



NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING



NFBR NEWSLETTER 13 : June 1992

National Federation of Biological Recording Newsletter 13

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Articles for the newsletter should be submitted to the editor, preferably on computer disc, either 5.25 or 3.5 in disc in ASCII format, or Windows Word format on DOS compatible discs, or in ASCII on Unix/Xenix format discs.

Editorial

This issue was originally intended to focus on recording issues relating to the aquatic environment. Unfortunately various promised articles have not been forthcoming and the newsletter has ended up as a less focused publication.

Articles for publication are urgently needed. There are currently no articles awaiting publication. If you have any news, views, reviews or comments please send them to the editor.

Next deadline: 1st September 1992

News

NFBR Conference and AGM.

September, Nottingham University

Who's paying the piper? - who uses and pays for biological information.

Full details of the conference will be circulated later.

Co-ordinating Commission for Biological Recording

Progress Update

From CCBR News March 1992

Since preparing and issuing its statement of Intent in late 1990 the Commission has not been idle. The feedback on this document was broadly favourable.

Encouraged that it was operating on the right lines, CCBR went on to prepare a programme of work based on the Statement. It is very large and will undoubtedly take a few years to complete. In essence it will be a fact finding phase from which CCBR hopes to draw

conclusions as to how next to proceed to promote an integrated, co-ordinated national scheme for biological recording.

The centrepiece of Phase 1 will be a detailed survey based on a questionnaire which it is hoped to send out to about 600 organisations including museums, wildlife trusts, biological societies, conservation groups, local, quasi-governmental and governmental authorities throughout the UK. It will undoubtedly be the biggest enquiry of its kind to be mounted in this country. Inter alia it will seek to enquire what records are held, in what form, for what organisms and for what regions or countries. It will also enquire as to whether and how records are disseminated, what kind of support the organisation has for recording and, of course, what deficiencies are perceived and what is needed to put them right. It will take recipients some time to fill in although in many cases, several pages will probably prove not to be applicable. This reflects, in part, CCBR's desire to gather as wide a range of information as possible and, in part, the large differences between different recorders ranging from single individuals up to government departments, organisations like NERC, or the country conservation agencies. A single form to cover this wide range seemed to be more sensible than a multiplicity of questionnaires.

In addition, information will be sought on the best current and future possibilities for storing, recovering and distributing computerised data, on software packages for recording data and the likely costs of both. CCBR is sensitive to the constraints on available cash that are likely to affect many potential participants in a possible future co-ordinated scheme!

Lastly, in order to be forewarned, advice will be sought on any possible legal problems of storing and disseminating records derived from many different sources. It seems pretty obvious that, if a national organisation comes into being, it will have to face problems of copyright and ownership, even if it is holding

records "in trust". Problems of liability may also arise if it supplies records to other parties.

It is planned to store the huge mass of incoming survey data in a specially designed database. The data will then have to be synthesised and conclusions drawn as to how best to proceed next in the light of the present state of biological recording in Britain. All participants in the survey will get a summary of the findings but a full report will also be available at cost.

To ensure that Phase 1, which we expect to take 12 months from the starting date, would be efficient and effective, CCBR has sought financial support in order to contract out the bulk of the work. Fortunately to date the Department of the Environment, the three country conservation agencies, operating through the JNCC and NERC have recognised the importance of this work and are each making a contribution. It is hoped that other agencies will also assist. A small Board of Management has been set up, including some members of the Commission and representatives of the contributors. It has taken some months to get all this organised but it is expected that the contracts for the work will shortly be agreed. Phase 1 should get underway by the early summer at the latest. It will then be up to the readers of this news and other participants to respond - promptly, we hope!

So there may be an apparent period of quiescence of CCBR until results begin to be available but, by mid 1993 we hope to surface with more ideas for you to consider and advise on.

While planning and organising phase 1 has occupied the majority of CCBR's time, it has through its members and their contacts, kept in touch with other relevant matters. For instance, we have maintained a lively interest in the continuing development of the "Recorder" package. We plan to meet with NFBR many of whose members will be involved in the survey,

and with other interested bodies as our work progresses. We have deliberately kept a fairly low profile until we really had something underway apart from the occasional newsletters. Now seems to be the time to go a little more public so we are preparing some articles to inform a wider audience of what CCBR.

