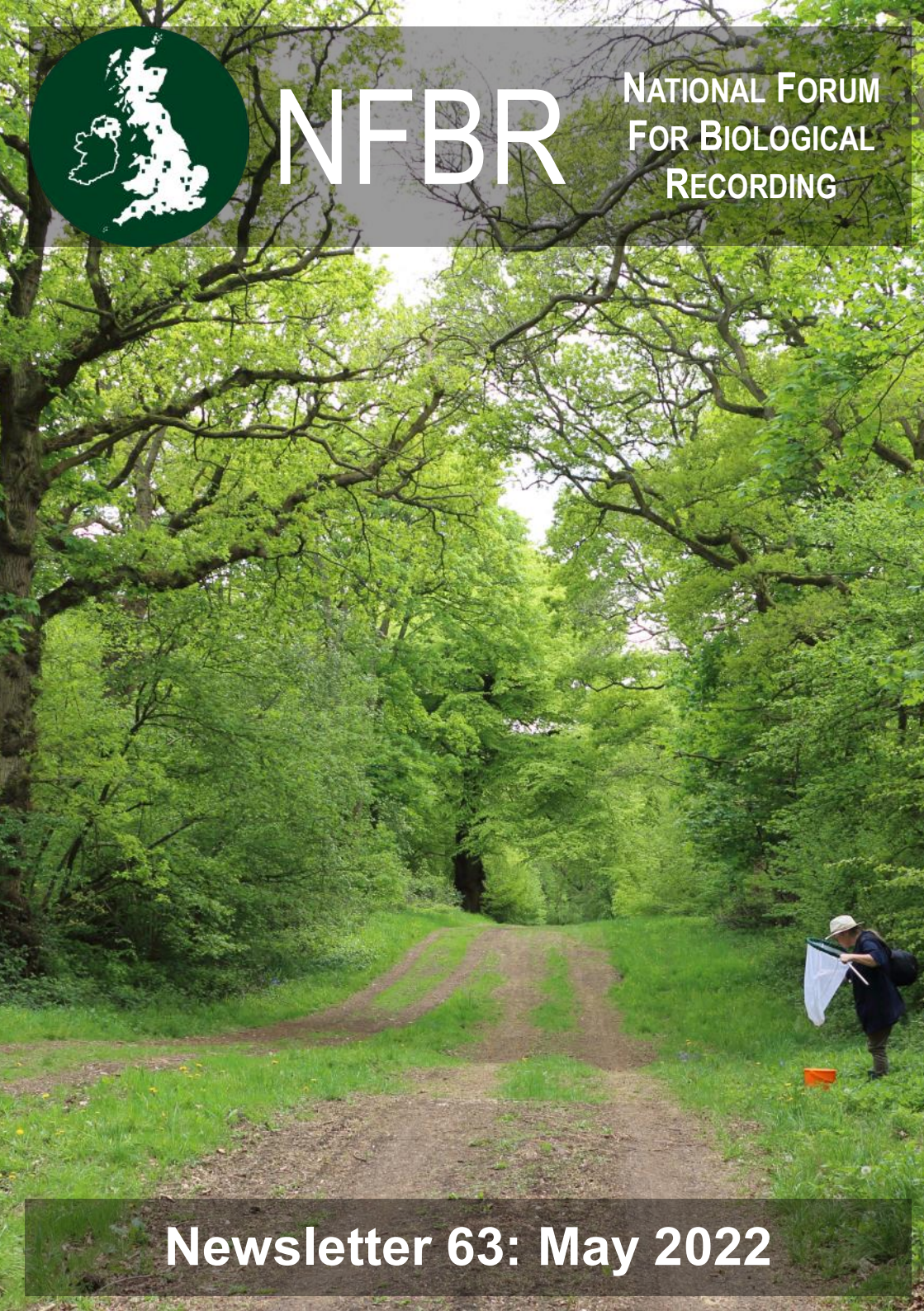
NFBR

National Forum For Biological Recording



Newsletter 63: May 2022

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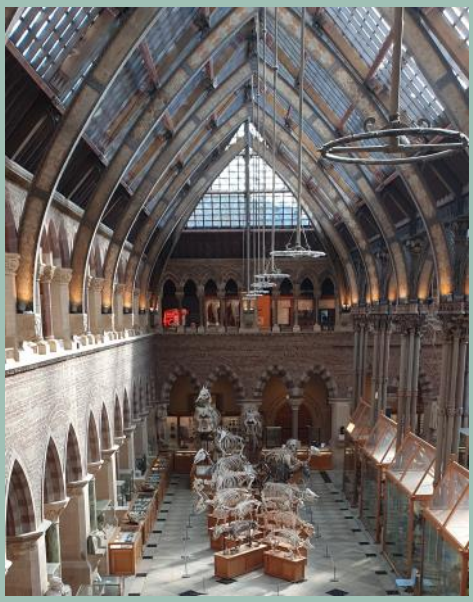


Welcome to Issue 63 of the National Forum for Biological Recording Newsletter.

It was great to be back in person again for our 2022 Conference! Read all about it on pages 3 to 7.

In what is a difficult and worrying time for nature, it is great to hear about new initiatives and projects to encourage and shape recording (Big Meadow Search, pg. 10; DECIDE Project pg. 20). Hopefully these and other articles will inspire you to get out recording as always. Here's hoping for a sunny and successful season!

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 autumn 2022.

Cover photo: Wytham Woods field trip © Teresa Frost
Learn about on the NFBR conference field trip on pg. 7

NFBR News

Elaine Wright

Our 2022 conference took place at Oxford University Museum of Natural History, and online via Zoom. It was wonderful to be back in person for the first time since May 2019, with 44 attendees joining us Oxford and 70 watching online. We had a range of excellent speakers on our theme “Curating the Past, Creating the Future: Legacies in Biological Recording”. The talks are all now available to watch on our YouTube channel via the links below.

