NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING

NEWSLETTER No. 15

October 1993

National Federation of Biological Recording Newsletter 15
Incorporating Recorder User Group News

CONTENTS

NFBR contacts 2
Report on NFBR AGM 1993 3
Constitution 4
Notice of NFBR Annual conference and AGM 1994 5
Report of meeting of CCBR, NFBR and Institute of Biology 6
Wildlife Link 8

RECORDER User Group

Report on RECORDER User Group meeting 13th July 1993 9
Report on RECORDER User Group meeting 20th April 1993 10
Notice of RECORDER User Group Meeting April 18th 1994 13
RECORDER Bulletin 13
Aunty Stuart's Recorder Problem Page 14
RECORDER Support Experience 18
RECORDER Support 20

Articles

Data processing using optical scanning and character recognition software. 21

Publications

Reviews 23
Natural Assets : Non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation 23
Endangered Wildlife in Dorset 23

Surveys 25

Diary 25

National Federation for Biological Recording

Officers

Chairman

Bill Ely
Keeper of Natural Sciences
Clifton Park Museum
Clifton Lane
Rotherham
South Yorkshire

Secretary

Marie Moreau
69 Mill Lane
Greenfield
Flitwick
Beds
0525 713719

Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Charles Copp
8 The Paddock
Cleevdon
Bristol
Avon BS21 6JU

Editor

Phil Collins
8 Angell's Meadow
Ashwell
Baldock
Herts SG7 5QS
0462742049

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. The deadline for the next newsletter is 1st March 1994.

News

NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING AGM

Minutes of the Seventh Annual General Meeting held at the Cornwall Environmental Records Centre, Cambourne at 5.00pm on 29th July 1993 during the NFBR Conference.

There was some question as to whether the AGM was quorate. However it clearly states in the constitution that one fifth of the members are required for a quorum and membership is clearly defined. If the constitution is adhered to then indeed one fifth of the members were present. It may be that as membership increases an amendment to the constitution will be needed accepting a smaller proportion of members to make up a quorum.

1. Apologies for absence were received from P.Harding, M.Sanford, S.Haweswell, N.Court, P.Collins and A.Tait.

2. There were no amendments to the minutes of the 6th AGM. C.French therefore proposed that the minutes be accepted without amendment. S.Ball seconded the motion which was carried unanimously.

3. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the 6th AGM.

4. The Chairman's report for 1992-1993 was given. Herein follows a summary of that report. The proceedings of the 1991 Conference will be published by the British Entomological and Natural History Society very soon. NFBR will purchase from them the copies required to distribute to delegates who were present at that conference. There have been three meetings of Council in the ten months since the last AGM. Following the decision at the last AGM the Recorder User Group has been formed under the wing of NFBR. It has been active in pressing for satisfactory support and development of Recorder and has organised two very successful meetings for Recorder Users. A third meeting is to be held the day following this AGM. News of the Recorder User Group regularly appears in the NFBR newsletter.

   At the last AGM the data collection stage of the CCBR Programme was launched. C.Copp has contacted approximately 600 organisations. He has 320 responses (53%). One third of Wildlife Trusts and Record Centres have not responded, two thirds of County Planning Departments have not responded. After two or three contacts many of these have said they do not have the resources with which to respond. Data is still coming in and C.Copp has just one month left to compile the report. The report has assumed a greater significance in that it is a factor in the UK's ability to respond to the Biodiversity Convention (Rio Summit). The data has shown that there are about 1500 taxonomic based data sets and 400 site based data sets in the UK; this amounts to 50 million taxonomic sitings and about 1 million sites. A draft report will be produced by the end of August and subsequent to this NFBR members will have an opportunity to meet with CCBR and discuss that report and what the next stage will be. The final report will be completed in November. NFBR intend that the best practices should be drawn out of the report and, using these as a basis, a set of standards should be produced. Production of a detailed set of codes of practice should be included in stage II of the CCBR Programme. NFBR will press for the implementation stage of the programme to be given resources. NFBR will suggest that they develop a handbook on standards for biological

recording for use by all recorders and that CCBR should press DoE for the funds to produce this. Following the Rio Summit each government agreed to produce a biodiversity action plan. The UK government said that the UK's action plan would be ready at the end of 1993. The draft framework for this action plan appears in the last (April) edition of the NFBR newsletter on page 20. Comments should be sent to JNCC. W.Ely has sent a written response on behalf of NFBR. A seminar was held in May in London. Four working groups have been set up dealing with Conservation, Data, Public Involvement and Sustainability. A draft Action Plan will be produced in January; it is hoped that this will not be a final document since it is likely that it will need some amendment.

5. C.Copp distributed the accounts and balance sheet and explained these. He has not yet had time to investigate moving NFBR accounts to an alternative bank or building society. The accounts will be sent to the auditor and will also appear in the NFBR newsletter.

6. A. Tait is standing down from Council and has expressed a wish that he does not wish to be co-opted. S.Ball must also stand down but has expressed a willingness to be co-opted. The remaining current Council members are: W.Ely (Chairman), M.Moreau (Secretary and Recorder User Group Secretary), P.Collins (Newsletter Editor), C.Copp (Treasurer and Membership Secretary), P.Harding, C.French, M.Sanford and N.Court. All were willing to stand again. In addition J.Stafford was nominated by M.Sanford and seconded by M.Moreau and A.Spalding was nominated by M.Moreau and seconded by W.Ely. These proposed Council Members each bring to NFBR a wealth of experience and expertise in recording issues. The total number of Council members and nominees willing to stand amounts to ten and so they were all elected unanimously and unopposed en bloc - proposer R.Key and seconder P.Tomsett. S.Hawkeswell will again be co-opted onto Council as the RSNC representative.