John Burnett Chairman CCBR

RECORDER - User Group

It has been agreed that NFBR should run the RECORDER user group, providing the chair and secretariat. Martin Sandford has been elected to chair the group by NFBR Council. The next meeting is likely to be in October.

RECORDER Project Plan

A project plan for the use and development of RECORDER was produced in January by English Nature in co-operation with JNCC, RSNC and NFBR. An edited version of the plan is reproduced here.

1. Background

The initiation of the RECORDER project was as part of the work programme of the Terrestrial Invertebrate Zoology Branch within the former Nature Conservancy Council. It was developed from the Invertebrate Site Register (ISR) software by Dr Stuart Ball in order to facilitate the storage and exchange of biological records in a standardised way using a common database. RECORDER has been developed as an implementation of "Advanced Revelation", which is used extensively by English Nature, JNCC, CCW and NCCS.

Upon reorganisation of the NCC the RECORDER project came to English Nature, with the project officer (Mr Philip Dutt) working within the Computer Services Branch (CSB). In 1991 it was agreed that the RECORDER project would be transferred to

the Science Directorate, with Mr Dutt remaining the project officer working on support and development. Routine administration will be undertaken by the Science Directorate and management of the project by Dr Ian McLean.

2. Aims of the RECORDER project.

English Nature has the following aims in developing the RECORDER project:

- a. To handle English Nature species information for plants and animals within an efficient database system that allows storage and retrieval of biological records in the context of their associated "who, where and when" data.
- b. To develop a common system for use in English Nature, JNCC, RSNC and other outside organisations (and individuals) to allow exchange of species data in the same format.
- c. To encourage those actively involved in biological recording to contribute their species information relevant to conservation to English Nature.
- d. To facilitate the establishment of an effective biological recording network, in co-operation with RSNC, NFBR, CCB, BRC and other organisations, which will allow the distribution and status of species to be determined more rapidly and more accurately.

3. The future of RECORDER in English Nature

The NCC developed a Coredata module to handle summary species data. However, many science staff in Regions and Headquarters required the more sophisticated features developed in RECORDER and there were requests to make the software more generally available to science staff. It has been concluded that it is in the best interests of developing species conservation within English Nature to

adopt RECORDER as the standard software for use in regions and Headquarters.

4. The future of RECORDER outside English Nature

RECORDER has been recognised by external wildlife conservation and environmental organisations as being the most powerful and versatile software package available to run on PCs for handling biological records. It is endorsed by RSNC and NFBR and has been requested by numerous organisations.

Efficient exchange of information between recording organisations should mean that only one or two submissions of data would be required by a recorder. This would increase the effectiveness of recorders by saving time and money. A network to exchange biological records using RECORDER as the common system would be the best solution commonly available.

5. A pricing policy for RECORDER

Charge bands have been agreed for the sale of RECORDER.

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Band A | Local Records Centres, County Wildlife Trusts, Country Conservation Agencies, other conservation organisations, natural history societies. |
| Band B | Individuals including national recording scheme organisers, county recorders and specialists on particular groups. |
| Band C | Commercial users, environmental consultants, universities and other educational establishments, government agencies, statutory bodies, research institutes and public utilities. |

A category of "secondary users" who will not be supported directly by English Nature is proposed. This will allow Local Records Centre who wish to work closely with a local

network of recorders to support a "secondary user" and ensure that they gather information and enter it onto RECORDER in a way that is compatible with the "primary user".

6. Site licences

Some users will wish to run RECORDER on a Local Area Network (LAN) or on more than one PC at the same location (such as a Local Records Centre). Providing the package is being managed by the same designated system manager at the same site it would seem sensible to allow each Charge Band to cater for use of multiple copies at the same site.

Primary and secondary users

Because one of the aims of the RECORDER project is to establish a biological recording network, an important aspect is to encourage more of the gatherers and users of biological records to collaborate and work together in their biological recording activities. Furthermore as English Nature has limited resources for giving software support, it is important to encourage users to work together in the use of RECORDER and to share solutions in the use of the package. This will be done via establishing a User Group and also it is suggested via creating categories of primary and secondary users.

7. Conditions of support of RECORDER by English Nature

1. Users should notify English Nature of who the designated system manager is. English Nature will only liaise with this staff member.
2. All calls relating to RECORDER shall be directed in the first instance to the administration unit of the Species Branch, Science Directorate.
3. English Nature will only deal with county wildlife trusts if the problem cannot be solved by RSNC Conservation Data Unit.

