NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING

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National Federation for Biological Recording
Newsletter 22

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National Federation for Biological Recording
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National Federation for Biological Recording

Minutes of the Eleventh Annual General Meeting
Liverpool Maritime Museum, 15th November 1997

Thirty-five NFBR members were present.

1. **Apologies for absence:**

   Dr Graham Oliver, Paul Harding, Marie Moreau, Nicky Court, Ann-Marie Smout and John Stafford.

2. **Minutes of the 10th Annual General Meeting of 12th November 1996:**

   Bill Butcher advised that he had been absent at the previous AGM and had presented his apologies, though a paper had been presented for him. The minutes were amended to show Bill's apologies for absence.

3. **Matters arising from those minutes:**

   None.

4. **Proposed amendments to the Constitution as indicated on the back of the agenda:**

   Amendment "5h"

   Proposed: John Newbold Seconded: Charlie Copp *Accepted nem. con.*

5. **Chairman's Report for 1996 - 1997:**

   Attached.

   Proposed: Bill Butcher Seconded: Tim Rich

   The report engendered some discussion:

   Stuart Ball noted that the build contracts for the 'new' Recorder would be out in February 1998, and it was expected that the system would be in beta test by August 1998. The scope had increased due to the requirements of the NBN, and this had increased the overall development cost. The finance was coming from a number of different budgets.

   Bill Butcher indicated that the Cornwall Records Centre had closed down in its original format, and was now run by the Cornwall Wildlife Trust. He felt that the NFBR should not be seen as being supportive of the 'distributed' database concept, whereby Colin French had passed complete copies of the database to many of the recorders in Cornwall. Sara Hawkswell commented that the Wildlife Trust were running the centre jointly with the Local Authority and that, so far, not all the data sets had been made available.

6. **Treasurer's Report for 1997:**

   Attached.

   Proposed: James Williams Seconded: Trevor James *Accepted nem. con.*

7. **Election of Honorary Officers and Council:**

   The post of Newsletter Editor was offered to Damian McFerran who accepted.

   Proposed: Trevor James Seconded: Sara Hawkswell

   The remaining Council and Honorary Officer posts were re-elected en-bloc.

   Proposed: John Newbold Seconded: Martin Sandford *Accepted nem. con.*

   One vacancy on the Council remained unfilled, owing to the resignation of Adrian Spalding.

8. **Election of Honorary Auditor:**

Trevor James proposed Mrs Shirley Bell as Honorary Auditor. Mrs Bell is auditor for the British Naturalist's Association. This was seconded by Bill Ely. *Accepted nem. con.*

9. **Any Other Business:**

a) Association of LRC's - (D. Mellor - presented to the meeting, and which had already been circulated to LRCs):

Trevor James reported the response of the NBN Executive on 13/11/1997 to the proposals, which included a suggestion that NFBR/BCG etc. put their energies into developing the basis of the NBN Trust.

James Williams indicated that BRISC had been co-opted, and was not necessarily fully representative of Scottish LRC views. He went on to indicate that there was concern that existing centres across the country were not fully represented. His personal opinion was that more effective communication was needed.

Trevor James noted that the speed of development of the NBN tended to mitigate against good communication, there being a particular problem with passing information to our partner bodies in time for proper responses.

Bill Ely felt that people could not be forced to join the organisation, but that there was a need to look at the criteria for the new organisation (Association), and then to see if the current organisations could make any moves towards these criteria.

Trevor James proposed that there was a distinct need to ensure that LRC's views are communicated to the governing bodies of the NBN.

Charlie Copp indicated that the NFBR should promote the adoption of standards for the National Network and for individual LRCs, and that the LRC's needed a separate organisation for representation to the Network governing bodies.

Trevor James asked the meeting if it agreed that rather than support D. Mellor's proposal in its entirety, the NFBR should indicate support of the initiative as a starting point for and a way towards designing the NBN Trust, as had been suggested by the NBN Executive.

Damian McFerran strongly felt that on the ground recorders should have the major voice.

It was agreed that Trevor James should take the views of the AGM forward in negotiations with the NBN and partner bodies.

b) Sara Hawkswell gave a few comments on progress with the NBN
- recruiting staff to support the pilots had slowed things down
- the NBN web site was currently being composed
- there would be workshops for LRC pilots and support staff which would take on board existing centre experience
- there would be an NBN Newsletter coming out to keep people informed of progress

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2.10pm.

Chairman's report

It will be evident from elsewhere in this Newsletter that work continues apace on trying to draw together the many strands of the National Biodiversity Network. The NFBR has tried to take an active role in this work through its various Council members' activities. As many will know, we are represented on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Executive through my membership, which is also on behalf of the Association of Local Government Ecologists, the Biology Curators' Group, and the Biological Recording in Scotland Campaign. In Autumn 1997, David Mellor of BRISC took on a role with the newly formed Project Planning Group of the NBN, which was convened especially to develop the detail of the Project Brief which needed to go to the Heritage Lottery Fund as an outline of what our full application would consist of. Since then, he has asked to withdraw from this work, and I have been able to find time to take his place on this Group also. It is now looking at developing a range of Project Briefs, as a step towards producing the full NBN Business Plan later in the Spring. This will be a central document in the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding of the overall programme.

Many members of NFBR and other bodies will still be wondering "what is in it for me?", and "what effect is it all going to have on the way I work?" The answer will depend enormously on what continued commitment there is from all concerned to the broad concept of linking data nationally and managing it locally. The technology is rapidly advancing to the point where effective linking of datasets becomes feasible. The potential power for influencing decisions, land management etc. across the country must be considerable. Putting in place some new Local Records Centres, and re-inforcing others at a time when budget cuts by local authorities etc. are forcing closure on others must be important in getting the value of such centres recognised. All this activity is coming at the moment from the re-directed funds of a very small number of existing organisations. The HLF bid is aimed at strengthening this arrangement, partly through the setting up of some kind of joint body to oversee the Project as a whole. It will still need all manner of organisations to "sign up" to the Network eventually for it to fully come into existence. Meanwhile, the national agencies are working on developing the infrastructure of software and systems etc.

The NFBR strongly supports the concept of the NBN. It also feels very strongly that, for it to work, it must have the support of the broad range of local and national organisations and individuals who are involved in this kind of activity, and that its Projects, therefore, need to be carefully designed to accommodate their needs. It is with this philosophy that we are approaching the work of developing the NBN as a major opportunity to further the aims of the Federation. Eventually, the structure of the NBN and its operation will no doubt require the NFBR to reconsider its own aims and objectives, not to mention its operation. Meanwhile, we are in a good position to ensure that the interests of the recording fraternity are taken into account. If any individual member of the Federation, or its partner bodies, wants to make an input, please get in touch direct with me or another member of the NFBR Council.