From museum to Moth Trap: following in the footsteps of an Edwardian Entomologist
(Katty Baird, National Museums Scotland)

Recording nature where it matters: The DECIDE Project for precision citizen science
(Michael Pocock, CEH)

Supporting Science - A small project with a big ambition to smooth the flow of lepidoptera data
(Rachel Conway, Butterfly Conservation)

Giving nature a number
(Katie Cruickshanks, NatureMetrics)

Digitising the archive
(Henrietta Pringle, TVERC)

You Can't Take It With You: the problem with personal collections and what to do with them
(Sarah Whild, BSBI)

Recording the immature stages of British and Irish Butterflies
(Peter Eeles, UK Butterflies)

Waking the Dead: promoting and recording Carrion beetles
(Ashleigh Whiffin, National Museums Scotland)

The role of photography in Biological Recording
(Penny Metal)

Deep data sharing: proactively decolonising natural science collections
(Rebecca Machin, Leeds Museums and Galleries)

The conference talk schedule was followed by a choice of two workshops for in person attendees. Please find summaries of the workshops below.

Workshop A: Making reference collections today

Summary by Elaine Wright

Workshop option one was run by Zoë Simmons (OUMNH) and concentrated on aspects of creating and maintaining reference collections. 18 attendees chose this workshop, and were challenged by Zoë to consider "What makes a BAD reference collection bad?" Poor labelling was the most popular answer, with other responses including incorrect identifications, inappropriate storage and badly preserved specimens.

Attendees then broke into 3 groups to discuss the "before, during and after" of creating a good collection, and what should be considered at each stage. The groups' conclusions are summarised below.

Before

- Reason for collection
- Costs
- Licences
- Locations to cover
- Permission to collect
- Storage space
- Storage type
- Kit for collecting & storage
- Safety including chemicals
- Future proofing, e.g. for DNA work
- Setting realistic expectations

During

- Standardisation of equipment and techniques
- Working out schedule and methodology
- Care of specimens during collection
- Ethics and collecting appropriate amount of specimens
- Seeking expert assistance with identification and field techniques
- Organisation
- Personal safety during field work
- Recording all relevant data on labels!

After

- Build a good relationship with potential recipients
- If data is digitised, clearly indicate / include this to guard against duplicated effort
- Consider what specimens will be used for
- Who do you want specimens available to? Do you want public to have access?
- Do you want specimens stay local e.g. passed to vice county recorder?
- Understand the possible (lack of) importance level of your collection on a wider scale and be willing to compromise with potential beneficiaries
- Ensure relevant permissions, licence details etc are included with the collection

Workshop B: Curating photos for biological recording

Summary by Teresa Frost

The second workshop option was run by Martin Harvey (CEH) and Teresa Frost (BTO), and considered the management of photographs as an aid to biological recording. Photography has long been a part of the observation and recording of wildlife, and the advent of widely available digital cameras has been instrumental in allowing more people to document their sightings. This workshop provided an opportunity to share ideas and current practice in storing and curating digital photo collections, and in making links between photos and biological records.

The 19 workshop attendees had a very discursive session, and by the end we recognised that whilst it may feel that digital cameras have been around a while, the idea of digital collections is very much in its infancy and so isn't surprising that it is easier to identify challenges than solutions. The topics discussed were around curating photo collections: how to make them secure for the long-term, with sufficient documentation for them to be used as adding value to records. Some online recording platforms such as iRecord, iNaturalist and iSpot all allow photos to be stored as part of formal biological records; this prioritises the recording element, but may not meet broader needs for curating a collection. We also thought about creating a visual legacy: what is the best way to donate photos to recording schemes and wildlife organisations. Ideas, comments and suggestions included the following:

Curation - options and best practice for storing photos

- Adding text captions and searchable tags to photos is more flexible than using a flat folder structure to organise them
- Useful captions/file names/ tags might include geotagging, as well as species name, taxonomic group, habitat
- Finding and organising photos works best if you plan your search terms in advance, and organise them in some way
- Several participants recommended Adobe Lightroom software (the free open-source darktable was also suggested) – these allow lots of image editing, but also enable tagging and editing of metadata
- Applies to all media, not just photos, e.g. video and audio files
- The UK Butterflies website that Peter Eeles set up has a structured approach to uploading, tagging and storing images for subsequent use and download, with the ability to automate the supply of photos to people requesting them (based on subject, photo licence etc.). Works well but resource heavy – depends on volunteer photo curators setting up the tags when new photos are added to the site
- Artificial Intelligence and image recognition approaches can help search if tagging incomplete, e.g. for all photos of insects on a dandelion
- But quality of image recognition varies and AI relies on good quality images/ tags for training the underlying algorithms - could create a vicious circle of ID issues unless we create quality photo collections with correct IDs
- Wikimedia Commons provides a good structure for photo sharing and is free to use, but quite time-consuming to add photos and set up tagging; noted there are still some errors in species ID within the Wikimedia Commons

- Is it best to delete unwanted photos, or to retain everything in case they prove useful at a later stage? Deleting unwanted photos promptly was recommended, to avoid very messy and resource-intensive collections, and to ensure the best things are being backed-up. Some photo systems can automatically rank photos based on quality of focus etc. to help with this step. However the main exception to this is where the species identification is not known or could be questioned, in which case it can be good to retain all photos, even those that are partially out of focus, in case additional views and angles of critical features are needed for identification.

Legacy - making your photos useful to the naturalist community

- There are many barriers to sharing images!
- Curated collections would be more useful for recording schemes, engagement and research than single images, especially for groups where specimens are being less frequently collected than in the past
- It can be difficult to track which photos have gone where when sharing with multiple sites/organisations
- Storing photo and video files is expensive in terms of online or offline storage facilities, and online sharing not available to all e.g. where internet connections are not good
- Sites such as Flickr have good resources, but dependent on continuity of private company
- The Piwigo open-source website was suggested as a good option for online photo sharing
- Earlier in the conference a question was raised about how to ensure that relevant passwords can be left as part of a legacy for photos and other digital data. The use of password management tools was suggested, as was the careful storage of written-passwords in secure locations that will be known to people dealing with any legacy. Passing on a password for your emails can be key to enabling someone else to access your digital legacy, e.g. so that passwords for other sites can be reset if necessary (although in some cases a second level of security is also needed e.g. via mobile phone text message)
- We finished by recognising that museums are dealing more and more with digital collections (perhaps more social history than natural history so far), but resources are limited and there are many issues to resolve. Natural History Museum has an urban-focused project that will be developing some new approaches to archiving digital material. Hopefully this will help further develop ideas for photo curation and legacy.