4. Enquiries relating to the Species file, management of RECORDER, biological recording policy etc. will be dealt with by the Species Branch administration unit.

5. English Nature will not give on-line training to users. Users will be expected to provide their own preliminary training.

6. The PC team in Computer Service Branch will deal with technical problems specific to the RECORDER application. Any other problems relating to AREV will be dealt with by the AREV distributor.

7. Problems relating to hardware, peripherals, other software etc. should be dealt with in the first instance by hardware/software suppliers or in-house computer support.

8. English Nature is not obliged to support modifications that are not sanctioned by the Technical Group or resolve problems occasioned by exchanging data with users with such modifications.

9. Proposed modifications should be sent to the administration unit Species Branch using the request for change form at the back of the recorder manual.

8. Future development of RECORDER

Dr Stuart Ball (JNCC) has been given time in his work programme to continue the development of RECORDER. Mr Philip Dutt (CSB) will continue to have a lead role in RECORDER development and technical support in English Nature. Dr Ball and Mr Dutt will collaborate over developing upgrade that will be needed to improve the specifications of RECORDER or which will be needed for future upgrades and developments of Advanced Revelation.

9. The establishment of a User Group

In order to encourage exchange of information and ideas between RECORDER users and

thereby achieve the aims of the RECORDER project the setting up of an active User Group is a high priority. This should be run outside of English Nature, RSNC and JNCC, though with representatives from these organisations on the steering committee.

10. The formation of a Technical Group

A Technical Group to referee and advise on future development and upgrades for RECORDER should be formed as soon as possible. Members should include Dr S. Ball (JNCC), Mr P. Dutt (EN), Ms S. Hawkswell (RSNC) a User Group representative and an independent outside specialist familiar with Advanced Revelation and biological recording.

Planning News

The government has recently produced a spate of planning policy guidance notes. These cover topics such as Nature Conservation, Tourism, leisure and Hotels, Coastal planning, Marine consultation areas, New housing and Planning and employment. All provide details of the Government's current thinking on each the issue. Their guidance will be closely followed by DoE Inspectors.

Draft PPG on Nature Conservation

The draft makes nature conservation a material consideration for the first time. Development permission can now be refused on nature conservation grounds. The draft also indicates that areas of local importance defined in local plans should be taken into account. Both these statements are major improvements on previous guidance. However there are still considerable omissions and much room for improvement. Council will be drafting a response to DoE. Major omissions are the Government's lack of concern for the wider countryside outside sites of special interest despite the EEC Habitats Directive, the lack of commitment to sustainable development and the absence of guidance to local authorities faced with outstanding planning permission that continue to damage sites of importance, e.g. peat extraction from lowland raised bogs.

Sixteen Marine Conservation Areas have been identified around the coast of England and Wales in the draft PPG on marine consultation areas. All organisations proposing action that would affect wildlife are asked to consult English Nature and CCW. There is no compulsion to follow their advice.

The Sea Fisheries Conservation Bill received assent in March. The act gives greater protection to seabirds and other wildlife. It requires the Government to balance fishing interests with the conservation of the marine environment.

The Transport and Works Act 1992 requires port and harbour authorities to take wildlife into account in their activities. Such authorities now have the powers to take nature conservation initiatives themselves.

News from Record Centres

Countryside Commission funding for survey work in Rotherham

When South Yorkshire County Council was abolished in 1986 the individual Metropolitan Borough Councils took over all responsibilities for their own areas of countryside and, of course, each one did it in a different way. In Rotherham the responsibility was divided up between 4 departments - Planning (for research and strategy), Amenities & Recreation (for implementation), Libraries, Museum & Arts (for information services) and Engineers (for statutory rights of way).

A few years earlier the Amenities & Recreation (A&R) dept. had taken over a reservoir and, with substantial funding from the Countryside Commission (CoCo), had developed it into a country park with an associated countryside management/ranger service. This service was able to respond to the increased opportunities which abolition provided and which CoCo assisted financially. The CoCo officers at that time did not consider that gathering information on the areas of countryside which were being managed and to which increasing numbers of visitors were being attracted was relevant to this activity and would not consider providing funding for such work. This attitude has now changed (as have the CoCo officers responsible) and during 1991-2 CoCo has provided funding for baseline surveys of some areas for which it is funding development work.