7. A.Tait has indicated that the auditor elected last year will be willing to continue. W.Ely proposed therefore that Miss Rushton, District Auditor for West Sussex Council should audit NFBR Accounts for the coming year. This proposal was seconded by M.Moreau and passed unanimously.

8. The amendments to the NFBR Constitution had been circulated to all NFBR members via the newsletter with appropriate notice of the proposal to accept these at the NFBR AGM. W.Ely proposed the motion that these amendments should be accepted without further alteration and M.Moreau seconded this motion which was then carried unanimously by the meeting.

9. S.Turk suggested that a longer period of notice for the next NFBR conference should be given in order to attract more NFBR members than had been present at this conference. This point was generally agreed. For the next conference NFBR has an offer of a venue (Loughborough) with appropriate organisation and administration included in the cost. The theme for the conference and a programme of speakers should be decided upon by Council at an early stage.

There being no further business the AGM was closed.

Constitution

Copies of the NFBR revised Constitution are available from M. Moreau, NFBR Secretary, 69 Mill Lane, Greenfield, Beds MK45 5DG.

NOTICE

NFBR ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM 1994

Preliminary details of next year's conference are as follows:

Venue: International Centre of Landscape Ecology, LoughboroughUniversity, Leicestershire.

Dates: 18th & 19th July, 1994

Theme: 'Action on Biodiversity - legislation, standards andpolicies in biological recording.'

It is anticipated that there will be a mixture ofpresentations on the implications of global, continental andnational initiatives on the conservation of biodiversity and of workshop sessions following on from the CCBR report and dealing with policies and standards for local records centresin meeting these implications. The Federation AGM and a Recorder User Group meeting will take place during the conference.

Preliminary plans are to start at 11.00 on the 18th and finish by 17.00 on the 19th, so that most delegates would need to spend only one night away.

Costs: a one-day ticket, to include attendance at conference,tea/coffee & biscuits in the morning and afternoon sessions, lunch and a copy of the conference proceedings @ £35.

A two-day ticket, to include attendance at conference, tea/coffee & biscuits in the morning and afternoon sessions, lunch and a copy of the conference proceedings @ £50

Additional evening meal for either of the above options @ £12.

A full ticket, to include attendance at conference, tea/coffee & biscuits in the morning and afternoon sessions, lunch, one overnight accommodation, one evening meal and a copy of the conference proceedings @ £80.

JOINT MEETING of NFBR & CCBR, INSTITUTE of BIOLOGY, 5thOctober

11 NFBR members joined the Council members to hear a report onprogress with the CCBR programme and to discuss the ways in which it could develop. Sir John Burnett began proceedings by explaining that the survey conducted over the last year had been in response to the growing awareness of data needs by avariety of users. In the event, the amount of information received via the questionnaires had greatly exceeded expectations and the compilation and analysis had taken longer than anticipated. However, as it was apparent that the value of the results would be correspondingly greater, the sponsors of the survey (DoE, JNCC & NERC) were likely to agree to an extension of the contract and the final product was now expected to be complete in February 1994. As an aside, he mentioned that about 30 box files of supporting documents and literature had been amassed in addition to the questionnaire returns!

Charles Copp described the methods and results of the survey.Out of 600 questionnaires sent out he had received 350 back(c58%, which is very high for this type of survey) and he and Paul Harding had undertaken some site visits in addition. Badger groups showed a 100% return but most other users were around the 50% mark. This included local records centres, which is a bit of a shocker since these are the organisations which, it is hoped, will benefit most from an increasing public awareness of the present unsatisfactory condition.Charles felt that even such a negative result was valuable asit pointed up the inadequate resources if LRCs lacked the staff to complete the questionnaires. In total some 200,000 bits of data had been received, indicating that some 1240 taxonomic datasets, representing 50 million species records, and 450 habitat/landuse datasets, representing 3 million records, were being held somewhere by someone. He then showed distribution maps of the locations of badger groups, LRCs,etc., and the structure of the database that had been built to accommodate the data.

Paul Harding then gave examples of some of the analyses that had been undertaken on the data. 60% of all species records are bird records, 29% of all species records have been contributed by volunteers (97% of bird records), while 29% of habitat/landuse datasets have been generated by in-house staff. There is a strong bias towards modern data (60% of species records and 80% of habitat/landuse records are post-1980) though a few organisations do have large amounts of historical data. In terms of habitat mapping, 21% of respondents use no system at all, 20% use the RSNC/NCC landuse categories and 17% use Phase I (these are very similar, giving a total of 37%) while 37% have re-invented the wheel and developed their own (presumably incompatible) systems.Only 17% used GIS systems, 38% used other computer mapping systems and 45% relied totally on paper maps. Respondents had been very coy (or very ignorant) when it came to releasing financial information but, as a guestimate, Paul felt that it would cost c£15K to equip a LRC and c130K/annum to run it, a national network of 70 centres would cost c£1.05M to set up and c£9.1M/annum to operate. In addition, a small nationalco-ordinating body would cost c£3.2K/LRC/annum (c£224K/annum for all 70).

Sir John Burnett then pondered on the future. Since CCBR was formed and set the survey in motion a number of things have happened which way assist matters - the PM signed the Biodiversity Convention and declared that the UK would produce its Biodiversity Action Plan by this Christmas, for instance, but no money had been allocated to this process. He summarised the situation in the following ways:

1. There is no responsibility for anyone to look after or make available the 50 million species records and 3 million habitat/landuse records.

2. There is no co-ordination of biological recording (no register of LRCs or datasets, no promotion or integration, no data networks and no training programmes).