Trevor J. James, Chairman

Working through Local Record Centres

A day seminar to be held at the Linnean Society of London Thursday 19th March 1998

This day seminar, arranged by the National Biodiversity Network's Local Advisory Group, is targeted at those running, contributing to or using Local Record Centres (LRCs) or who may in the future. A series of presentations will look at the plans to develop the National Biodiversity Network, work already underway to establish a framework for LRCs, the role of LRCs in Biodiversity Planning and how recorders can get involved. There will be an open discussion session with plenty of opportunity to comment on these proposals, and input into future developments.

Details and booking forms will be mailed out to all NFBR members next week. However if you do not receive this information, then contact **Sandra Skipworth** at:
The Wildlife Trusts, The Green, Witham Park , Waterside South, Lincoln, LN5 7JR

Tel: **01522 544400** Fax: **01522 511616** e-mail: **nbn@wildlife-trusts.compulink.co.uk**

As of the 8 December 1997, **http://www.nbn.org.uk** is the NBN World Wide Web (WWW) site on the Internet. The site contains the basic information about NBN, and links to other relevant sources of information. The NBN site will be developed as an important way of sharing information with those individuals and organisations involved in the work of establishing NBN. The papers and minutes of the Executive Group and the advisory groups will also be put onto this Website. This will increase the ways in which partners can find out what is going on. In the long-term, this Website will be the gateway for providing access to wildlife data held by custodians within the NBN.

Working in partnership towards the NBN

Natural History Museum - update

The Natural History Museum in London has recently intensified its taxonomic work on the UK fauna and flora in a variety of areas. A key project is the compilation of UK checklists, which is the museum's main contribution to the National Biodiversity Network, a consortium-based project run by JNCC, NFBR, NERC, RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the NHM. The first phase of checklists will consist of updating and expanding the lists compiled by JNCC as part of Recorder. This will be followed by the compilation and rationalisation of other published lists, and the final phase will be the writing of entirely new lists for the more neglected groups of organisms. The first lists are expected to be available on the museum's web-site by April 1998.

Alongside this project, NHM staff are also writing a range of handbooks for the identification of various groups of insects, plants and marine organisms. The Entomology Department has recently completed a book designed to help the non-specialist with

identification literature: entitled "Identifying British Insects and Arachnids: an annotated bibliography of key works", it will be published by Cambridge University Press later this year.

For further information on the museum's UK-based activities contact
Peter Barnard e-mail: **pcb@nhm.ac.uk** , or see the NHM's web-page **http://www.nhm.ac.uk**

Dr Peter C. Barnard, Entomology Department, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, UK Tel: **+44 (0)171 938 9457** Fax: **+44 (0)171 938 8937**

Recorder Update

A considerable amount of work has gone on since July, and we now have a much better idea of what we intend to build, and the scale of the operation. It is now formally an NBN project entitled "Developing collect/collate software", and we are authorised to use the NBN name and logo on our correspondence and products. The JNCC has agreed a substantially higher level of funding for next year as part of its contribution to the NBN.

Charles Copp is working on material for the NBN web site (www.nbn.org.uk). This will present the results of the requirement analysis, the current state of the data model and the work on specifications for the new version. We hope to make a couple of our prototypes available too. Andrew Cottam is working on the process of finding a suitable contractor to build the software. Because the estimated cost of the build passes the threshold of 200,000 ECU, the European Services Directive applies, and we are required to invite tenders throughout the EU by advertising in the Official Journal of the European Union. The OJ advert was placed in mid-December and companies had 40 days in which to express an interest. The closing date was Monday 2nd Feb. We have had over 40 responses (all from GB! so far). The next stage is to make a first sift of these responses, and then to give the selected companies a Statement of Requirement which sets out what we want in detail. There is then another prescribed period during which the bidders prepare a proposal indicating how they would meet our requirements. On the basis of this, we will short list 2-3 companies and then enter into negotiation over the terms and conditions, costs, etc. We are advised that, if all goes well, we should be in a position to reach a final decision and place the contract around May or June 1998.

We expect the build to take around 6 months, but there are a whole series of steps which produce the various software products we have identified. The new software will be very different from Recorder as you currently know and love it. For a start, there will be a whole family of software modules, not just one package. The first thing to be built is the "application framework". This is the basic building block which will provide the most basic functions that everybody needs. For example, it will provide the interface with standard dictionaries (species, biotopes, etc.) and manage peoples names and addresses and literature references.

The first set of add-on modules will provide data capture functionality similar to current Recorder and will allow species occurrence records to be managed. We will then build some "heavy-weight" modules aimed at local record centres and recording schemes, which will

manage the job of collating records and tracking them in the network, and manage the details of designated sites and biotope surveys. We also expect to build a GIS interface module which will allow Geographical Information Systems to access and analyse data from the database.

One of the new ideas we have come up with is "method related add-ons". In going round asking users what they want, one thing stands out. You are an incredibly diverse lot! The requirements of a bat-roost recorder are very different from a ground-beetle recorder or a lichenologist. Recorder teaches us that trying to write one piece of software to cater for all of these specialist interests is an impossible job. So we think one of the main ways people will interact with data capture software in future is through specialist modules that look just like an on-screen version of a particular recording form. Behind the scenes, the module will handle the interaction between this form and the NBN data model, it will know about any specific validation that is required, and it will be able to produce specific reports on the data it collects.

We will build at least one of these specialist modules, to demonstrate the process, (probably a Marine survey data capture form), but the intention is that the instructions on how to do it (an Application Programming Interface - API) and the rules it must obey, will be published. That means that others can extend the basic software we supply to meet their specific requirements. Therefore, if the Pterodactyl Recording Scheme decides to run an "Atlas 2005", then they find a computer techie amongst their membership, or contract someone, to write them an add-on designed specifically to implement their recording methods, and collect the exactly the details they need. It is then made available to their members (or maybe they are a generous bunch and anybody can download it from their web site) who install it in the NBN software and away they go. The big advantage we foresee is that, because most of the basic services are available from the framework application and other modules, the job should be much smaller than writing whole new pieces of software from scratch. The developer will be free to concentrate on what is specific to, and different about, Pterodactyl recording without having to worry about verifying grid references or managing literature references - these jobs are already done.

One thing that I have NOT said is what database we will use and what software tools will be used to build it. That is because these decisions have not been made. The contractor who does the build will have a large say in what software tools they use, and this will be one of the areas we ask them to cover in their proposals on how they would do the job. We believe that we can write software that is not tied to a specific database. We don't want to be tied to one package in future - like dear old Advanced Revelation. It should be possible for the software to talk to any one of a wide range of database packages. This is important for larger users, for example Local Authority based LRCs, who already have a database system installed and whose IT departments do not want to take on the management of another one. The situation for the individual naturalist working on their own at home is different, and we would expect the final package to include suitable database software.