The rule that HMG grants to local authorities must be met by an appropriate local contribution (in this case 50%) is a problem for a museum/records centre which does not have

a fund for meeting this share. I was able to generate a small amount of money and this helped. However, the CoCo officers were willing to accept 'payment in kind', in which the records centre staff undertook survey work on land managed by A&R and the time involved (including laboratory and office work) counted towards our 50%. This has caused a significant shift in our work pattern away from collating the large pile of data which is steadily accumulating and towards undertaking additional fieldwork to add to the ever-growing backlog.

There are obvious problems in this course of action but I feel that the 'political' advantages of taking an active part in a corporate activity such as this are worth the extra hassle.

CoCo's money has mainly been spent on commissioning work from a small number of local experts. A Common Bird Census was conducted by members of the Rotherham & District Ornithological Society, while vegetation surveys and photographic surveys were undertaken by a local botanist. The results were presented as coloured habitat maps and coloured photographs mounted on sheets containing descriptions of the sites, the photography and the location and orientation of the photographer. These very visual and attractive products are easy for land managers (and CoCo officers) to understand, can be used in displays to advertise the survey and management work and complement the more factual data that are the backbone of a records centre's work.

*For further information contact Bill Ely,
Clifton Park Museum, Clifton Lane,
Rotherham, South Yorkshire*

(A very tasteful pamphlet "Piecing together the jigsaw" has been produced to accompany the Countryside Study. Ed)

GIS for Environmental Data Handling Flexibility

Within an urban context, natural and semi-natural areas are under increasing pressure from development, recreation and in some cases dereliction, even though some sites may be of considerable ecological value. Conservation of such sites requires management relevant information. Southampton City Council recognised their lack of such consistent data in the first phases in implementing a Nature Conservation Strategy.

The GeoData Institute of the University of Southampton was commissioned by Southampton City Council to devise a co-ordinated information system for nature conservation. Existing survey had been conducted without a standard recording format, with no repository for the data, and with no effective way of using the results systematically in assisting with management or maintenance of sites.

Problems in building an environmental database for the City had to be overcome, to provide a system that would be both flexible and expandable. Specific requirements to provide information at a scale relevant to management and development of a nature conservation strategy for the City precluded a merely grid-based system. However, it was seen as important that the survey matched national standards, where possible. This was especially important as the City was already exploring Geographic Information Systems (GIS), but was not, at that stage, ready to implement a complete GIS strategy. Thus a survey framework was created that allowed rapid implementation within a GIS at a later date.

The survey structure consisted of a habitat scale biological recording format. Detailed floral presence and abundance figures were collected on the basis of relevés, (using an area of typical homogeneous vegetation) within each habitat. Site boundaries were identified by field survey and by aerial photographic interpretation. This methodology was adopted first for 8 urban stream way habitats (Greenways) as pilot areas, and was extended to nearly 180 other City sites. These habitat units (1150) were subsequently used by all other recorders, including local naturalists, who have added detail on many additional faunal groups. Further point-location based river water quality sampling was undertaken for the Greenway sites and incorporated within the recording format.

Relational database (dBase IV) tables were designed to link the environmental data sets with unique reference codes, locations and general site information that allowed direct transfer from the database to a GIS system. The aim was to provide a system that would provide a public access database within the constraints of conservation of rare species. The database alone has been influential in the development of the Nature Conservation Strategy and has already assisted the City in the planning process.

Subsequently, all the site and habitat boundaries have been digitised within a GIS. This has permitted the data sets to be queried interactively, by location or area, allowing data display in tabular or graphical form. These have been implemented within SPANS (Tydac Technologies - Spatial Analysis System). Such a system also permits rapid analysis of the data to provide reporting at a variety of scales and customised a printed output.

Adoption of the GIS system allows the flexibility to collate the data in a form compatible with grid-based surveys or the query of the data on the basis of a defined zone. Development of the GIS provides both the potential for analysis and redisplay within

such classificatory programmes as Twinspan or Decorana and for classification of the data as NVC classes, although this is often of uncertain use in urban habitats.