3. There are no national data standards.

4. There is no national accreditation standard or procedure.

5. There are no data exchange protocols.

6. There is no international agreement on any of theabove.

The final report will be the property of the sponsors and it will be their prerogative, not CCBR's, to decide what to include and what to exclude from the published version.

In the discussion which followed a few points were agreed -

1. Biological recording (locally and nationally) depends totally on a small number of key individuals and would collapse without their efforts.

2. The proportion of money spent on biological recordingis minute even in comparison with that spent on natureconservation (well under 1%).

3. Until biological recording has a statutory footing it will not be taken sufficiently seriously by funding bodies.The imminent re-organisation of local government is unlikely to have any beneficial effect on this.

4. There is a need for a central co-ordinating body, even if it simply fulfils the role of promoter to government departments.

5. It is important for user demands to be taken seriously by data holders.

The process of formulating proposals for the future has not stopped, and will not stop when the CCBR report is presented in February. If you have any comments on the way that CCBRshould use the results of the survey and analyses in order to strengthen the case for increased support of biological recording then please send them to me.

Bill Ely

WILDLIFE LINK

The subscription to Wildlife Link has increased quite markedly this year and, in order to justify the expense, we are now receiving more information. Among the latest batch are copies of three articles:

"GIS and the environment: what's really happening?" by Rob Atkinson of FoE.

If you want a copy then send me a large s.a.e. and 30p in stamps (or some other negotiable currency).

"Freedom of access to information on the environment. Implementation of the new regulations." If you want a copy then send a request to R.S. Baxter, Environment Protection Central Division, Room A135, DoE (tel. 071 276 8131).

"Developing large environmental databases for sustainable development." If you want a copy then send me a large s.a.e.and 90p in stamps.

RECORDER USER GROUP

Report of the meeting held on Friday, 30th July, at the NFBR 1993 Conference in Cambourne, Cornwall

1. M.Moreau welcomed the participants to the Recorder User Group meeting and explained the purposes of the Recorder User Group. She emphasised that it is important that Recorder users or those interested in Recorder let NFBR know what their needs are and what problems they may be experiencing. NFBR act as a forum for exchange of ideas in their newsletter so if you have any problems or needs please write to NFBR so that they may be taken to the Recorder User Group Steering Committee which meets with the managers and developers of Recorder. NFBR will ensure that your requirements are considered. She further explained that this meeting was designed primarily for those who have not yet had the opportunity to come to previous Recorder User Group meetings in other parts of the country. She then handed the proceedings over to S.Ball who developed the Recorder application.

2. S.Ball described Recorder and the relationship of its various versions running on various versions of ARev. He talked about the checklists that already been put onto Recorder and those taxa which will be added in future. The first available version of Recorder, 1.12, ran on Arev version 1. Versions 2, 2.12, 3 and 3.1 of Recorder also run on Arev 1. The current version of Recorder is 3.1 and runs on versions 1 and 2 of Arev. When first tried on Arev version 3 it crashed. Over a period of time English Nature/JNCC will stop supporting earlier versions of Recorder and all future versions will run on Arev version 3.1. The user will need a PC 386 or 486, preferably with a hard disk size 80Mb or more, a copy of Arev and a copy of Recorder. However, in future, English Nature is hoping to purchase a runtime deployment kit. They will then distribute Recorder complete with Arev. This will mean the developers can stop 'chasing' new Arev versions. The upgrade from Arev 2 to Arev 3 is approximately £100. There is now available Recorder version 3.1 which runs on Arev 3.0. S.Ball is working on a new Recorder version 3.2 which will upgrade all versions so far on all Arev versions. Subsequent to this there will be a transfer package for all to run on Arev 3 and support for earlier Arev versions will be dropped. Later, in 1994, Recorder version 4 will incorporate improved security, more entry screens and the facility to merge data from one copy of Recorder to another.

3. The Countryside Agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are now all involved in the Recorder project. English Nature are now fully committed to Recorder. R.Key then updated the meeting on the current arrangements for Recorder support. S.Hawkswell at RSNC cannot continue to supply support; until further notice it is supplied by The Surrey Wildlife Trust, School Lane, Pirbright, Surrey GU24 0JN Phone 0483-488055 Fax 0483-486505 In the future it is hoped that a unit will be set up to support Recorder and CMS. It is likely that the Recorder sites file will become the sites file that CMS uses.

4. S.Ball then demonstrated the Arev 3 version of Recorder version 3.1.

5. Finally some questions were put to the advisory panel which consisted of Stuart Ball and Tony Price.

The meeting closed at 5.00pm.

RECORDER USER GROUP

Report of the meeting held on 20th April 1993 at Shire Hall in Berkshire.

Martin Sanford briefly introduced the proceedings and introduced Paula Cox and Duncan MacKay who generously hosted the meeting and provided the venue. Duncan MacKay gave an initial address explaining the new format of Berkshire County Council's Planning Department; Berkshire is the first local authority to privatise functions of its planning department. He also talked about ecologically important sites and the designation of Wildlife Heritage Sites which are in the tier below SSSIs in Berkshire.

The order of proceedings was then altered slightly due to traffic problems delaying the speakers. Questions were put to the Advisory Panel. Tony Price, who sits on the Technical Subgroup of the Recorder User Group, joined the panel of advisors.

The first question raised concerned the need to sometimes record the known absence of certain species. This is difficult but TP explained how to use a separate file which could then be dealt with separately from the major data set.

On the screen entries for entering quick species lists for one visit single entries only are acceptable in the status field, for example a bird's status cannot be male and vocalising - only one of these may be chosen. The problem does not occur when entering Records but this can be laborious for a long list of species.