I expect test versions of the first products to be in circulation by mid-summer. There will be a formal testing process which will be linked to the NBN Local Record Centre pilot projects, and National schemes and Societies development plans. However, I hope that we will be able to make test versions available on the NBN web site to allow anyone who is interested to participate in trials and supply feedback.

Recorder telephone support

The support contract with ICS currently runs until the end of April 1998. We anticipate that support for the current version of Recorder will continue through 1998. Once new software is available, support for the current version will eventually be discontinued, but it is too early yet to set a date.

Dr Stuart G. Ball Data Custodian Team Leader Tel.: **01733 866864**

Atlas 2000 progress

General progress

Records for 314 hectads received by 2nd Feb. 1998 (47.5% on card) from 51 VC Recorders (60 remaining).

The Atlas 2000 is currently progressing very well, with new records arriving almost daily. After two field seasons spent recording, this is our first winter where our Vice-county Recorders have begun submitting records. They are now busy compiling species lists for each 10km square they are responsible for, and this is no mean feat, as records have to be extracted from so many sources (both modern and historical). To date, the records for 314 10km squares have been received from 51 Vice-county Recorders, amounting to about 10% of the total. Added to this, however, are the many Monitoring Scheme squares that have been well recorded in the most recent date class (1987+), bringing the total to 21%. The steady flow of records into Monks Wood is crucial - we don't want them overwhelmed at the end of the project. We have therefore asked Recorders to set themselves yearly targets for submission and, by the beginning of the next recording season, we have in fact been promised 50% of the records. I wait with baited breath!

Records are coming in two formats, either on "manual" Mastercards or on computer disks. Currently, the split between the two is roughly 50/50. Although this is on target, there is a notable trend towards submission by Mastercard, as Recorders find learning to use computers and computer software too onerous. This is a problem, as we'd much prefer records to come in on disk, and it's one we should be addressing with more computer support and workshops.

One of the main thrusts of the Atlas 2000 is the pooling of existing data from so many different sources. Locally, this is largely the responsibility of Vice-county Recorders. However, we hope soon to step this process up by getting in touch with Local Record Centres and Wildlife Trusts, and asking them to liaise with their Vice-county Recorder. The Country Agencies are also important here. Currently SNH have been superb in making funds available

for data extraction. This usually involves compilation of site or summary hectad record cards from site files in problem areas. Currently Perthshire, Berwickshire, Westerness, Kintyre and Easter Ross have been or are being covered. Targeting of resources like this is important. We'll be contacting CCW and EN soon with lists of problem areas in England and Wales.

Things are therefore going well at the moment and, although there is a huge amount yet to be done, we're quietly optimistic that the project is on target. Let's hope the next season is both productive and enjoyable!

Trevor Dines Atlas 2000 Organiser

Butterflies for the New Millennium - project update

Butterflies for the New Millennium is the largest and most comprehensive survey of butterfly species ever undertaken in the British Isles. Launched in 1995 by Butterfly Conservation and the Biological Records Centre at ITE Monks Wood, the project is now well on the way to achieving its aim of creating a fully computerised national network of butterfly recorders for the 21st Century. This network (called, appropriately, Butterfly*Net*) now spans the whole of the UK (including the Channel Islands), and consists of over 60 local co-ordinators representing local biological records centres, Butterfly Conservation branches and Wildlife Trusts. They provide the focal point for records from an estimated 10,000 individual recorders and a wide range of conservation organisations and records centres. Butterfly*Net* will continue to expand in 1998, when the Butterflies for the New Millennium project is extended to include the Republic of Ireland.

A comprehensive new atlas will be published in the year 2000, based upon the results of the current intensive five year survey (1995-1999). Meanwhile, records continue to come in to the national database which already contains more than 300,000 records, coverage is improving, and local priorities are being determined and achieved. However, time is not on our side, and a lot of field recording remains to be done. Whilst many regions in the south are concentrating on achieving 100% coverage of 1km squares or developing more sophisticated butterfly monitoring using transects, other local co-ordinators are faced with large unrecorded areas, a result of the combined burdens of huge tracts of remote land and few recorders.

A major priority for the remaining two field seasons is, therefore, to improve the coverage of these under-recorded areas, such as the Highlands of Scotland, Ireland and parts of Wales and northern England. In order to address this issue, the project will be running a targeted recording scheme in these areas to direct volunteer recorders to specific sites (identified and prioritised by the appropriate local co-ordinators).

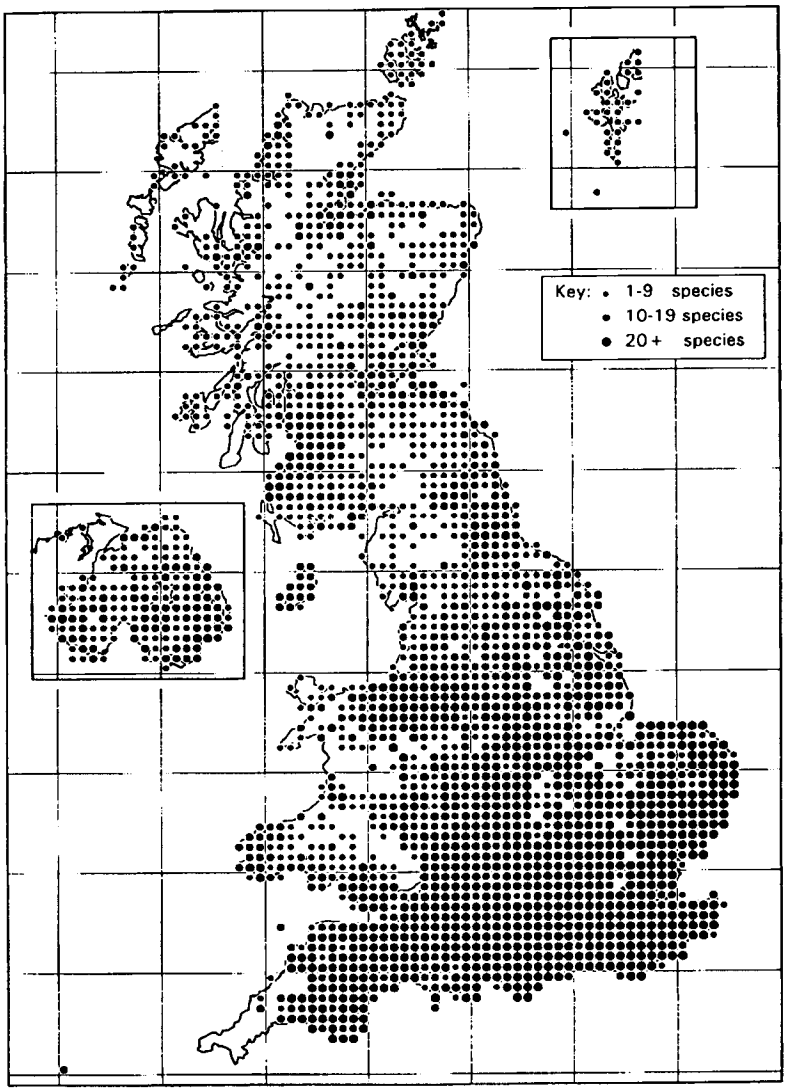
Butterflies for the New Millennium is a collaborative project and its success is dependent on the hard work, enthusiasm and commitment of thousands of individual recorders and professionals in the fields of biological recording and nature conservation.