Behind the Scenes Tour

Many of the in-person attendees took the opportunity to join a guided tour behind the scenes of Oxford University Museum of Natural History with Zoë Simmons. This fascinating tour included close views of specimens collected by Charles Darwin, an insight into the work to create new exhibits, some live specimens (including Dolores the Chilean Rose Tarantula [*Grammostola rosea*]) and ended in the former Radcliffe Library (now the Huxley Room, right), location of the Great Debate after the publication of On the Origin of Species by Darwin. This room was also a filming location for Morse, and the site of a couple of fictional murders!

Rough Common © E. Wright

Field Trip

The conference was followed by a field day at Wytham Woods, a site which has been owned and studied by Oxford University for 80 years. Twelve of us met at the car park and had a brief introduction to the site from the site Conservator Nigel Fisher. This handily included a couple of padlock codes, allowing us to drive further onto site and make use of the Chalet (shown right).

Some brave souls visited wetlands at the far south of the site, whilst many concentrated on the woodland and meadows around the chalet. So far over 250 species have been added to the list from the day, with more sure to follow (you can explore the species list on the conference iRecord activity by filtering the location for Wytham).

The Chalet © T. Frost

Herb Paris © Holly Woo

Aneurus avenius © M. Harvey

Hazel Leaf-roller © E. Wright

NFBR Annual Report for 2021

Sarah Whild

NFBR Membership

Our membership, although still modest, has soared during the Covid years, and we now have just over 160 members. The online conferences have reached a much wider audience, and we hope this trend continues. Although NFBR is still a small group, it continues to make significant contributions to UK biological recording in all its aspects.

Organisation

Due to the lockdown, the May Annual General Meeting and conference (2021) was held via Zoom, hosted by the Field Studies Council, and we had an amazing attendance of over 300 participants. We thank the FSC for their fantastic support in running our conference.

Executive (trustees)

Simon Pickles and Graham Walley were re-elected as trustees, with Graham Walley taking on the role of Honorary General Secretary, and the other current serving Executive members and trustees are Sarah Whild (Chair), Jodey Peyton (Vice-chair), Clare Langrick (Treasurer), and Elaine Wright (Newsletter Editor).

Advisory Council

The following members were elected to the Council: Martin Hicks, David Slade, Keiron Brown, Alan Stewart, Zoë Randle, Chris Raper, Martin Harvey, Jodey Peyton. Steve Prentice, Teresa Frost, Zoë Simmons and co-opt Damian McFerran, and John van Breda, as well as Chris McInerny as a representative of BRISC. The Council met twice during the year and the Executive met four times. We are grateful to Graham Walley for recording the minutes of Executive meetings so fully, and to Steve Prentice for minuting Council.

NFBR Conference 2021

The May 2021 conference, 'Outside the Honeypot: Wildlife Recording in the Urban World' organised jointly with the Field Studies Council, the Tanyptera Trust and the Liverpool World Museum. The online hosting was provided by the FSC BioLinks Project through Keiron Brown and his team was excellent. NFBR is very grateful for all the very generous presenters who gave their time and expertise to make the two days a success, and the members and colleagues who made the conference happen. We know from the conference feedback that over 90% of delegates thought it very good or excellent.

Communication

Newsletter 61 came out in May 2021 and Number 62 in November, both covering a wide range of species, groups and peoples' activities, all produced to a very high standard. We're all grateful to the contributors and the skill and commitment of the Editor, Elaine Wright. The NFBR website was maintained by John van Breda, and David Slade for which we thank them. Social media followers continued to increase over the year, with 2,800 Twitter followers.

Planning the 2022 Annual Conference was started during the autumn of 2021 on the subject of 'Curating the Past, Creating the Future: Legacies in Biological Recording'.

Collaborative working

We have maintained good working relations with a wide range organisations and groups with biological recording interests, especially the Biological Records Centre at Wallingford (part of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN). NFBR has commenced informal consultation with a range of organisations on the optimal flow of biological recording data in the UK. Our Advisory Council has contributed to this significantly, and we hope to develop these thoughts into a formal consultation with a wide range of organisations over the next two years.

We have had a very productive year of fostering new working relations, and renewing old ones, as well as maintaining our ongoing work with partner organisations. Members of the Executive met Lisa Chilton, the new CEO of the National Biodiversity Network Trust, and we hope to maintain our close links with NBN. NFBR has become a member of Countryside Link, and we also contribute to the national State of Nature report. NFBR joined Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) in November 2021. This coalition of environment and wildlife organisations unites messages from over 65 organisations to protect nature in England. NFBR has representation on the Land Use Planning Group and the Invasive Non-Native Species working groups and we will report on feedback from these meetings in the NFBR Newsletter. Please get in touch if you would like to know more about these Working Groups.

On behalf of the NFBR Executive I'd like to thank the Advisory Council and our members for their continued support for our group and biological recording.

Current NFBR Governance

NFBR has a board of trustees who form the Executive Committee, plus an Advisory Council. You can learn more about the individual Trustees and Council Members on the NFBR website.

Current members and positions held (following 2022 AGM) are as follows:

Trustees

Sarah Whild (Chair)
Jodey Peyton (Vice Chair)
Clare Langrick (Treasurer)
Graham Walley
Simon Pickles
Elaine Wright
Teresa Frost (new)

Advisory Council

Martin Harvey
Martin Hicks
Damian McFerran
Steve Prentice
Kieron Brown
Zoë Simmons
Liam Olds (new)
Chris Raper
David Slade
Alan Stewart
John van Breda
Zoë Randle
Chris McInerny
Imogen Cavadino (new)

The 'Big Meadow Search' Project: Putting plants on the map

Laura Moss

The Big Meadow Search (BMS) project was launched in the summer of 2021 by Carmarthenshire Meadows Group to encourage recording of plant species on members' land. It has subsequently developed and is now open to anyone to take part across the UK with searches being welcomed from any type of unimproved grassland including meadows, woodland rides, road verges, wild amenity grasslands, church yards etc.