If any Recorder User finds any satisfactory solutions to problems or produces any utilities that may be of use to other Users he/she should send the utility/instructions to a central clearing house for checking. At present the Technical Subgroup acts as the clearing house; initially Sara Hawkswell or Stuart Ball should be contacted.

As the amount of data held on Recorder is increased processes take up longer amounts of time. If partitioning of the hard disc is necessary it is advisable to have as large a partition as possible for the Recorder files. Also a maths co-processor aids speed greatly. It is wise when initially purchasing the hardware to specify the large amount of RAM needed; this is more economic in the long term.

Ian MacLean from English Nature updated the group on Recorder software support. For an interim period to 18th June support for all users will be provided from the RSNC offices in Lincoln, telephone 0522-544400. Subsequently support for Recorder and other ARev biological and conservation databases will be linked. Expertise available for support will also be used to update and review the documentation. All users will be sent a circular detailing this information. Recorder and CMS will remain separate packages but there may be closer links between them. The bodies involved with species recording are generally well integrated with regard to decisions about Recorder. The questionnaire responses describing Recorder drawbacks and glitches was very useful. An inter agency project board comprising the bodies formed from the old NCC has been set up; the board will link in with RSNC who will remain as partners in the project. Recorder is increasingly being taken up; Scottish Natural Heritage now have 20 copies.

The floor was then opened for questions.

Bill Butcher questioned whether the site parts of Recorder will be hived off to CMS. S.Ball said this would not happen. The site file structure for Recorder may well be copied to CMS which currently has rather depauperate site information.

Stuart Ball then updated Recorder Users on the software itself. A brief circular was handed out which will be sent to all users or published in the NFBR/RUG newsletter. The aforementioned questionnaires raised a number of questions. Some of these can be answered by the user himself reading the manual. S.Ball recommended reading the manual as a good initial approach. In addition he has written some useful information which will appear in the subsequent newsletter. Prof. Stace is involved in the database subcommittee of BSBI; he has indicated that a plants machine readable list will be available very soon. S.Ball will pursue this and put it in an update later this year. S. Hawkeswell has obtained checklists of NVC codes which she has passed on to several Wildlife Trusts. Some communities are missing and there are several mistakes which came from the original Lancaster Match Programme. S.Ball will send out a corrected version on the next update. Other species lists will also go out in the next update.

S.Ball then explained and demonstrated the new version of Recorder under ARev 3. Installation discs for this version of Recorder are now available for those who purchase ARev 3. Later this year an update will be made available for all ARev versions, i.e. there will be two upgrades available: one for version 3. and one for versions 1.15 to 2.12. After the beginning of 1994, for any major upgrades of Recorder, users will need to update their ARev database packages. The current (April '93) costs for this are £132 for a single user, £308 for multi users and £25 for updating a runtime version. The new version has many advantages including improved security and improved reporting facilities.

Plot 5 has been improved and plotter commands can now be sent to a file so maps can be included in word processed documents.

There followed a lunchbreak. Our hosts had provided an extremely delicious lunch which accompanied informal exchanges of information and solutions to problems. After lunch Martin Sanford gave a talk describing how his Local Record Centre which is broadly species based got started with Recorder. He linked it to DMap and has subsequently produced a number of publications. When the Bird Recorder for Suffolk retired it was soon realised that the enormous amount of data needed to be sorted required a database with Recorder's facilities. M.Sanford found that Recorder was excellent for bird data with a few minor provisos, e.g. "male" and "singing" cannot both be entered in the status field on the rapid entry screens, "singing" therefore could be put in the comment field. It is a wise idea to anticipate future hardware requirements rather than current requirements when purchasing hardware so that for example large enough hard discs, large enough RAM and an adequate speed of machine for searches is obtained initially. This has long term purchasing economy as well saving staff time which is likely to be the most expensive part of running a biological records database.

Following this talk more questions were put to the advisory panel. An important issue was raised - that the smaller user may not be able to afford to upgrade ARev on a fairly regular basis. The advantages of "chasing the technology" versus the advantages of stabilising a national standard for a biological recording database were discussed. For the upgrade to ARev 3 the possibilities of grant aiding small users was discussed. English Nature will endeavour to keep costs as low as possible. There will be no charge for the Recorder upgrades other than perhaps for materials (discs, postage and packing). It must be remembered that time and effort in updating Recorder is provided free of charge by English Nature and JNCC. S.Ball then explained how the upgrade would be done. No

user is obliged to upgrade, but users should realise that future support for old versions is likely to eventually be provided at a cost. Most of the problems with old versions, however, are likely to be sorted out during the users first two years of use so it may be that subsequent support is rarely required. After the upgrade to ARev 3 it is likely that most users will not need more than a runtime version for running and reporting from Recorder; the runtime version and its upgrades are very inexpensive.

The abolition of parishes in some districts as unitary authorities are formed has worried some users. Generally this should not cause problems since biological recording is broadly based on vice counties.

A site selection screen is needed in Recorder with much the same sort of facilities as the records selection screen. S.Hawkeswell said this requirement was a major priority for the Wildlife Trusts. B.Butcher stated there are various high priority needs. It is essential that the next upgrade of Recorder meets these needs. The three major requirements are site selection (site searches), reporting and data transfer between packages. S.Ball will put a note in the newsletter on carrying out site searches.

After the coffee break Alan Morton and Mike Thurner gave an enlightening demonstration of their DMap package and its linkage to Recorder.

At 5 o'clock M.Sanford thanked Paula Cox and Duncan MacKay, made announcements regarding the next Recorder meeting at the NFBR conference (28th July), asked for Recorder users to send their nominations to NFBR Council and brought the meeting to a close.