If you are not already involved, please send for an information pack from:

Butterfly Conservation (Head Office), PO Box 222, Dedham, Essex CO7 6EY

or contact: The Project Co-ordinator, **Richard Fox**, ITE Monks Wood, Huntingdon PE17 2LS
Tel.: **01487 773381** E-mail: **r.fox@ite.ac.uk**

ButterflyNet All records 1995-97



All records received by the Butterflies for the New Millennium national database 1995-1997
Some areas which appear blank may in fact be well recorded, but the records have not yet been submitted to the database (for example, a major Cornish dataset which has been delayed). Produced courtesy of **Jim Asher, Butterfly Conservation.**

Mammal Identification Skills Workshop

Mammal are seriously under recorded - they account for only 0.5% of all biological records in the UK. We cannot protect vulnerable species effectively if we do not know where

they occur, or if their status is changing. Come and learn how to collect mammal records, and help to put British mammals on the map.

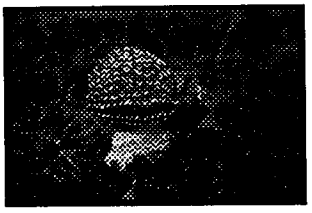
Come and learn how to identify mammal from a fleeting glimpse, from their calls and from the many signs they leave behind! Get hands on experience of Longworth trapping, owl pellet analysis, and an opportunity to gain a Mammal Society/Field Studies Council Certificate in Basic Mammal Identification Skills by joining one of the *Look Out for Mammals* workshops.

During 1997, over 100 workshop participants were awarded Certificates in Basic Mammal Identification Skills. By popular demand, the workshops in 1998 have now been extended from one day courses to weekend events. These two day courses, taught by Mammal Society trainers, will run from 9:30am to 5:00pm, Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday evening, there will be an optional activity, such as a bat walk or badger watch, but no formal tuition. Accommodation is available at the field centre for those who cannot travel on a daily basis. All participants are sent a pack containing course information, and a map of how to reach the field centre.

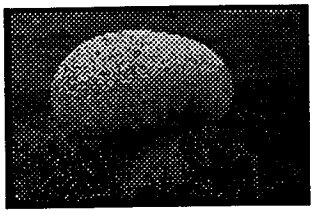
Forthcoming courses:

County	Venue	Date
Surrey	Juniper Hall FSC Field Centre	6-8 March
Pembroke	Orielton FSC Field Centre	20-22 March
Inverness-shire	Aigas Field Centre	17-19 April
Somerset	Nettlecombe Court FSC Field Centre	8-10 May
Kent	Rippledown House Field Centre	22-24 May
North Yorks	Malham Tarn FSC Field Centre	29-31 May
Perthshire	Kindrogan Field Centre	5-7 June
Devon	Slapton Ley FSC Field Centre	24-26 July
Surrey	Juniper Hall FSC Field Centre	7-9 August
Shropshire	Preston Montford FSC Field Centre	31 July - 2 August
Conwy	Rhyd-y-crean FSC Field Centre	21-23 August
Conwy	Rhyd-y-crean FSC Field Centre	25-27 September
Perthshire	Kindrogan Field Centre	2-4 October
South Yorks	Sheffield Museum	13-15 November

contact: **The Mammal Society**, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Rd., London SW8 4BG about forthcoming courses in your area, and a booking form.



Fungi recording in Northern Ireland



Fungi are often regarded as a group of minor importance rarely taken into account in site management, site declaration or in lists of protected species. It is understandable why as the science of mycology is not very well integrated with that of nature conservation, its taxonomy is often in a state of flux and species are difficult to identify. However, given that fungi play a central role in many ecosystems and that it is well documented that many groups

are in serious decline in some parts of Europe (Nauta, 1993; Arnolds, 1991; Fellner, 1992), it is time that more effort was put into serious recording of fungi, and that attempts are made to integrate fungi with nature conservation. It has, for instance, been shown that many species are excellent indicators of ecosystems under stress (Fellner, 1992) or of old undisturbed ecosystems (Rotheroe *et al*, 1996). For this reason alone, it is important to record fungi. Even before species began to disappear, work in Germany showed a marked decline in the length of the fruiting period of many fungi, and the numbers of fruiting bodies themselves decreased (Schmitt, 1993). This is usually linked with air pollution in the form of nitrogen deposition or the fertilising of grasslands. In the Netherlands, there have been large scale losses of species, and certain species are only producing 20% of the numbers of fruiting bodies that they were fifteen years ago (Arnolds, 1991).

So what is happening in Northern Ireland? Are fungi under such threat as in continental Europe? It is actually impossible to say, as there has been so little fungus recording that there is insufficient data to work with. Before this decade, the main source of records were three one week long visits of the British Mycological Society (BMS) in 1931, 1948 and 1964, a paper by Professor Muskett in 1931, work by Canon Lett in the 1880's and John Templeton in the early 1800's (Muskett, 1976). Figure 1 shows the distribution of those records. Given the additional problem of having to be very cautious with historical records due the changes in taxonomy and advances in knowledge, this is not a good base to work from. In the late eighties and early nineties, some individuals started recording fungi, but the problem in Northern Ireland was that in recent years, there were no experts. People became useful at various groups, but had to learn on their own which, given difficult keys, both to locate and use, was not easy.

In 1996, the Northern Ireland Fungus Group (NIFG) was set up to try and pool the knowledge that there was in Northern Ireland and become a self help group. The NIFG has been successful so far in that it has encouraged people to record, and we have all learnt from each other, both in identifying species and learning a recipe or two! The Group is not simply about recording, but also caters for those with gastronomic interests in fungi. A series of seven or eight forays are organised each year, open to members and non-members, and attempts are made to cover a wide range of the province (Figure 2).