The real power of handling data in such a format and specifically within a GIS lies in the ability to combine the site-based survey with other non-standard data, combining the ecological information with non-ecological information. For example, by linking the biological records with Census enumeration district data it has been possible to identify important ecological sites potentially subject to high recreation pressures. Consequently, this type of analysis allows more refined targeting of resources and management effort.

Public involvement has been a key feature of the project and forms an ongoing commitment within the Nature Conservation Strategy. This has been aided by the rapid production of publicity materials and analysis within SPANS, by combining text and graphical output within a computer generated slide shows (implemented on IBM Storyboard). Display materials are now available within two City supported environmental educational and information centres.

Adoption of a sophisticated environmental data handling approach will allow Southampton City to refine its Nature Conservation Strategy.

It will provide:

- rapid update of accessible information for planning decision support and environmental management.
- analysis of the data will allow preparation of ecologically sensitive management regimes and the monitoring of the effectiveness of that management.
- an effective tool for the maintenance of site records and environmental presentation material production.

The objective of promoting development and use of survey within the City requires sustained effort and continued feedback from the public to maintain the impetus of such an advanced recording system. Future developments will look at handling the repeat surveys and providing more sophisticated multimedia display materials via GIS generated graphics. The approach has wide implications in other areas and contexts.

The GeoData Institute is a research and consultancy agency of the University of Southampton specialising in environmental data acquisition, processing and analysis. For further information please contact Chris Hill, GeoData Institute, University of Southampton SO9 5NH Tel: (0703) 583565

Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre

Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre was set up in 1989 through an initiative by Hertfordshire's local authorities. The biological recording function had previously been carried on by the Museum Services at St Albans and North Herts, but funding for the former South Herts Records Centre was withdrawn in 1988 and similar difficulties with the North Herts Centre led to its recording function being withdrawn in 1990. The need for a single county centre had long been felt and the chance was taken to establish an entirely separate organisation and to explore ways in which funding could be ensured by spreading the burden over as many local authorities as possible. The result is a Centre that is funded by the County Planning Department and all but three of the Districts and Boroughs in the County. The Centre employs a current permanent full-time staff of three, along with three other short-term contract or part-time staff and is directed by an officer shared with the County Planning Department. An extra full-time member of staff is planned for the forthcoming year. The projected budget for 1992/93 is over 110,000, which is largely met by local authorities but is supplemented by commercial consultancy fees or charges made to non-contributing local authorities at an hourly rate.

When it was set up, existing data from an incomplete "Phase 1" survey of south Herts was handed over by St Albans Museum, although the computerised aspect of this database has not been operable at HERC. The database held by North Herts Museums was a manually operated card index and file system of sites of known conservation interest and although reasonably extensive and reliable was not a parallel set of data. Marriage of the two has proved difficult! Strong links with the County recording system of the local natural history society have been maintained and so reasonably up-to-date, but presently still manual sets of data on species distribution are

available. The "Recorder" package has been obtained and is operated on a Compaq Deskpro 386/20e computer, although progress on computerisation is painfully slow.

The Centre's role has increasingly become orientated to giving advice on planning issues especially with the development by the County Council of a Countryside Heritage Project which demands detailed knowledge of wildlife sites at the outset. Also, local authorities increasingly need input on ecology for routine planning matters. This has meant a strong orientation towards the needs of the funding authorities. Contact with and support of conservation and other natural history organisations remains very important and so free access to data is ensured for such bodies. Attempts are also made to maintain the information-proving role to other scientific bodies such as Monks Wood. Only in this way can amateur support be ensured, so vital in the provision of data to ongoing survey projects, such as the current Herts Flora Project, which is being organised by one member of staff as County Recorder for the BSBI. However, there are problems. With so many potential demands for information, staff levels until now have not been sufficient to cope both with servicing the demand and maintaining the database, although once the initial phase of establishing the Centre has been completed a more equitable balance between data management and advisory work is envisaged. In particular the former museum centres were more in a position to service the database by specimen verification and through scientific links with other bodies. The major natural science libraries also remain with the museums, although this is partly overcome by the Centre being housed in association with North Herts Museum Service. However, there are moves to get round this problem by expanding the Records Centre to take on a wider role in relation to natural science collections for the County, both documentary and scientific. It has to be recognised that any such move would need the full support of both Museum Services and that appropriate curatorial facilities would

have to be available. Without such a marriage between data and the scientific collections, however, no reliable database is possible.