Recorder User Group Meeting
April 18th 1994
Hancock Museum, Newcastle
10.00 am - 5.00 pm

The agenda for this meeting will include:-

in the morning:-

- an introduction for new/potential users
- a talk from Stuart Ball on progress with future upgrades (including data transfer routines).
- a question and answer problem solving session (please bring along any problems with Recorder).

in the afternoon:-

- a talk on national recording schemes and relations with Recorder.
- examples of dispersed systems (local networks) using Recorder with 'satellite' secondary users.
- a discussion session for AOB.

Further details of this meeting will be included the bulletin mention below. If you do not receive the bulletin (or lose it!) details can be obtained from the User Group Chairman:-

Martin Sanford, Suffolk B.R.C., Ipswich Museum, High St, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 3QH.

Recorder Bulletin

All Recorder users please note there will be a bulletin sent out in the near future giving details of the next upgrade (3.2), this will be distributed as a 'Runtime' version licensed by English Nature early in 1994. Users and potential users are therefore advised not to by or upgrade to ARev 3 unless they are using ARev for other programs than Recorder. The new upgrade includes several significant improvements to the Species file and to the functioning of the program.

Aunty Stuart's Recorder Problem Page

Some more tips and solutions to problems raised at User Group meetings or in letters and calls I have received.

Moving about in popups

- To go to a specific line, type Ctrl-G and you will be prompted for a line number - the cursor will be positioned on that line. If the line number you enter is larger than the number of lines in the popup, then the cursor will be positioned on the last line.

- To find a specific item, type Ctrl-F and you will be prompted for the value to find. A search will be made for the first occurrence of whatever string you type and the cursor will be positioned on the line containing it. Subsequently, typing Ctrl-F*<enter>* will move the cursor to the next occurrence. A similar effect can be achieved just by typing the value you want to find and pressing *<enter>*, ***but this will only search the first column of the popup***.

Moving about in long lists

If you are entering a long species list, for example, moving about within it can take some time.

- Ensure that the editor is on (Press F4 until the status line shows Edit Ovr or Edit Ins at the bottom left-hand corner of the screen) and then PgUp and PgDn will move the cursor a screen-full of lines at a time.

- Ctrl-G works as noted above. Ctrl-G *999 <enter>* (or some large number, larger than the number of lines in the list) is a useful way of getting to the last line in the list and Ctrl-G *1 <enter>* will get you back to the start.

- Ctrl-F works, but only searches the column in which the cursor is located.

Vice-counties as vague sites

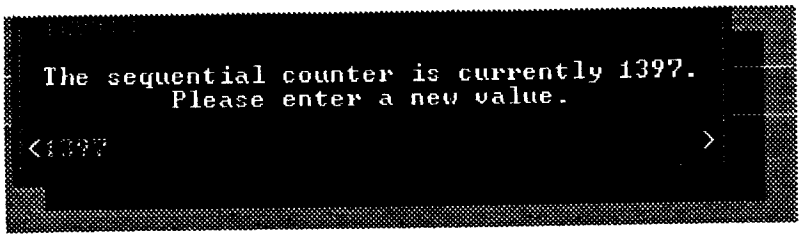
Do you have records which are not attached to a specific site, but you would still like to specify a Vice-county? **Solution**: set up a vague site for the Vice-county and refer to that in your records. To achieve this do the following:

Go to the site entry screen (Add/Edit - Sites) and create a new site with a code consisting of "V" followed by the Vice-county number (e.g. V66). You will find that you are offered the Vice-county's name as a default at the "Site name" prompt and the Vice-county number as a default at the "vice-county" prompt. You only need to fill in the name and the vice-county then save the record (F9). If you have a Durham (VC 66) record which is not attached to a specific site, use "V66" as the site code - it will now be included in any searches and reports using the Vice-county. Vague sites can also be created for counties, districts and parishes (see F-4 in the User Manual).

For the System Manager

Setting the default record number.

Many of Recorder's entry windows maintain a sequential record counter and offer you the next record number as a default. Re-setting the number which will be offered by default is very easy. At the key prompt, press the "=" key. A prompt will appear like this:



The value you enter will become the new default and the sequence of numbers will proceed from that point. Note that, if the value you specify is a record number that has already been used, then accepting the default number will load the existing record rather than start prompting for a new one.

Editing VCOUNTY

The file VCOUNTY contains a record for each 10km square on land in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Vice-county and County information is used in grid reference verification and, if it is incorrect, will cause valid grid refs to be rejected. The records are structured as follows:

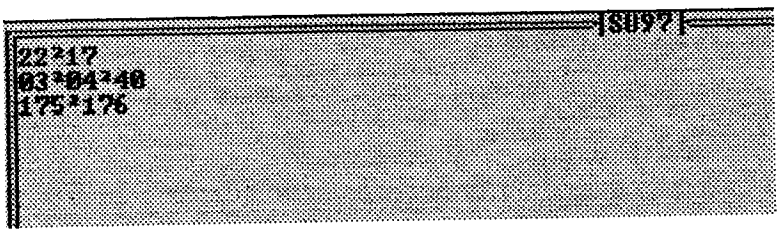
Key:		NZ16	
Fields:	1	66²67	Multivalued list of Vice-county numbers
	2	32²41	Multivalued list of Modern county numbers
	3	88	Multivalued list of OS 1:50,000 sheet numbers

The Vice county information was assembled by hand and the County information from the OS Gazetteer and a number of errors have been found. Recorder does not include an editing window for this file, so changes have to be made manually using Arev's editor. If you find an error please:

- Correct it so that your grid references are accepted.
- Let me know so that the correction can be incorporated in an upgrade.