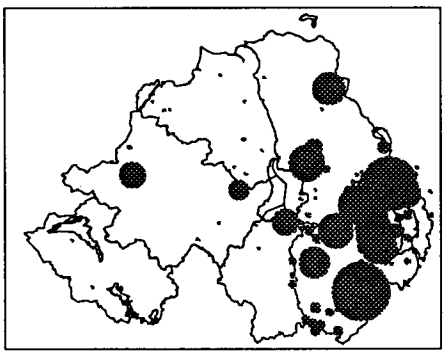


Figure 1 - Fungus records 1800 - 1980

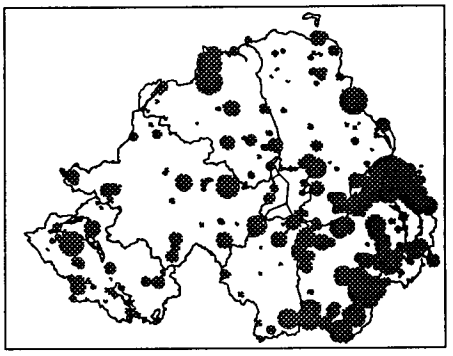
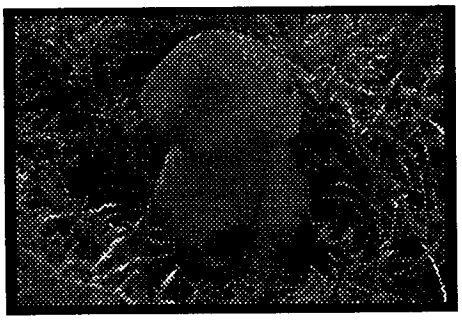


Figure 2 - Fungus records 1980 - present

In 1997, the Biodiversity Challenge (NI) Group produced a set of lists of key species of biodiversity concern in Northern Ireland which included lists for fungi (Brown *et al*, 1997). It was difficult to select species given the lack of data, but apparently rare species or examples of groups known to be under threat elsewhere were selected. Some of these may prove not to be under threat, and doubtless many other species should be on the list, but it is an important starting point and we would like to put in a plea for any records of any of the species on the list.

There have been two major recording projects undertaken by members of the group, with help in terms of time from Environment & Heritage Service, in the last few years. In 1995 and 1996, Mark Wright and David Mitchel undertook a project looking at the Boletes and Amanitas of County Down. These two groups are ectomycorrhizal fungi, which mean that their hyphae under the ground join onto the fine roots of trees and form a symbiotic relationship. The fungi get carbohydrates from the tree and help the tree in the uptake of minerals and water, and may even protect it against pathogenic root-infecting fungi. Ectomycorrhizal fungi are under particular threat in continental Europe, with many species now locally extinct or producing smaller and fewer fruiting bodies (Arnolds, 1991). This project was an attempt to produce some baseline data from which further work could start to assess whether these groups were declining.

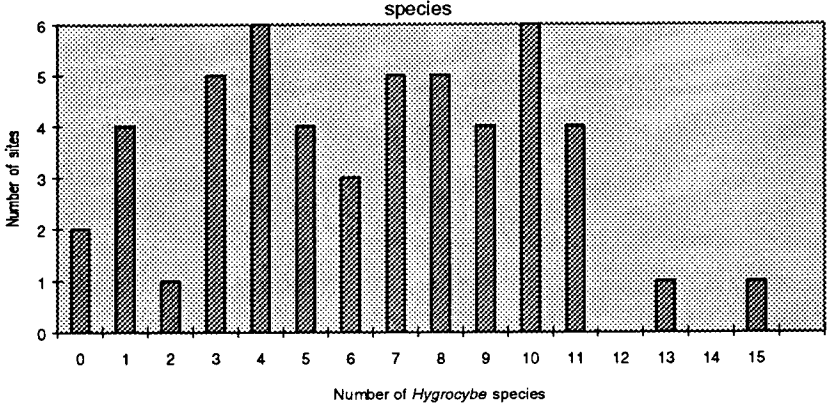
County Down was chosen, as this was the only practical County given where the surveyors lived, but it had the added benefit of having some historical records to compare against. The largest woodland, broadleafed or coniferous, in each 10km square in the County was surveyed twice at different times of year in successive years. A number of additional sites were surveyed if time allowed. The host tree and habitat was recorded for each record. In total, 37 species of Bolete (there are about 83 species known in GB - Marren, 1992) were recorded of which there were 8 new Bolete species recorded for Ireland, 2 new species for N. Ireland and 7 species were not re-recorded. 16 species of Amanita (33 known species in GB - Marren, 1992) were recorded of which there were 2 new species recorded for Ireland, 1 new species for Northern Ireland and 2 species were not re-recorded. The Dutch have identified a sequence of decline of ecto-mycorrhizal species. The most sensitive species are those who only form associations with one coniferous tree, followed by the coniferous generalists, followed by those specific to one broadleafed tree, the broadleafed generalists, and finally by those species that form associations with a variety of mixed trees (Arnolds, 1991). We found that the mixed tree generalists were the most common species in County Down, but that some coniferous tree specialists were also relatively common. This might indicate that these groups are not under serious threat here yet, but further quantifiable research is needed, especially given the fact that it is known that nitrogen deposition is increasing in Northern Ireland. A report on this project will be produced later this year as part of Environment & Heritage Service's Research and Development Series.



Boletus edulis

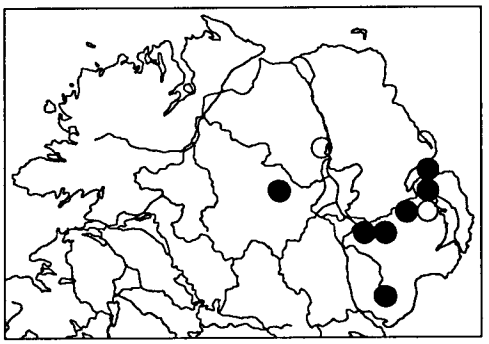
The second recording project is that of a Waxcap Grassland survey. Waxcaps (or genus *Hygrocybe)* and some other grassland fungi groups are arguably better indicators of unimproved grassland than higher plants, and are under probably greater threat than ectomycorrhizal fungi. This ongoing project is part of a UK and Ireland wide survey, organised by the British Mycological Society, looking for Waxcap grasslands, and is attempting to establish criteria for the ranking and possible declaration of grasslands for their fungal component. The methodology employed is to visit a potential site, preferably at three different times of year, and record the range of species of targeted groups (Rotheroe *et al*, 1996). Species identification is not critical, though preferable, as it is numbers of different species, colonies and fruiting bodies that are recorded. To date, in Northern Ireland, 51 sites, a range of unimproved grasslands, estate and domestic lawns, have been surveyed, and the first indications are that waxcap grasslands with medium numbers of species are not rare in N. Ireland, but grasslands with high numbers are proving difficult to find as Figure 3 indicates.

Figure 3 - The Number of sites recorded with different numbers of waxcap species



It is easy to identify a waxcap. They are usually brightly coloured with red, orange and yellow the common colours. They often, but not always, have a wet slippery cap, and of course they are usually found in grasslands. They are often found in domestic gardens and estate lawns, and the NIFG and BMS would appreciate details on any sites of waxcaps. We would welcome reports of one species in particular, *Hygrocybe calyptriformis.* This species is on the

Hygrocybe calyptriformis



***H. calyptriformis* NI distribution map**

UK provisional Red Data List and the UK Biodiversity List and is unmistakable. It is pink, conical and the cap tends to split into sections which arch up into the air. Present Northern Ireland records are mainly for domestic gardens.