We have devised a BMS species list from a combination of the National Plant Monitoring Scheme lowland grassland indicator species with additional meadow axiophytes recommended by the Carmarthenshire County plant recorder. Although we are focusing on the BMS species list we encourage participants to record all the plant species they come across during their search as these will also be of interest and value.

Searching is easy to do and accessible to everyone as all it entails is making note of the location name, grid reference and date and then ambling along a grassland area and recording the species seen. No specialist equipment is required but a good plant identification guide, a hand lens and a camera are always helpful. Records submitted to BMS will be analysed to assess the number of participants, geographical coverage, types of grassland searched, range and numbers of plant species encountered and the proportions of positive and negative indicator species per search area. Once the BMS analysis is complete, the submitted records will be forwarded to the relevant local environment record centre (LERC) so that the collected data can be put to maximum use.

The project was launched in 2021 with a very short lead in time but managed to generate 75 searches across 14 counties extending from Newcastle upon Tyne down to Totnes.

Ahead of the 2022 summer search period, we are running a social media project to raise interest in plants. There are frequent posts on Twitter (@bigmeadowsearch) and Facebook (Big Meadow Search group) featuring plant identification tips and information on interactions with other species such as invertebrates and fungi. To date nearly 500 Tweets have been posted. The image opposite shows examples of the types of social media posts.

This year the BMS project will be running 1st June to 31st August. We are working hard to promote the project across the UK and Ireland and plan for this to be a long-term project.

In our first year, data was predominantly submitted as Excel spreadsheets and Word documents which made data analysis labour intensive. For 2022 we are developing a Big Meadow Search website (www.bigmeadowsearch.org.uk[Ed: Not yet online]) to allow online data submission. The website will also be a resource for

plant information and references. As with all citizen science projects there is the potential for species misidentification and although our online data submission platform will not require photographic evidence, we welcome photographs and enquiries via our social media and email. Records of harder to identify and rarer species will be reviewed and if any uncertainty arises it may be possible to contact the searcher for additional details.

Although there are already UK wide botanical schemes, we feel BMS offers something new and fills a gap. The National Plant Monitoring Scheme's, NPMS and NPMS+ surveys for example, involve long term monitoring of specific 1km grid squares and are likely to attract established recorders with good botanical identification skills. BMS search sites are not allocated so searches can be self-selected and opportunistic. We have a three month time period for searches to be undertaken, this offers flexibility and the potential for individuals to search multiple sites. As a diverse variety of grassland areas are included, the BMS project offers a wide range of opportunities for people to get involved, ranging from inner city suburbs to wilderness areas with the potential to gather data from previously under recorded grassland areas. Searchers don't need to feel pressured to identify everything they come across as records of common species and not just the rare are of interest and value.

Feedback from the inaugural BMS project has demonstrated that participants derived increased appreciation and knowledge of local places and natural history and improved their identification skills whilst generating records. This year we aim to build on this experience, increase the number of participants and extend the geographical coverage. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us via bigmeadowsearch@gmail.com.

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 Deb Muscat (Manager).

Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) boundary follows that of the current Cumbria County Council and out 12 miles into the sea along the west coast. Encompassed within it are the two Vice Counties of Cumberland (VC 70) and Westmorland-and Furness (VC 69) and small parts of North-West Yorkshire (VC 65), West Lancashire (VC 60) and Mid West Yorkshire (VC 64).

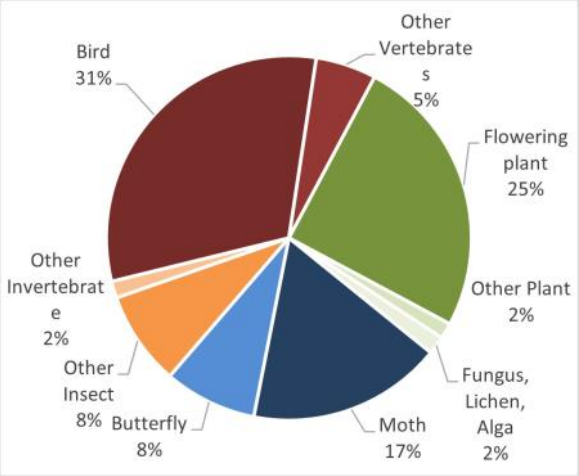
Tell us a bit about your LERC

CBDC was established in 2011 and is hosted by Tullie House. The museum has a nationally important natural science collection and its own collection of data (c 300,000 records) which had been collected by the museum staff and the Carlisle Natural History Society since 1902 when the Natural History Record Bureau was set up, deemed by many to be the first local record centre.

The first Manager, Teresa Frost, set up the office, data systems, policy and procedures in line with the ALERC accreditation criteria (so CBDC has no excuse for not submitting evidence to ALERC until 2021). Since then, the organisation has accumulated almost 2.5million species records and is the custodian of Cumbria GeoConservation's local geological sites data and the Cumbria Wildlife Trust's County Wildlife Sites data. Until 2021 Cumbria did not have a habitat base map. Thanks to DEFRA Local Nature Strategy Pilot funding this gap has been closed. The LNRS Pilot Action Team identified CBDC to collate the existing datasets and create the habitat base map. The CBDC Data Officer went on to carry out the habitat network modelling which was widely praised. Carrying out this work has helped secure core funding and CBDC is working with Natural England and the Cumbria Local Nature Partnership to update the habitat map.

CBDC holds 2.47 million records representing a wide range of taxa (breakdown shown right).

Cumbria has a very active recording community covering all the major taxonomic groups which provides over 80,000 records each year as well as verifiers and county recorders.



CBDC Office

Tell us about the local recording scene

There are 5 Natural History Societies in the County with Carlisle Natural History Society members providing the most records, either directly to CBDC, or via iRecord and national societies. There are 12 recording groups. Some are well established such as Cumbria Botany with a programme of events and website, whilst others, e.g., Cumbria Insects and Invertebrates, are informal groups that share their records and ID queries through a Facebook group.

Tell us about how you support local recorders

CBDC supports the recording community in several ways, from running the annual recorders' conference (which is attended by around 90 people each year) to stepping in to run the Fungi group when its leader moved away. We have also provided practical help with websites, social media publications and training.