After three years of effort, the Centre has a good track record of providing advice to those who need to know. The way ahead depends so much on both political will and on promoting the need for reliable data-gathering as a basis for effective conservation among those who control the purse strings.

In many ways the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre has shown that it is possible to fund and support such a service, but experience has also shown that there are pitfalls in moving away from the traditional, museum-based approach to recording the environment. If conservation is to succeed in Hertfordshire, it is evident that the two aspects of Records Centre advisory work and scientifically reliable data go hand-in-hand. The future proposals for a County Heritage Centre, where scientific collections and facilities, together with the Records Centre and offices of other interested organisations, would be brought together, look set to overcome the shortcomings of the current arrangements and promise an effective way of tackling the needs of Hertfordshire's environment into the 21st century.

*For further information contact Trevor James
HERC, Burrymead Rd, Hitchin, Herts.*

Surveys

Herts and Middlesex Otter Habitat Survey

The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust are currently running a project on Otter Habitat sponsored by the NRA and B.T.

Its primary aim is to survey the rivers in Hertfordshire with a view to highlighting areas of quality otter habitat and forwarding enhancement ideas that NRA could undertake to improve habitat for otters. This mainly involves fieldwork and liaising with landowners, however a head start was gained by looking at river corridor surveys and the NCC Rivers and Coast Survey. A valuable additional source of reference has been talking to other local organisations such as the Herts Environmental Records Centre and various departments of Herts County Council.

Fish populations are obviously an integral part of the study since otters are 90% piscivorous. NRA electrofishing surveys of several rivers have been looked at and it is intended that Angling Societies' match records will supplement this data. Hatfield Poly have carried out fisheries research and this will be looked at in the near future.

Water quality has shown to be a critical factor in otter survival so an assessment of this is vital. The "Living Rivers" project gave an initial indication and the NRA has supplied the results of their routine water quality tests along with water quality objectives. Data on heavy metals, pesticide contamination and PCBs is of more direct consequence to otters and is proving more difficult to find. Organisations such as ITE, and F.O.E. have been approached for any information they have and it is clear that more of this type of data is needed. The NRA are shortly starting a programme of fish tissue analysis which will give valuable insight into how these toxic contaminants are building up within the food chain and the likely levels an otter would be liable to ingest.

A project such as this relies on the co-operation of a variety of organisations and individuals to help piece together the complete picture and so far most organisations have been forthcoming. HMWT are continuing the theme of water resources in the "Water for Wildlife" campaign which will promote awareness of water quality, quantity (i.e. low flows) and wetland habitat.

For further information contact Melanie Findlay HMWT Grebe House, St Michael's St, St Albans, Herts AL3 4SN

Scarce Plants Project

This project set up by JNCC, NCC and ITE has been running for some 18 months. It aims to review the status of plants that occur in over 15 10km squares but under 100 10km squares. This is the last summer of the project. There still remain gaps for most species.

Contact David Pearman for further details and a list of plants or see BSBI News 57 April 1991.

Flora Britannica

Flora Britannica is a major project to produce a cultural flora for modern Britain. A survey of those plants which are still important to us at the end of the 20th Century. It aims to encourage a wide ranging popular research programme at a local level and to produce a comprehensive but accessible book incorporating the results. The author is Richard Maybey and the project is being co-ordinated by Common Ground.

The Flora Britannica will record popular plant names, which species are woven, carved or dyed with, places where plants still shape the local landscape and where congregations have been made famous by poets or painters survive.

The first stage is the distribution of a handbook which will guide and inspire people to send in information about species in their area.

It is available from BBC Support Services PO BOX 7 London W3 6XJ.

Lemna minuta and Azolla filiculoides.

Rachel Janes is working on a PhD project researching the biology and spread of these two alien invaders. Any further records from anywhere in the UK and any comments on their occurrence and persistence would be useful.

Contact Rachel Janes, Dept of Environmental and Evolutionary Biology, Nicholson Building, University of Liverpool PO Box 147 Liverpool L69 3BX

Polecats

Records of English Polecats and corpses are required by Johnny Birks, English Nature, Masefield House, Wells Rd, Malvern Wells, Worcs WR14 4PA 0684 560616

BTO Nightjar Survey

The BTO and RSPB are organising the first national survey for 10 years. The aim is to count all the churring males in Britain in 1992. Contact Dave Burges, BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

Training

RECORDER Training

We have designed our courses to be short and intensive. Each participant has a computer to work on and groups are kept small to allow participants to work independently but with input from the tutor when needed. Experience has shown that this is an effective way of providing training.