Contact address for the Northern Ireland Fungus Group is:
Gerry Shannon (Chairman), 41a Newell Road, Ballymoney, Co.Antrim BT53 6HB

Contact address for BMS Waxcap survey is:
Maurice Rotheroe, Fern Cottage, Falcondale, Lampeter, Ceredigion SA48 7RX

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Marine species recording - getting it together

There are approximately 10,500 marine species listed in the Ulster Museum/Marine Conservation Society Species Directory for the British Isles - about one fifth of the number of species which exist for terrestrial habitats (providing that you do not include the protists). However, a very much larger number of phyla are represented in the sea than on the land, and include some exclusively marine ones such as the echinoderms and ascidians.

There have been attempts to start species recording schemes, and Biological Records Centre recording cards exist for groups such as seaweeds, echinoderms and bryozoans. Phycologists and conchologists in particular have current active schemes, and the marine natural history society 'Porcupine' (named after a 19th century surveying vessel) actively undertakes recording. The Marine Nature Conservation Review programme, which has been running since 1987 and finishes in March this year, was never intended to be a specifically

species recording project but has records listing species from separate habitats or survey stations for over 29,000 locations around Great Britain, and has 'sister' projects in Ireland.

The large amount of information which is available from a wide range of surveys, and the opportunity to use that information to assist in environmental management and protection projects led to the proposal for a project called 'UK Marine Biology'. The proposal is being made by the Marine Biological Association of the UK at Plymouth, and responses to a concept document circulated in September 1997 have been extremely positive. As 'UK Marine Biology' evolved during last year, it became clear that the Marine Biological Association could provide the marine node for the National Biodiversity Network, and that link is now established.

Forty-seven people involved in marine recording, including NFBR members, met at Newcastle University at the end of January to hear about the various schemes in progress, and to develop an approach to both marine species recording requirements and to 'adding value' to those records to make them more useful for environmental protection and management. The meeting provided a firm foundation to further collaborative development of marine species recording from biologists at marine laboratories, in research institutes, in museums, in government agencies and consultancies.

If you want to know more about:

'UK Marine Biology', contact: **Alison Hood** at the Marine Biological Association, The Laboratory, Citadel Hill, Plymouth PL1 2PB (e-mail: **ahoo@pml.ac.uk**);

'Porcupine', contact the Secretary **Ian Killeen**, 163 High Road West, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9DB

The results of the marine recording workshop, contact **Keith Hiscock**, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Monkstone House, Peterborough PE1 1JY (e-mail; **hiscoc_k@jncc.gov.uk**) for a report (due in March).

Keith Hiscock Head, Marine Nature Conservation Review, JNCC

Marine Species Recording Workshop

A Marine Species Recording Workshop was held on 29th & 30th January at Newcastle-upon-Tyne to enable those involved in marine species recording and data management to develop a co-operative approach to addressing the issues of marine biodiversity and marine environmental management. This was done in the context of the National Biodiversity Network and of UK Marine Biology. Working Groups resulted in recommendations for:

- the computing structures required
- appropriate 'fields' of information to be recorded
- developing successful recording schemes
- quality assurance - setting standards for information collection, collation, exchange and ownership.

The Workshop was commissioned by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee as a contribution to the National Biodiversity Network, and was organised by the Dove Marine Laboratory, part of the Department of Marine Sciences and Coastal Management at the University of Newcastle. A short report of the Workshop will be available as a 'JNCC Report Series' publication in due course.'

Judy-Foster Smith University of Newcastle

The Marine Algal Mapping Scheme

When the British Phycological Society was founded in 1952, there were a number of stated aims in addition to solely promoting the study of phycology by means of meetings and the publication of a journal. It was felt that there was a need for a detailed checklist of the British Marine Algae, and this has been fulfilled by the publication of a number of detailed lists of British, European and North Atlantic checklists in the ensuing 46 years, the most recent being by Guiry. It was also felt that the standard marine algal flora (Newton, 1931) was out of date and needed replacing. This is in the process of being completed, although perhaps not in the form initially envisaged: a multi-volume work entitled *Seaweeds of the British Isles* is in course of publication by the Natural History Museum, London (7 volumes so far, 1977 to date, multi-authored, and at least another 3 volumes yet to be completed together with a revised version of the earlier volumes under consideration). There is still a need for a good, comprehensive, one-volume work on seaweeds which would be suitable for use both on the shore and in the laboratory. The third aim was to study, in detail, the distribution of British and Irish seaweeds, and to publish an Atlas.

The Marine Algal Mapping Scheme which arose as an answer to this third aim, and which is run in collaboration with the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood, began in 1970. For the first 20 years it was coordinated by T.A. Norton (first at Glasgow and, latterly, at Port Erin) and for the past few years, the present author has been the coordinator of the scheme.

A team of volunteer recorders has been assembled (and additional recorders are always welcome). Because, since mid-Victorian times, there has been (rather surprisingly) very little popular interest in marine algae amongst amateur naturalists (despite the current fashion of marine biology), most of the recorders are professional phycologists or postgraduate students - although some of the most dedicated and loyal recorders are not in these categories. There may be several reasons for this: the lack of good identification guides for all species encountered is obviously one. Perhaps the paucity of common names for many of the species is also a contributory factor. The great problem which results from this is that there are too few recorders and, as a result, the data collected are less complete than one would like. Cynics might remark that seaweeds grow near where phycologists work or have their holidays!

Recorders are provided with cards which list the species being mapped (and which have space for details about the location and the date). Species found are crossed through on

the cards on a simple presence or absence basis, no account being taken of abundance or community structure): those which were drift specimens are marked with a 'D' - these are entered into the database, but do not appear on subsequent maps since their provenance is unknown. The record cards allow the collection of data for the red (Rhodophycota), brown (Phaeophycota) and green algae (Chlorophycota) together with the genus *Vaucheria* (Xanthophyta). Species are recorded on the basis of the 10km squares of the Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference System for Great Britain, the Suirbheireacht Ordonais/Ordnance Survey National Grid for Ireland, and the Universal Transverse Mercator Grid for the Channel Isles. New recording cards are in preparation (the original cards dated from October 1970) with updated nomenclature: until these are available, records are accepted in any form (!)