On the CBDC website you will find Cumbrian Atlases for Birds, Moths, Mammals and Dragonflies and coming soon - Bumble Bees. Working on atlases has proved to be a great way to acquire and verify data, as well as motivating recorders to visit under recorded hectads. As well as Atlases CBDC has a series of publications written by local experts including Urban Gull Colonies, A Checklist of Cumbrian Coleoptera, Birds in Cumberland in the 18th Century and Transcripts of the Annual Reports of the Natural History Record Bureau, 1902-1912.

Each year CBDC organises a small programme of recording days, which brings together recorders from across the taxonomic groups. With the growing interest in rewilding and farming for nature in the county CBDC has been able to organise visits on private land that has not been previously recorded. Not only does this give recorders the opportunity to get to never recorded parts of the county, but the landowners also usually pay for the privilege of hosting a recording day.

Like all LERCs CBDC does not let an opportunity for more records go past and when Plantlife set up their LOST project in the county to increase lichen and bryophyte recording we jumped at the chance of hosting the project. Although the project ended in 2020, we are very pleased to report that the Lichen and Bryophyte group is very active and has presented their achievements and is a regular contributor to the Recorders' Conference. Like all LERCS we work with partners to support public participation and citizen science and each year we are involved in a couple of events from local recoding days to Bioblitzes, writing magazine articles to running family friendly events at the Keswick Mountain Festival.

Over the past couple of years CBDC has been working with the Cumbria Farmers Network and 20 farmers in North Cumbria to help them record on their land. Our Recording Officer has also been teaching them how to recognise and understand the priority habitats on their farms.

To improve the support CBDC provides to the recorders and coordinate the increasing requests for help with community events CBDC is setting up a Recorders' Forum this year.

The CBDC Staff Christmas Walk (Back row: David Clarke, Stuart Colgate, Moustafa Eweda. Front row: Deb Muscat, Marjorie Hunt, Annwen Philipson

Tell us about your team

CBDC has 3 full time members of staff and has been supported by a team of up to 8 volunteers dedicating over 50 hours of time a week to tackle office admin. Last year CBDC was able to offer two of its volunteers part time employment and it is currently benefiting from an ERASMUS Entrepreneur placement. CBDC has 2 volunteers who work from home and hopes to engage more in the office now the pandemic restrictions have been lifted.

A special mention must be given to David Clarke who as Senior Curator in the Tullie House Museum, suggested setting up a Cumbria local record centre in the 1990s. He agreed to Chair the CBDC Steering Group in May 2012 on a temporary basis; David stood down in March 2022. David is the County Recorder for the British Dragonfly Society and has been a lifelong member of the Carlisle Natural History Society.

The CBDC Manager, Deb Muscat, used to be a botanist until she went on a dung beetle day and is now a trainee coleopterist. Her excuse for abandoning plants is there are lots of competent botanists in Cumbria and less than a handful of beetle recorders, although she won't let a rare plant go unrecorded! Deb has a community engagement background and so takes a lead on the public engagement projects. Marjorie Hunt took on the role of Admin Assistant last year and is now in the process of getting the team fully organised.

The Recording Officer Stuart Colgate is an experienced ecologist, botanist and moth recorder and trainer, an ideal skill set to support the recording community as well as developing and delivering activities to raise income. As well as the obvious training sessions, e.g., species identification and surveying for organisations like Caring for Gods Acre and the Wildlife Trust, Stuart also developed and delivered a

Biodiversity Module for the Cumbria Blue Badge Tourist Guide Accreditation Scheme. Stuart has also carried out ecological survey work on Lake Windermere and on Brownfield sites for partner organisations. He is supported by Annwen Philipson who validates and prepares records for uploading into our database a role that she carried out for 3 years as a volunteer.

Dr Moustafa Eweda has worked for CBDC for over 10 years and is our inhouse IT expert and the brains behind the highly technical data projects that we have delivered. He is responsible for the CBDC commercial data enquiry service and leads on the mapping and GIS projects. Moustafa is currently working with Marti Ventos, who has come from Spain through ERASMUS.

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

Cumbria is the most biodiverse county in England with 24 priority habitats represented. Therefore, wherever you go you are not far away from a good place for recording.

For those wanting an archetypal Lake District Valley, then Borrowdale is the place to go. The village of Seathwaite is the wettest place in England so waterproofs are recommended. Great Wood and Johnny's Wood are important Atlantic Woodlands, home to rare lichens and bryophytes. In 2020 the National Trust translocated specimens of Tree Lungwort *Lobaria pulmonaria* from a 200 year old oak tree to dozens of nearby trees. The oak which had been blown over in a storm supported one of the largest communities of this rare lichen species in England. If you make it to the tops, you may be treated to a rare alpine plant.

A quieter alternative is the Ennerdale valley which for over 10 years has been managed in harmony with nature and has a range of habitats from the lake shore to the subalpine on the mountain peaks. The keen eyed may spot Ring Ouzel, Pied Flycatcher, Red Squirrel, Mountain Ringlet, Marsh Fritillary to name but a few. The lake is home to England's only migratory population of the Arctic Char and the River Ehen supports a significant freshwater Pearl Mussel population. Ennerdale is so important that drinking water is no longer extracted and United Utilities have just completed a £300m, 100km pipeline from Thirlmere to serve the local population.

For a different perspective visit Drumburgh Moss one of several National Nature Reserves in North West Cumbria that support a wide range of rare and interesting plants and animals including Short Eared Owl, Curlew, Large Heath Butterfly, Moss Carder Bee and Bog Rosemary. Being close to the coast there is also an opportunity for some bird watching as the Solway is renown for geese and waders.

Contact information for Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre

Email: info@cbdc.org.uk

Website: www.cbdc.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CumbriaBDC

Twitter: https://twitter.com/CumbriaBDC

c/o of Tullie House Museum, Castle Street, Carlisle, CA3 8TP.

NBN Update

Mandy Henshall

Making data work for nature – a strategy for nature's recovery

The NBN Trust has published its new five-year strategy - "Making data work for nature". We have only a few years to bring about the changes that are needed to address the biodiversity crisis in the UK. Our new strategy sets out our ambitions and our commitment to helping make this happen.