RECORDER - Basics

This is a modular three day course designed to enable someone with little or no knowledge of computers to run RECORDER efficiently on their stand alone PC.

I Basic computing skills

An introduction to computers and MS-DOS. Also covering health and safety data protection act and data security.

II RECORDER BASICS

Covering RECORDER's structure and files, entering data into all files and some simple menu driven reporting mechanisms. An introduction to R/List and EasyWriter is given providing participants have reached a suitable level.

III RECORDER System Managers

A short course for those who will act as System Managers - explaining the role of the System Manager additional utilities access to AREV's SYSPROG account, creating users and data security.

At the end of the course participants will be given a copy of our Open Learning Pack to enable them to practise what they have learnt.

RECORDER - Advanced

A two day course aimed at those who have some experience working with RECORDER and understand how the database is structured. The main aim is to enable users to manipulate data efficiently and improve their reporting techniques. The course should give you more idea of the potential of RECORDER and AREV and give users confidence in making the best of the system.

The course will cover using Query windows, making TCL work for you, using Merge Templates, Tables and further work with R/List.

RECORDER Basics

30 June - 2 July 1992

6 - 8 October 1992

9 - 11 February 1993

Cost of 250 per person

RECORDER Advanced

9 & 10 June 1992

13 & 14 October 1992

26 & 27 January 1992

Cost of 150 per person

All courses are to be held at RSNC's Lincoln Office and are non-residential, although we will help with finding local accommodation

OPEN LEARNING PACK

Ok - so you've got RECORDER set up on your machine - now what. You've got to learn how to use it. Whilst the manual with the system may explain how to use some of the features it has not been designed as a learning aid. RSNC has written an Open Learning Pack which guides a user through the system following a series of structured lessons. Each followed by a series of exercises to practice what you've learnt. These worksheets are designed to be used with a test database, which you can use alongside your "real data". Once you've learnt the basics the sheets will guide you through some reporting features and give you an insight into some further reporting skills.

The pack consists of :

- A set of worksheets
- Notes for the system manager
- A test data set on floppy disk
- A set of quick reference cards

Whilst not intending to replace a more formal learning course the pack has been particularly successful when used in two circumstances - both by new users who have attended an intensive course and as a training tool for an existing user to train other users with minimum input.

A copy of the open learning pack is given to all those attending the RECORDER Basics course but is also available at a cost of 75.00 plus 4.50 P&P from July 1st 1992.

TRAINING FOR TRAINERS

There is an urgent need for more people to be able to provide training in RECORDER. With this in mind RES will be organising a "Training for Trainers" course in late September 1992 aimed at people who specifically want to train other RECORDER users at any level. The course will aim to cover general training skills as well as those required to train computer users and more specifically RECORDER users. Please let us know if you would be interested in attending such a course.

For further information and booking please write to us at the following address:

RSNC Environmental Services (RECORDER Training)
The Green
Witham Park
Waterside South
Lincoln LN5 7JR

Diary

Systematics and Conservation Evaluation

London 17-19th June. Linnean Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0LQ

Heathland Conference July 8 - 10, Surrey Trust, Surrey County Council and English Nature, contact Planning Dept, Surrey County Council, 081 541 9463.

Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan European meeting August 1992. World Resources Institute, ICUN UN Environment Programme. One session will deal with information.

Progress to meet the Challenge of Environmental Change. International Congress of Ecology, Ecological Manchester 20-26 August 1994. Suggestions for symposia titles are required. details from the Secretary, VI International Congress of Ecology, Dept of Environmental Biology, University of Manchester, M13 9PL.

Hedgerow Management and Nature Conservation, 4-5th September, Wye College. BES Conservation Ecology Group, Dr Trudy Watt, Wye College, University of London, Wye, Ashford, Kent TN25 5AH

Water for Wildlife Symposium, 5-6th September. Wiltshire Trust, Details from 0380 725670

Otter Conference, 14-15th September, Contact, Patti Tudor, Kartupelis Associates, 0223 421145

26-27th September British Bryological Society AGM and Symposium Meeting. Dr David Streeter, Sussex House, Falmer, Brighton, Sussex BN1 9RH

Publications

As many Record Centres are increasingly involved with planning, this newsletter looks at some of sources of information on environmental planning issues and activities.