To correct an error do the following (let us assume that VC 24 has been left out of SU97 - a genuine error):

1 Go to TCL (F5) and issue the command: EDIT VCOUNTY SU97 and you will see Arev's editor screen:



2 Position the cursor at the end of the first line and enter a sub-value mark (²) by holding down the Alt key and typing 253 on the **numeric keypad** then type "24" as normal. The top line should now look like "22²17²24". Save the record (F9) and exit (Esc). Grid references from SU97 and vice-county 24 should now be accepted.

Creating a new user

This cannot be done from Recorder, so log out of Recorder and go back to DOS. Go to the directory where Arev is installed (usually called AREV) and issue the DOS command AREV. This will log you into Arev in the SYSPROG account. You will see the Arev main menu; select "Management" - "Users" - "Make user" and you will be presented with a window with two prompts; the first for the new user's name and the second for the account to which this user will have access. Fill these in with the user's initials and the account name "LRC" and then press F9 to create the user.

Now go to TCL (F5) and issue a command to create records called *user*.ENVIRONMENT and *user*.VIDEO in a file called SYSTEM. The easiest way to do this is to choose an existing user whose access rights are the same as those you wish the new user to have and copy the records fort that user to create the new ones. Let us assume you have a user called "ITV" and you have just created a new user called "BBC" The command would be:

```
  COPY   SYSTEM   ITV.ENVIRONMENT   ITV.VIDEO   TO:   BBC.ENVIRONMENT
BBC.VIDEO
```

Log out of SYSPROG (typing OFF at TCL will do the trick). When you next run Recorder it will accept "BBC" as a user, with the same colour scheme and access rights as user "ITV" but without a password as yet (even if ITV had a password.).

Moving Recorder's sub directories

Recorder's files are stored in the sub directories SYSTEM, CODES, SPECIES and DATA of a directory called RECORDER. When moving onto a network, or moving to another machine, it may be necessary to move this whole structure to a different DOS volume. Let us assume that Recorder is currently installed on drive C: and that you wish to install it on a network drive F:. Here's what to do:

1 Make sure you have a good, up to date backup before you start!

2 Log on to Recorder as the system manager. You will need to edit two records to tell Recorder about the new location where it will look for its files in future. Go to TCL and:

```
EDIT VOC LOGON
```

You will see the edit screen (like the previous screen shot) containing the following lines

```
TCL
ATTACH C:\RECORDER\SYSTEM
INITIALISE
MACRO LRC-MACROS
```

change the C: to F: in the second line, save the record (F9) and then exit (Esc). Now:

```
EDIT LRC.SYS SUBDIRECTORIES
```

You should see the following four lines in the Editor screen:

```
C:\RECORDER\SYSTEM
C:\RECORDER\CODES
C:\RECORDER\SPECIES
C:\RECORDER\DATA
```

Change all four "C:"s to "F:"s (the quickest way to do this is by using Ctrl-R to replace all occurrences of C: with F:). Save the record (F9) and exit (Esc).

3 Exit from Recorder and copy the whole directory structure to the new drive using the DOS command XCOPY. To do this move to the root directory of drive F: and then use XCOPY to move the files and sub directories. The steps might look like this (depending on the sub directories you have set up and the defaults in force you may not need the CD \ command).

```
C:\AREV>F:
F:\PUBLIC>CD \
F:\>XCOPY C:\RECORDER\*.* /S
```

4 Log on to Recorder again. Check that it is indeed using the files on drive F: by using the File size (Utilities - File - File size) utility to examine some files. This shows the DOS file names associated with an Arev file and you should see F:\RECORDER... as the path.

5 Once you are satisfied that Recorder is working correctly on drive F:, delete the old copy of Recorder's files and sub directories on drive C:

RECORDER Support Experience

After the first two months trying to help people with problems I have looked for recurring experiences which could be shared to the benefit of all users.

Backup

There is too little backup being done and too much re-use of too few backup tapes (or disks). Yes it does involve the cost of an extra tape or two but it could be a very serious problem costing a lot of time and effort to remedy. The truth is that ARev/RECORDER is capable of corrupting data files and if it is the Records file with a lot of data in it this will certainly be a major problem to regenerate. In addition to error messages explicitly indicating data file corruption or the inability to update related indices, other manifestations of data corruption can be bizarre. It can result in an unsuccessful attempt to execute symbolic dictionary code like CHECK.ALTITUDE.WP or DATE.STAMP.WP at an inappropriate moment, such as when trying to process Species lists to Records.

The programming tools supplied with ARev make it very hard for a normal user to correct data file corruption and the only reasonable expedient is to restore from backup. However if the backup has been made after the corruption occurred and has been written over the top of a previous uncorrupted backup it is all to no avail. All users are encouraged to keep at least two backups, the current state and the one before. Never replace the one before if there is any hint of data corruption.

Corrupt indices must be Rebuilt which is a much more fundamental process than an Index Update. This is available from RECORDER via the System Manager Utilities - Indexes - Rebuild Index. It may take some time to complete for large data files.

RECORDER is structured in separate directories for SYSTEM and SPECIES which are not normally changing, CODES which only change if the user must and DATA which holds all the normal data entered. It is the DATA directory which should be saved very carefully after significant new data has been added. Note that all the directories should be backed up periodically and when additions or changes are made to them.

Site data reports

LIST does not produce reports with multiple lines per record. Long fields (e.g. Site Descriptions) are truncated and a report containing a useful number of file (e.g. site) parameters does not fit on a single printer line even using condensed print. The use of a FORM report gives multi-line potential, but with uncertain length of some fields ranging from no data to many lines of text, even FORMs are not ideal.