It is considered vital that ALL records are checked and verified, and that NO doubtful data are allowed to enter the system. 'If in doubt, leave it out', could well be the scheme's motto. Easily accessible literature for the identification of ALL species is obviously an on-going problem. Verification is carried out at several levels. Any species considered to be difficult is marked with an asterisk (*) on the recording cards: these need to be checked by an expert. Voucher specimens are obviously an important feature for the accurate identification of such species. There are two separate panels of referees to which the co-ordinator will submit records for verification. A panel of LOCAL referees, who know - or can reasonably predict - what may or may not be present in a particular area of the country, give an opinion of this aspect of the record. A panel of EXPERT referees validates/determines the 'difficult'/critical species. All records are gratefully accepted: even 'common' species need to have complete datasets, and recorders from all areas of the country are welcomed. Once the records have been verified, the record cards are then sent to the Biological Records Centre for processing.

In order to give a progress report of the scheme, a provisional atlas of 155 taxa was published in 1985 (Norton, 1985). The purpose of this was to show what had been achieved and what remained to be completed. The maps displaying post-1950 distributions of the species selected gave some very interesting insights into our knowledge. For example, the extent to which green algae are under-recorded in Ireland (the map for *Ulva lactuca*, a nearly ubiquitous species, seems to indicate that it is somewhat infrequent in Ireland, which is obviously not the case). Sadly, the effect of this atlas' publication was to make people complacent, and feel that nothing further needed to be done.

As a result, the scheme has, effectively had to be relaunched, and its stated aim is for completion by the end of the century with the publication of a detailed atlas of ALL the species. These maps will, once again, be on a post-1950 basis (a post-1970 date was considered, but this would result in a very large proportion of the data already submitted having to be ignored). Nomenclature is now completely up-to-date, and a list of synonyms accompanies the record cards being produced. Prospective new recorders are encouraged to contact the author.

A number of decisions remain to be made before a final format is decided upon for the Atlas. How does one indicate the changes over time in the distribution of a species? Unless one

knows that one has ALL the data for ALL sites for each date in question (and, of course, one doesn't) it would be inadvisable to come to firm conclusions. How does one indicate the habitat? Is a species absent from a map because the habitat is not suitable for it, or is the habitat suitable, but the species still absent? Does the absence of a record on a map indicate the absence of a species, or the absence of any records for anything from that area?

What remains certain is that we will go forward into the next Millennium with a marvelous knowledge of the distribution of marine algae around our shores. It is important not only that this data is constantly kept up-to-date but also that it is used as fully as possible by many individuals or institutions.

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F.G. Hardy, Department of Marine Sciences and Coastal Management,
University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU

BRISC Annual Conference and AGM (24 January 1998)

About 40 people attended, enjoying the pleasant atmosphere and surroundings of Chatelherault Country Park. David Mellor, outgoing chairperson of *BRISC,* welcomed everyone and chaired the morning session. Malcolm Muir, Countryside Services Manager of South Lanarkshire Council, kicked off with an impressive presentation on South Lanarkshire's involvement with a local Biodiversity Action Plan and recording in general. South Lanarkshire was one of the Scottish Biodiversity Group's four pilots working towards local BAPs (the two afternoon speakers dealt with this scheme in more detail). In spite of being part of Scotland's heaviest industrial area, South Lanarkshire still has a rich biodiversity, especially in the ancient woodlands surviving in various gorges. Important milestones had been the Local Agenda 21, which emerged out of the Earth Summit in 1992 and the Biodiversity Convention, because this had enabled local authorities to act on countryside matters, and SNH's Rangers in Scotland Report which had freed Rangers from the confines of countryside parks. The local BAP provided the nature conservation side of the Local Agenda 21, and in South Lanarkshire was very much a partnership approach to see what could be done. So far, there were two species and two habitat action plans, namely for water vole and lowland waders; woodlands and peatlands. 'Recorder' was used in conjunction with GIS (Arcview) in order to integrate data from various other sources such as landuse data. Ways were now being explored for how to implement the BAP, encourage participation, raise awareness and in particular to encourage good practice in the local council.

Paul Kirkland, Butterfly Conservation's Officer in Scotland, then talked about the work of his organisation, and listed some of the priority species for Scotland: marsh fritillary, small blue and pearl-bordered fritillary. He stressed the importance of LRCs, and how they provided an essential aspect of recording and monitoring. Butterfly Conservation had produced species action plans in response to the UK list of notable species, which then had been organised into habitat action plans, leading to a UK butterfly conservation strategy. Regional groups and local branches also played an important role, both in highlighting locally notable species, and drawing up action plans for these. Butterfly Conservation was very interested in working with all local BAP groups, and *BRISC* was the obvious organisation to keep a list of all local BAP initiatives in Scotland (11 so far).

Lawrence Way of JNCC then took the floor to explain about the National Biodiversity Network. Outlining the structure, he stressed that LRCs made up an essential part of the NBN, showing how they would fit into the NBN, and how the network would work. Eventually it would be managed by a NBN Trust, made up of relevant parties. The present executive consisted of JNCC (and through this the various country agencies), NERC, NHM, RSPB, TWT. The recording community had representation through Trevor James, chairman of NFBR. There was a national and a local advisory group, and *BRISC* was represented on the local advisory group (LAG). Standards and good practice would be developed as an essential part, both for recording and for sharing data. Accreditation criteria would be developed and required to be met by all parts of the network, including software. The Wildlife Trusts were managing the LRC side for the NBN, and with funding obtained from the Esmee Fairbairn Trust, they were set to pilot three schemes, one in England, one in Scotland and one in Wales, to aid and monitor the procedure of establishing LRCs. The pilots had been chosen by independent advisors, and the North East (Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray) had been chosen in Scotland and an officer (Ross Andrew) appointed to assist the project here. A second tranch of pilots was being considered by the LAG, possibly involving existing LRCs. A bid was going to the Heritage Lottery Fund to further develop the NBN, and a business plan was being developed under four headings: co-ordinating development, standards for contributing data, giving access to wildlife information across the UK, and using and applying information. Publicity folders for NBN, with various extras, such as the latest NBN newsletter, were available free to all who attended.

As the AGM had been moved to the afternoon, to allow Lawrence time to return to Peterborough within the day, Anne-Marie Smout finished the morning session with a brief introduction to the *BRISC* Standards and Good Practice, which a subgroup had been working on for the last couple of years. With the assistance of SNH, this document would now become a proper publication as one of SNH's Research Reports. With a publication date before end of March, it will be available either from *BRISC* or SNH at a very reasonable price. It should help fill a few gaps till NBN's standards and good practice guidelines could be fully developed.

