each year. These articles will be included in the newsletter, which will be published within 2 calendar months of this date. This will allow time to find alternative articles if the required number is not received.

Please remember that the NFBR newsletter is your voice and your opportunity to express your opinions on the main matters pertaining to recording. So yet again, I call upon all members of the NFBR to think seriously about contributing to the newsletter. Do not allow it to be so absent from our thoughts for so long.

The next Edition of the newsletter will be botanically-based with a strong practical theme.