The solution is to use a MERGE report which can close up if no data is present and spread out if a lot of text is included in any filed or if multiple values are present. A "standard" MERGE definition has been produced for Site Reports called SITEFULL. Sadly this has not been distributed to everyone, but if you are having problems making site reports you should get hold of a copy at least as a starting point for your modification. MERGE reports can be designed and used from RECORDER by the rather curious route of Reports - Manage Select lists - ARev Reports - Design/Use - Merge. Merge reports are stored in the SYSTEM directory and should be backed up when they are added or amended.

Printer Support

ARev has rather primitive printer support except for Merge Printer. This is set up via a special Merge Menu (F10 from the Merge window) selecting the Printer option. Many merge printer definitions are about but not everyone has them all.

RECORDER has its own system of printer support which enhances the standard ARev offering. It is set up from System Manager Utilities - Set-up.

To set up a new RECORDER and/or Merge printer the user will have to get out the printer manual and work out what strings of control characters are required to set and reset Bold, Underline, Italic, Fonts etc. Epson compatible control codes are very different from the HP-PCL control codes used by the popular Deskjet and Laserjet printers. Setting up the RECORDER printer does not automatically set up the Merge printer and vice versa so you have to do them both separately. The Recorder printer can access Merge printer definitions and fill in the Escape codes in the Set-up window.

Expanded Memory

Out of memory messages are most likely to appear when you are running other programs at the same time as RECORDER (e.g. RECORDER under Windows or other programs with ARev/RECORDER suspended). You should wonder whether you are using what extra memory there may be on your machine. At TCL enter "WHO" and see whether Expanded memory is active on your system. In order to be active it requires that Memory Management drivers (e.g. HIMEM.SYS and EMM386.EXE or QEMM386 etc.) are loaded by your CONFIG.SYS file making the memory available to your computer, and also that ARev is started with the /x switch. Many users have batch files that start ARev/RECORDER with the /o switch which will defeat all attempts by ARev to use extra memory. For ARev to make optimum use of expanded memory the memory manager has to be set up in a cunning way. This is described in the ARev documentation "Using Expanded Memory Support". To achieve the required result may take some experimentation as each IBM compatible PC tends to be less than completely compatible in its use of high memory.

Mike Thurner

RECORDER support on behalf of Surrey Wildlife Trust.

RECORDER Support

Please note that from Monday 2nd August the contact point for RECORDER support has changed. All support calls until further notice should be directed to:

Telephone: 0483 488055

Fax: 0483 486505

Letter: Surrey Wildlife Trust
School Lane
Pirbright
Woking
Surrey GU24 0JN

Please ask for RECORDER support and remember that you will need to quote your RECORDER centre number.

Any calls received at the previous number will be redirected.

Articles

Data processing using optical scanning and character recognition software.

For biological record cards, an alternative method of automatic data processing to bar codes (NFBR Newsletter 9: April 1990) is to use optical scanning and character recognition software. After coffee one Sataurday morning we ran a small trial to demonstrate that this system could be used to process cards collected for the proposed *Atlas of the British and Irish floras 2000*.

The idea behind this system is that simple BC cards are automatically read optically into the computer. The resulting image is then analysed using software and readable characters identified; any names which are not crossed out on the card will be readable but those crossed out will not be recognised. The readable names can then be subtracted from a master card to leave those taxa recorded on the sample card.

A Hewlett-Pacard flat bed scanner was linked to a Compaq Deskpro 386 pc and cards scanned into a temporary file. The data were then analysed using the software and loaded into a standard Lotus spreadsheet for analysis. Preliminary trials showed that the simplest spreadsheet file was obtained by having a regular arrangement of numbers and names (Fig 1a). As this system can work using names alone, traditional BRC numbers could be dropped completely, though they could be left and used to check that a card has been read in correctly, or for manual input by those without scanners. White cards with clear print give the best character recognition (approaching 100%). Stacks of card can be run through using the bulk feeder.

It is envisaged that recording details such as lcality, recorder and additional species etc. could be added manually and distribution status information edited in once each card has been read automatically. (the software will not recognise handwriting accurately yet.) The scanner is unlikely to cope with muddy cards annotated in the field, but will be ideal for bulk processing of summary cards. The accuracy is such that manual checking may not even be required,

This system is simple, rapid to use and accurate. The technology is at least 5 years old and far from 'bleeding edge'. A full system including computer, scanner, software and spreadsheet/database is available off the shelf for about £3000.

Figure 1.

Trial example of data processing using computerised optical scanning and character recognition system.

A. original card (note full names and numbers have to be included to simplify the data structure resulting from scanning.)

B, Sample species crossed out on card.

C. Sample card data as read by the computer after character recognition.

D. Species recorded

Figure 1

A

18500 Ample adi
18900 Asple mar
19200 Asple rut
19400 Asple tri
19500 Asple vir
21100 Athyr fil
24400 Blech spi
24800 Botry lun
47300 Ceter off
58600 Crypt cri
60300 Cysto fra
12130 Dipha alp
66200 Dryop aff

B

18500 Asple adi
18900 Asple mar
19200 Asple rut
19400 Asple tri
19500 Asple vir
21100 Athyr fil
~~24400 Blech spi~~
24800 Botry lun
47300 Ceter off
~~58600 Crypt cri~~
60300 Cysto fra
~~12130 Dipha alp~~
66200 Dryop aff

C

18500 Asple adi
18900 Asple mar
19200 Asple rut
19400 Asple tri
19500 Asple vir
21100 Athyr fil

24800 Botry lun
47300 Ceter off
58600 Cr~r-l~c~i
60300 Cysto fra
12130 Dl~l~a
66200 Dryop aff

D

24400 Blech spi
58600 Crypt cri
12130 Dipha alp

Tim Rich, 37 Hartfield Rd, Forest Row
East Sussex RH18 5DY
Tel: 0342 826 239

Publications

Reviews

NATURAL ASSETS : Non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

A successful conference on Site Designations held in Bristol in 1991 by the Local Government Nature Conservation Initiative indicated the considerable interest that exists in site designation systems. The Initiative therefore decided to publish a guide entitled 'Natural Assets' covering the various aspects to be considered when designing a system.