First in the afternoon session was John Sheldon, of West Lothian Council Planning Service and also representing for the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, who talked

about COSLA, LBAPs and LRCs. He started by outlining his own involvement with Biodiversity, which went back a number of years. Agenda 21 had been particularly important for LAs, and he had been part of the group that had first thought of Local BAPs to translate national targets into local targets. He had ended up as chairman of the Scottish Biodiversity Sub-group on Local BAPs when this was set up a couple of years ago. He then raised a number of questions: what is biodiversity?; what are the difficulties people have with biodiversity? These involve the word itself, culture, attitudes, mistrusts, money, awareness/education, mechanisms, science, partnership, momentum and not least - conflicts. To get the Local Authorities to come on board, SNH, RSPB and the Scottish Office had conceived a pilot scheme involving four areas in Scotland to develop a local BAP. They were Orkney, the North East (Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Morayshire), Strathclyde and South Lanarkshire. The results were LBAPs at various stages and a manual, published last November, which detailed the four pilots' various experiences. Hopefully it would encourage other LAs to follow suit. His own council had developed a BAP, published last November, almost simultaneously with that of Fife. Developing BAPs involved local environmental audit, which meant getting data - LRCs were very important here. It also involved policy development, strategic planning, and had social and economic elements. The process highlighted the relevance of LRCs to local authorities. A phase two was now under way, and an officer (Victoria Abernethy) had already been appointed to take this forward.

John Ramsay, of the Scottish Office and secretary of the Scottish Biodiversity Group, was the last speaker of the day. He stressed that a lot of progress on Biodiversity had been achieved in the last year and a half. A booklet had been launched last autumn, setting out the structure and the purpose of the Scottish group. It had early on become evident that a separate Scottish group would be essential because of devolution, change of administration, etc. Economics of course also played an important part. The Scottish Biodiversity Group saw LBAPs as the way forward. Ownership **had** to be local to have any effect. The national structure set out in the national plan could be picked up by the local groups. Biodiversity had already had substantial implications for the government, and there was a new and wider appreciation for it, even in the Scottish Office. It was up to the local authorities and local people to make sense of this. The Scottish Office had joined in the project to run the four pilots which John Sheldon talked about, and this had now been extended to a second pilot. The next question was: how do we deliver? This was addressed on the part of the Scottish Biodiversity Group by a programme of awareness raising sessions and training, orchestrated by the Education subgroup, led by Monica Strachan. Data must become more easily available.

The last item of the day was the AGM. David Mellor gave a brief resume of events in the past year. Financial difficulties had not been solved, and *BRISC* could no longer pay for a secretary's post, but an extraordinary meeting in July 1997 had confirmed the members' support for the organisation, and given the committee a mandate to carry on as best it could. Bob Bryson was thanked for all his work as secretary for *BRISC*. The treasurer gave his account, which was approved. A revised constitution was then agreed by the members, making

representation and support for LRCs a high priority. The new constitution will be available once it has been passed by the Charities Commission. The name of the organisation was changed to 'Biological Recording in Scotland', thus dropping the word 'Campaign' but retaining the acronym. David Mellor stood down as chair, and Anne-Marie Smout was nominated by the committee as the new chairman. This was accepted. All committee members were re-elected, and three new members joined the committee. Anne-Marie Smout then thanked David for all his unstinting and tireless efforts on behalf of *BRISC* during the years he had chaired *BRISC*, and the meeting finished with a round of applause for David.

Apart from the excellent talks, there were a number of displays by local or national groups to inspect during lunch and other breaks, and everyone agreed that it had been a most successful and informative day.

Anne-Marie Smout

Reviews

Local Biodiversity Action Plans

It may surprise you to know (as it did me) that nobody is co-ordinating the production of local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) or biodiversity audits. All these BAP committees and not one of them (or anyone else) with that basic responsibility - I must be overlooking some essential element in Government policy with regard to biodiversity action! This lack of co-ordination may be the reason why two examples of local BAPs, that appeared recently, are as different as chou et chevre: both are useful and serve the same basic function, but there the similarity ends!

Fife Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Fife's Natural Heritage (Fife Local Biodiversity Action Plan), 1st edition published November 1997 by the Fife Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group c/o Planning Service, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes, Fife KY7 5LT. A4, 28 pages, soft laminated cover, no price or ISBN. The cover is an eye-catching photo-montage of a dozen recognisable taxa, all of which one must assume form part of Fife's biodiversity. There are three main sections.

1. Biodiversity in Fife which explains why biodiversity is special in Fife and describes the main perceived threats to habitats and species, how habitats and species were selected for action and a timetable for the Plan.

2. Habitats, which lists seven very broad habitat types and illustrates them in a two page colour spread. It is good to see a habitat based approach being taken. Also in this section, is a list of 100 'priority species' for which action plans will be prepared. In reality, this list covers well over 200 taxa occurring in or around Fife as it lists 'bats', 'whales', 'seaducks', 'terns', 'sharks',

'bumblebees', 'ladybirds (Coccinellidae)', '*Odonata*' and '*Sphagnum*'. How each of these groups can be covered by a single action plan will test ecological logic. A couple of the more bizarre species to be listed for action are 'native oaks', and the woodlouse *Porcellio spinicornis*. Can these really be threatened in the Kingdom of Fife?

3. Implementation and monitoring. This section is notable for an honourable mention of Fife Nature which 'will be essential for all Partners, community groups and individuals to forward data to the centre, if the full potential of the Plan is to be realised'. That sounds like a commitment, by somebody, to support Fife Nature! Appendix 2 is a list of some current initiatives which shows that serious activity is already taking place, and that biodiversity can potentially benefit from many different types of actions. Well done Fife - you have stuck your head above the parapet, and have shown that something is being and can be done locally. Pity about the proof-reading and (I hate to say this), but there are a lot of polysyllabic words and quite a bit of jargon! Which leaves one wondering who the target audience might be.

Countdown '97

The Countdown Programme - a biodiversity audit with local action plans for the conservation of the wildlife of the Cheshire region, compiled, with partners, by The Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Ring-bound in substantial covers - (over 1kg in weight). No price or ISBN.

This is presumably designed to be added to and amended, with new pages and sections. It is attractively and imaginatively designed, and illustrated, with stiff dividers between sections. If I have one major criticism, it is that there is no proper map of 'the Cheshire Region' that one could relate to towns, roads and grid squares. It is very much a preliminary statement on local biodiversity issues. Perhaps the least satisfactory section is the Biodiversity audit of the species, which is comprehensive on vertebrates and flowering plants, but deficient on almost everything else. A quick flick through Hilbre: The Cheshire Island, 1982, edited by J B Craggs would have added 700 terrestrial and about 200 marine invertebrates, for a start! There are single sheet action plans for five habitats and 27 species. Poor proof reading is a problem with this volume as well. The target audience is a little more obvious with this one - in the earlier sections, there is frequent reference to 'you' and a form to enable people to respond to 'contribute [in any way] to the Countdown Programme'.

The Cheshire Countdown is a good basic information resource, and practical demonstrator for the consortium that will be developing the National Biodiversity Network pilot local records centre for the area. The compilers are to be congratulated in strengthening the case, to become the pilot in this way.

Reviewed by Tom Grant

Items for Newsletter

Items for inclusion in the next edition of the Newsletter are now being accepted. The Editors would be grateful if you could forward these to **CEDaR** before the end of July.