Our vision is of nature thriving everywhere, in all its diversity. We passionately believe that, together, we can reverse the biodiversity crisis. That's why partnership is central to our mission. Download our new strategy to see how you can work with us through the National Biodiversity Network – the UK's largest partnership for nature. The new strategy takes us into the NBN Trust's third decade and celebrates the fifth anniversary of the launch of the NBN Atlas.

New NBN Atlas Developer

We are delighted that Keith Raven has joined the NBN Trust team, as NBN Atlas Developer with DevOps.

Keith's role is to provide on-going support and maintenance for the NBN Atlas. His core work responsibilities are managing and improving the NBN Atlas infrastructure and helping to automate operational and system admin procedures.

Call for nominations – Honorary Membership of NBN Trust

We are seeking nominations for Honorary Membership of the National Biodiversity Network Trust. Do you know someone who you think should receive this accolade? Honorary Membership can be awarded to one or two persons each year and is agreed upon by the Board of Trustees. They do not have to be a member or part of a member organisation to be nominated.

Are you recording wildlife using iNaturalist?

The NBN Trust is seeking to collate information about projects that will engage people in recording wildlife.

If you are planning, or if you know about a project that will include using the iNaturalist app or iNaturalistUK to gather wildlife data in the next 6 months, we want to hear from you.

Call for information from educational institutions

The NBN Trust would like to request information from educational institutions that use the NBN Atlas as an educational resource.

In the last year we have seen an increase in the use of the NBN Atlas in education and academia and we are keen to support and develop this.

Would you like more news from the Network?

The NBN Trust provides a regular update for the NFBR newsletter, but it also publishes a monthly electronic newsletter, Network News. Bringing together news and information from the NBN Trust, as well as from members and data partners across the Network, it also includes information, news and updates relating to the NBN Atlas.

If you don't already subscribe, just complete the simple, online sign up form.

National Earthworm Recording Scheme

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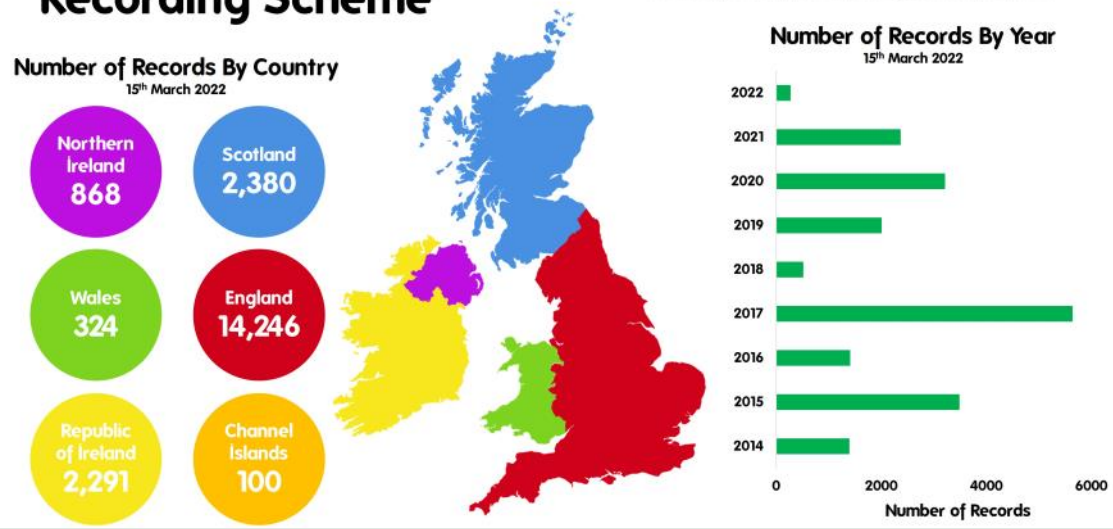


Recording Scheme Spotlight

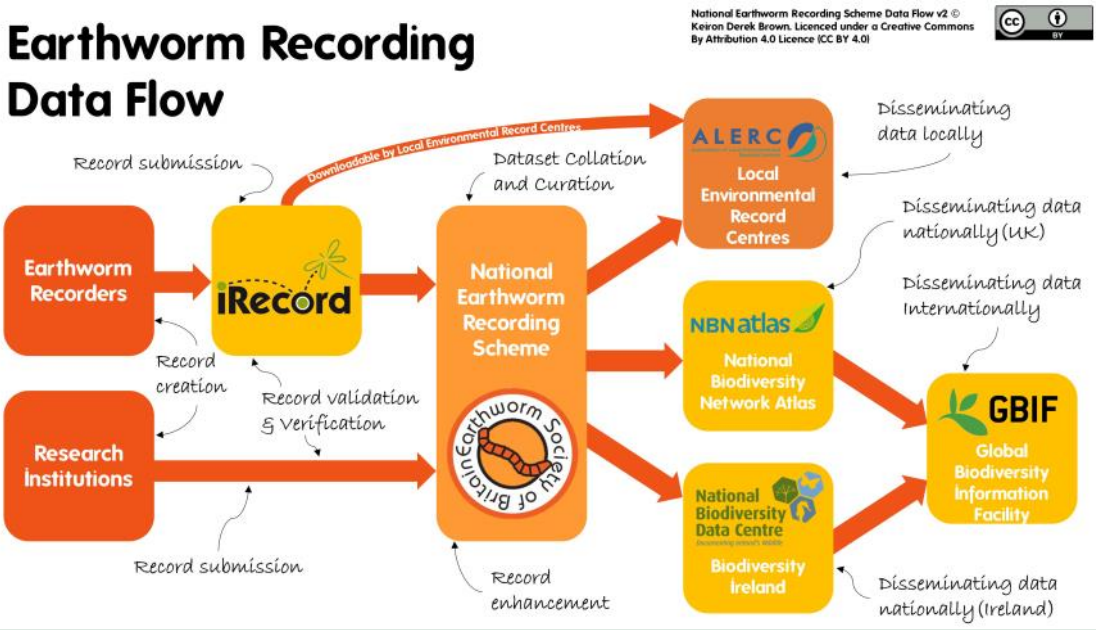
Each issue the NFBR newsletter celebrates one of the many and varied National Recording Schemes in the UK. These schemes help to ensure accurate species identification, help with dataflow and are an essential part of the British wildlife recording community.