The book examines all the different facets of non-statutory site designations from criteria for evaluation to the policy framework. The relevance of site designation to sustainable development is also highlighted.

The aim is not to encourage the adoption of identical systems throughout Britain; it is recognised that systems are required for different purposes in differing geographic areas. Rather the book fulfils an important role in recommending a methodical approach to addressing the various aspects of site designation. It is based on extensive knowledge of the systems already in existence and uses best practice to formulate its guidelines. English Nature have demonstrated their support by making a major financial contribution.

The book was written by David Tyldesley and Associates in association with an editorial board from the Initiative comprising ecologists from Hampshire, Derbyshire and Avon County Councils , and English Nature.

Those involved in biological recording and site evaluation will find this book a useful guide to the various aspects of site designation, from data collection, storage and analysis through to the selection of sites for nature conservation.

The price of the book is £7.00 plus £1.20 p&p and is available from the Planning Department, Hampshire County Council, The Castle, Winchester, SO23 8UE. *Cheques with order, payable to : Hampshire County Council*

Endangered Wildlife in Dorset The County Red data book

A. Mahon & D. Pearman (eds) DERC, ISBN 09511393 3 6 £6.00

Following the example of the Lincolnshire and Humberside Trust for Nature Conservation's "Endangered Wildlife in Lincolnshire and South Humberside" Dorset Environmental Records Centre has recently published a Red Data Book for the County. The book is very well produced and presented and aims to fulfil the need for readily accessible summary information on the status of individual species at a county level.

The book is broken up into sections covering the major taxonomic groups with brief paragraphs on each species, giving a summary of its status and occurrence in the County. The species are separated into three categories, National Red Data Book Species (including RDB1 RDB2 and RDB3 invertebrates), Nationally Scare Species (occurring in 16-100 10km squares nationwide including RDB Notable a and Notable b invertebrates) and Dorset Scarce Species (occurring in three or fewer

sites in the county.) The net is cast fairly wide. For example unlike many other similar publications the section on birds includes categories for wintering populations and an appendix of birds seen on passage and of birds that winter in the County but that are only included in the national Red Data Book as breeding species. As a result 103 of the 117 birds in the national list are covered.

Dorset has been fortunate in that it has attracted many eminent recorders. As a result the information upon which the publication is based is probably more extensive than that that is available in many counties. However as is always the case with such a publication the information published can only reflect the extent and accuracy of the recording available at the time of publication. Some species, particularly of invertebrates and the more esoteric groups may simply be under recorded. This is fully recognised in the species descriptions and in some sections but perhaps should have been emphasised more in the introduction if the book is to be used by developers and decision makers as the editors hope.

All in all a thoroughly recommendable book that should serve to stimulate further recording and a greater understanding of wildlife of the County and may hopefully assist in reducing the numbers of species that need to be included in any future repeat publication. A model for other counties to emulate.

Publications

Larger Moths of the London Area, Plant, C.W., LHS 1993,£14.95

The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol 7 Part 2, Maitland, A and Heath, J, Harley Books, £27.50.

Hawkmoths of the Western Palearctic, Pittaway, A.R., Harley Books, ISBN 0 946589 21 6 £55.00

The Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland, Parts 1 and 2, Roberts, M.J., Harley Books, £80.00 - updated softback edition.

Proceedings of the National Otter Conference, Cambridge 1992, Morris, P. ed, Mammal Soc, ISBN 0 906282 21 7 £6.50.

Mammals of Britain and Europe (Collins Field Guide), MacDonald, D & Barrett, P. Collins £14.99.

Atlas of Mammals in Britain, Arnold, H. ITE Research Publication No. 6, ITE, ISBN 011 7016675, £12.50

Red Data Book of Britain and Ireland: Stoneworts, Stewart, N.F. & Church, J.M., JNCC, ISBN 1 873701 24 1, £15.00

The Fern Guide, AIDGAP Key, Merryweather, J. & Hill, M. FSC ISBN 1 85153 211 0, £5.25

Publications that may be of interest received include:

Green File no 12. Energy Conservation Bill progress report, Published by the Green Party Campaigns Dept.

Hot News, The newsletter of the Climate Action Network UK

Further details are available from the Editor.

Surveys

National Doormouse Survey - The Great Nut Hunt - information packs from English Nature (NDW), Northminster Ho, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

National Otter Survey, English Nature.

Great Hedge Project - survey of parish boundary hedges - Forms from Tim Rogers, The Wilderness Centre, Mitcheldean, Glocs GL17 OAH (with S.A.E.)

Diary

12 Feb 1994 Badgers; a One-day Seminar, Wiltshire Badger Group, Dr Allan Feast 0272 288 184

11-13 April 1994, Wetland Archaeology & Nature Conservation. Bristol University.

18 April 1994 Recorder User Group Meeting Hancock Museum, Newcastle

18-19 July, 1994 NFBR AGM
International Centre of Landscape Ecology, LoughboroughUniversity, Leicestershire.