A good list of planning related publications, including items on environmental assessment, habitat management etc. is available from The Planning Bookshop, TCPA, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AS
Tel 071 930 8903

Journals and Bulletins

Journal of Environmental Planning and Management

Published twice yearly the journal cover issues of environmental policy, planning, management, land use, impact assessment, audits, conservation etc.

Carfax Publishing Co PO Box 25 Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 3UE Subscription rate 68.00, Personal 28.00

Planning and Environmental Law Bulletin

10 issues per year, giving updates on changes in planning and environmental legislation.

Longman Law, Tax & Finance, 21-27 Lamb's Conduit Street, London WC1N 3BR

Planning Bulletin

Giving weekly news on planning issues with frequent coverage of environmental and countryside issues.

TCPA, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AS. Subscription 48.00

Planning

A weekly journal with a regular feature on conservation and much news on environmental planning issues and activities.

Ambit Publications, Suite 1 Fullers Court, 40 Lower Quay St, Gloucester GL1 2LW.

Recent Reports

Losing Ground - Leaving the Stone Age - RSNC, The Green Witham Park, Waterside South, Lincoln LN5 7RJ

Report on the threat posed to the countryside and coastline by mineral extraction activities.

Natural Solutions for Derelict Land.

Information on D.o.E derelict land grant for nature conservation projects.
Programmes Dept, RSNC.

Future Forestry - A new direction for Forestry Policy, Wildlife Link, 246 Lavender Hill, London SW11 1LN

General Publications

The Northwest European pollen flora. vol 6
Edited by W. Punt & S. Blackmore Elsevier, 1991.

British Plant Communities - Volume 2 Mires and Heaths J.S. Rowell Ed, 1991, ISBN 0521235588, £95.00.

The second of five volumes forming the National Vegetation Classification. The publication includes community descriptions, a dichotomous key of types, distribution maps and sections on physionomy and habitat dynamics.

Ecology and Management of Coppice Woodlands, G. P. Buckley, 1992, Chapman Hall, ISBN 0 412 43110 6, 35.00

The Ecology of Urban Habitats, O Gilbert, 1991, Chapman Hall, ISBN 0412 45500 5, 17.95

Water Quality Assessments, a guide to the use of biota, sediments in environmental monitoring, D. Chapman Ed, 1992, Chapman Hall ISBN 0 412 44840 8.

British Red Data Books: 3. Invertebrates and other insects. J. Bratton, Publications Branch, JNCC, Monkstone House, City Rd, Peterborough PE1 1JY, 8.00.

Spiders: An illustrated Guide, R Preston-Mafham, Blandford, 16.95.

Weevils: Naturalists' Handbooks, M.G. Morris, Richmond Publishing, 13.00 hb, 7.95 pb.

Software

Flora - the computerised key to 786 species of British wild plants has been updated. It is now smaller, more flexible, faster and menu driven. A Windows 3 version is under development. It is produced by the Flora Project, Seale Hayne Faculty, Polytechnic South West, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 6NQ.

Reviews

New Flora of the British Isles. C.A. Stace
1992 Cambridge University Press ISBN 0521
42793 2

Stace has produced a comprehensive new flora. It provides a number of new features that were not included in previous floras. In particular it includes details of many trees, shrubs and herbs found in the wild in the British Isles that have been omitted from previous floras due to their introduced status.

The flora provides identification keys mainly as conventional keys with a choice between alternatives, but also multi-access keys where necessary. Drawings are frequently provided for diagnostic features, which make the text much clearer. Generally these are of good quality.

The keys are usable though the layout is a little confusing. There are no line spaces between the key couplets, making the text hard to read and follow. Occasionally new sections begin at the last line of a page.

The nomenclature is up to date, but new names are introduced with no explanation. The revised check list using the new nomenclature is not yet available. Once this has been produced the flora will be much more usable.

Rare species which should not be collected or damaged are clearly marked.

Overall the new flora looks as if though it will become the successor to "CTW". The keys, coupled with the drawings are usable and the inclusion of introduced species is a major improvement on its predecessors.