This time we are featuring the National Earthworm Recording Scheme with answers provided by Keiron Derek Brown.

Tell us a bit about the scheme

The National Earthworm Recording Scheme (NERS) is hosted by the Earthworm Society of Britain (ESB). It is run by Keiron Derek Brown and was launched by Keiron only as recently as 2014 – making it one of the newer recording schemes on the block. Originally set up to cover just the UK, the scheme has been expanded to cover the Channel Islands and Ireland.

The scheme covers the order Crassiclitellata – otherwise known as the true earthworms. Earthworms belong to the phylum Annelida (the segmented worms), with the NERS being the only UK recording scheme for an Annelid group. 31 species of earthworm are known to occur in natural environments in the British Isles, predominantly from the family Lumbricidae but with single species from the families Acanthrodrilidae and Sparganophilidae.



How is the scheme run?

As a newcomer to the world of biological recording, it was important not to reinvent the wheel. Barriers to earthworm recording include the fact that specimens must be collected, killed and preserved to identify through microscopy and the fact that surveying often involves digging. Therefore, keeping record submission and data flow simple is key to the running of the NERS.

Records are accepted through iRecord, enabling recorders to submit their earthworm records alongside their records of other taxonomic groups. All data submitted to the NERS is shared locally (with Local Environmental Record Centres), nationally (via the National Biodiversity Network Atlas and Biodiversity Ireland) and internationally (through the Global Biodiversity Information Facility).

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

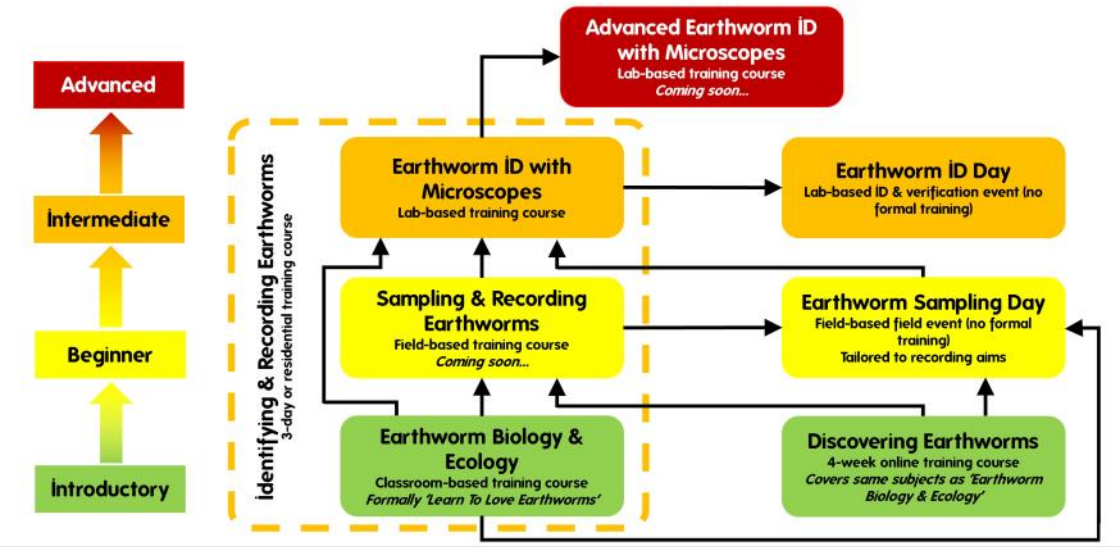
Training is a priority when it comes to recording scheme activities. Earthworm recording is still in its infancy and there are HUGE geographical gaps in coverage.

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

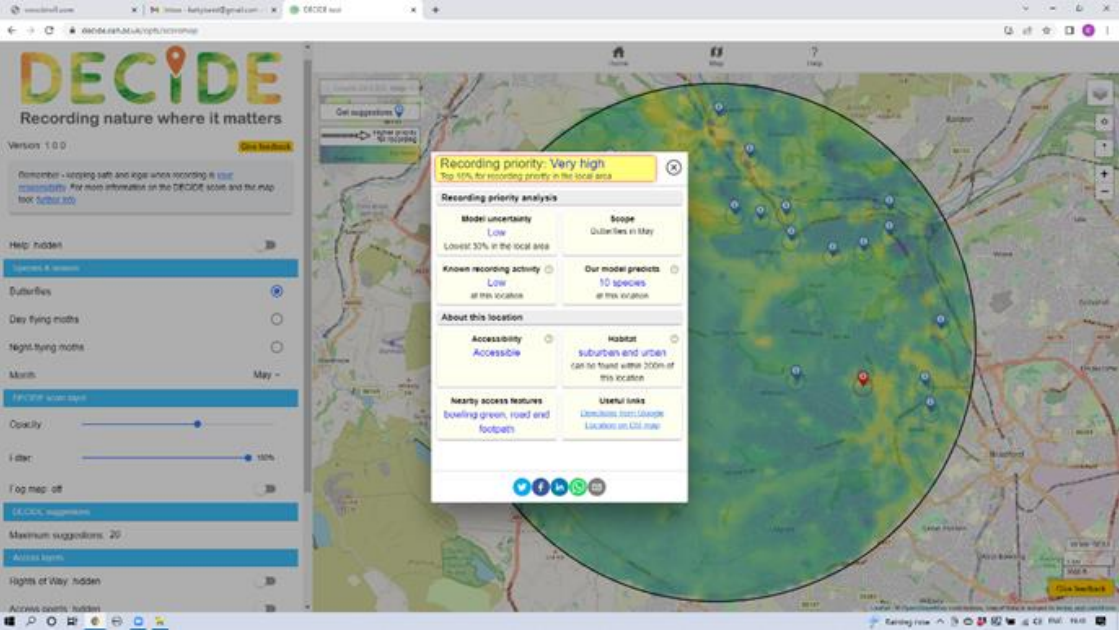
You can find out more about the NERS on the ESB website: https://www.earthwormsoc.org.uk/ners.

Earthworm ID Training Pathway

References
Brown, K.D. (2018) *FSC BioLinks Development Plan For Training Provision.* Shrewsbury: Field Studies Council



Lumbricus terrestris © Keiron Derek Brown



DECIDE aims to encourage more recording from places that need it most. The emphasis is on getting records from places where Species Distribution Models are most uncertain of their predictions. To do this, a web-based Tool has been developed which highlights areas that are of greatest priority for more recording. DECIDE currently focusses on butterflies and moths with maps showing where new records will have most influence on improving species distribution models for these groups.

The DECIDE Tool has just had a comprehensive upgrade and is ready to be tried and tested over the coming months. Take a look and let us know what you think by filling in our feedback form. Feedback from users in the recording community has already been invaluable in shaping the design of the Tool and we are now particularly interested in evaluating how it is used and what further improvements we could make. All comments and suggestions are important to us and where relevant, will be incorporated into future iterations of the Tool.

Cinnabar © Les Evans-Hill

Small Tortoiseshell © H. Leach

MyDECIDE : Butterfly recorders wanted!

A closely related project is running this summer, called MyDECIDE. This is a study investigating ways to provide automated, personalized feedback to people submitting records. For the initial trial, we are focusing on butterfly recorders and we are seeking people to sign up now to take part this summer. Participants will receive an email each month until October which will summarise their recent butterfly recording activity and provide suggestions for new places to visit in the coming months where more records would be particularly valuable. There will also be a few short questions about the style and content of the emails. At the end of the trial, participants will be invited to complete a questionnaire evaluating their experience and considering the impact receiving these emails had on their recording activities.

Please take part if you can and spread the word about DECIDE and MyDECIDE in your biological recording communities.

Visit the DECIDE tool here: https://decide.ceh.ac.uk/opts/scoremap.

Threatened butterfly species cope well in below-average year

*UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology**

**This article originally appeared on the CEH website*

Some threatened UK butterfly species are showing signs of recovery despite an overall decline, annual records have shown.

The results from the annual UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) show that after three good years in a row, 2021 was a below average year for these insects in this country, and the worst since 2017. The scheme is led by Butterfly Conservation, the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

Following one of the coldest and wettest Mays on record, many common species did poorly in 2021, including Green-veined White, Large White, Large Skipper, Small Skipper and Common Blue. Even some widespread species that have shown long-term increases fared badly last year, with the Ringlet recording its lowest numbers since 2012.

Many species still show major long-term decline such as White Admiral, which recorded its third worst year since 1976 at monitored sites.

However, despite the context of general decline, there were some promising results for a number of threatened species. The endangered Heath Fritillary, which has been the focus of long-term intensive conservation efforts in Kent, Essex and Somerset had a good year and has now increased 112 per cent at monitored sites over the last decade.

It was also a good year for the Silver-studded Blue, classed as 'vulnerable' in Britain, whose numbers have increased 70 per cent since the 1970s due to conservation work on its heathland and grassland habitats.

Dr Marc Botham, Butterfly Ecologist at UKCEH, says: "*Despite 2021 continuing to be a challenging year for data gathering and conservation activity, we received 476,000 records from more than 2,900 sites over the year, including a record number of standard transects.*

"*We are incredibly grateful to the thousands of volunteers who were able to carry out monitoring and maintain this invaluable long-term dataset. This enables scientists to measure how butterflies are faring as well as assessing the health of our countryside generally. The UKBMS data are vital in assessing the effectiveness of government policies and progress towards the UK's biodiversity targets.*"

Butterfly populations fluctuate naturally from year to year, but the long-term trends are mainly driven by human activity, particularly deterioration of habitats due to land management and pollution, as well as climate change. The UKBMS data helps conservationists target habitat restoration to support species that are under threat.

Dr Richard Fox of Butterfly Conservation says: "*We're delighted to be seeing some positive signs for species such as the Heath Fritillary, especially when the general*

long-term picture for UK butterflies is one of great decline. It reinforces the importance of managing and restoring habitat in a way that supports the survival of our butterflies."

The UKBMS, which has been running since 1976, involves weekly counts of butterflies between April and September on defined transects at locations across the UK.

Sarah Harris of the British Trust for Ornithology, whose volunteers are among those who collect data, says: "*The information gleaned from the UKBMS data is not just used to help understand and conserve butterflies, but also to help understand and protect the wider ecosystem on which so many birds, mammals and other species rely.*"

The 2021 data from the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme is available at UKBMS.org/official-statistics.

News Snippets

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

A new society for coleopterists and beetle enthusiasts was launched in February, the Coleopterists Society of Britain and Ireland, or ColSoc for short: www.colsoc.org.

Cook, P.M. et al have created a comprehensive traits database for the butterflies and macro-moths of Great Britain and Ireland. The database covers 968 species in 21 families. Ecological traits fall into four main categories: life cycle ecology and phenology, host plant specificity and characteristics, breeding habitat, and morphological characteristics. Download the dataset here: https://doi.org/10.5285/5b5a13b6-2304-47e3-9c9d-35237d1232c6.

The Insect Collection Managers Group has a new Twitter account @InsectManagers.

The British Arachnological Society are adding to a list of individual pages to aid identification of all those species which are on the current British spider checklist but are not included in the popular 3 volume book 'The Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland' by the late Michael Roberts (published by Harley Books in 1985/7). You can find the new species accounts here: www.britishspiders.org.uk/spiders-not-in-roberts.

British Arachnological Society have also created factsheets for commonly encountered spider species: https://britishspiders.org.uk/factsheets.

Plantlife are again asking the public to survey Cowslip for S-form and L-form flower types: https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/cowslip-survey.

FSC BioLinks and the Cranefly Recording Scheme have teamed up for the Craneflies To Light Project, which aims to improve cranefly recording and research which species are attracted to light: www.fscbiodiversity.uk/blog/craneflies-light-project.

SEWBReC has collated a new webpage collating free online identification resources for all species groups: http://www.sewbrec.org.uk/recorder-resources.

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

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