

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING

NEWS

-March 2004-



National Federation for Biological Recording

NEWS

February 2004

No Newsletter?

No NBFR Newsletter has been produced this year because we do not have an Editor. If you feel that you have a talent (active or latent) for editing or writing, or for whipping members into activity to write for the Newsletter, we would love to hear from you – just email pha@ceh.ac.uk.

But instead....!

NFBR is fortunate to be able to circulate to members free copies of the Proceedings of a recent YNU conference, which we hope will be interesting and informative.

NFBR Committee and officers

NFBR Committee has met quarterly and we always seem to have a very full agenda. Committee members are active on many other national and regional committees, always trying (and usually succeeding) to get the authoritative voice of biological recording practitioners heard where it matters. The contact details of all Committee members and officers are included in this News.

NFBR Website

Many thanks to Nick Moyes who keeps the NFBR website up-to-date. If you want to know what is going on or who to contact, log on to www.nfbr.org.uk.

NFBR Conference and AGM (2-3 July 2004)

We are putting together an exciting mix of talks and workshops for a 2-day meeting in Cardiff in July (or 3 days if you want to do some fieldwork in South Wales). A Preliminary Programme is enclosed and further details will be sent direct to all NFBR before Easter; and eye on the NFBR website.

Put the dates in your diary NOW!

A Biodiversity Strategy for England: Promoting Education and Public Understanding.

In the recently published document on measuring the progress of the Biodiversity Strategy for England (DEFRA, 2003), a chapter is dedicated to the issue of promoting education and public understanding of biodiversity. The strategy has a vision for a society in which “people recognise, value and take action to maintain and enhance biodiversity as part of their everyday lives – in the same way that they might address health issues, the community in which they live, or their economic circumstances”. The strategy hopes to achieve this vision through increasing the number of people choosing to spend leisure time at nature reserves, increasing the number of members of biodiversity organizations and increasing both the number of people who take part in conservation activities as volunteers and the total amount of time people spend volunteering. So far progress towards these objectives between 1995 and 2001 has been poor. No data is currently available on membership of biodiversity organizations, there is no clear trend in the data on nature reserve visitors, and the positive trend reported for volunteer involvement is due to the increase in volunteer recruitment by the Marine Conservation Society alone.

Though the indirect relationship between these objectives and the promotion of education and public understanding of biodiversity can easily be made, they are unlikely to play a major part in achieving the stated vision. They are likely to fail at the first hurdle – the need to recognise biodiversity. In fact they seem to actively avoid the issues of education and understanding in favour of attendance and membership. More effective, (and more measurable), objectives, may be: -

- Increasing the number of pupils undertaking field biodiversity activities, as part of the National Science Curriculum strand Sc2: Life Processes and Living Things, at key stages 1, 2 3 and 4.
- Increasing the number of life long learners taking part in accredited courses related to biodiversity.
- Widening participation in introductory biodiversity training events offered by biodiversity organizations.

It seems that the education and public understanding of biology is one of the least developed strands of the biodiversity strategy for England, and one with which the NFBR is in a strong position to engage.

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (2003). *A biodiversity strategy for England. Measuring progress: baseline assessment*. Defra Publishing. London.

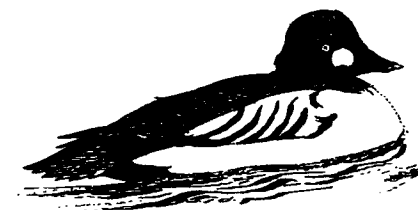
**National Federation of Biological Recording
– Council Meeting 22nd January 2004**

Yorkshire and The Humber Regional Report

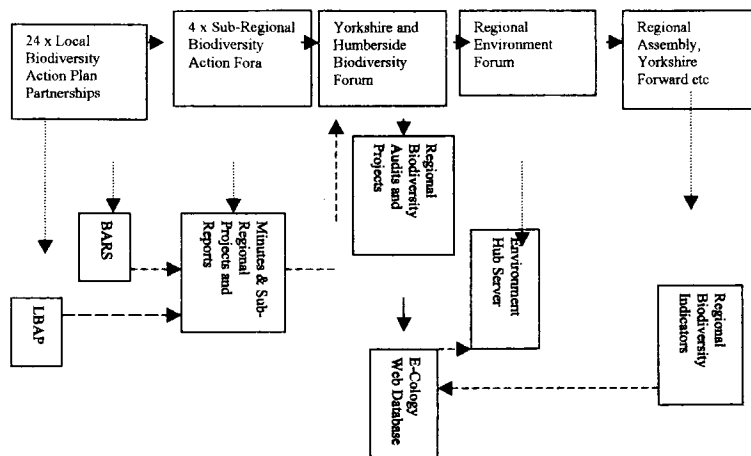
**Current Status of Record Centres in Yorkshire
and the Humber**

Historic Yorkshire is inequitably serviced by five biological record centres, four of which are housed within Local Government, whilst the fifth is devolved from a charitable trust. West Yorkshire Ecology, housed within Leeds City Council, covers West Yorkshire. West Yorkshire Ecology currently has two posts, an ecologist and a Biological records Officer, though only the former is currently filled. Records are held on a Microsoft Access database and ESRI Arc View geographic information system (GIS). In recent months West Yorkshire Ecology has experienced staffing problems with key members of staff moving on and remaining staff suffering serious illness. The structure of West Yorkshire Ecology is under review with a strong possibility that the unit will become part of the planning department with a commensurate realignment of the Centres activities. South Yorkshire has three record centres hosted in the Doncaster Museum, Rotherham Leisure Services and Sheffield Countryside Services, each of which has one full-time employee. Barnsley is not currently covered by a biological records centre, however, there have been recent moves to establish this capability through the current local biodiversity action plan (LBAP) process, though this may not lead to the establishment of a biological record centre as such. The Rotherham Centre holds records on Recorder 3.1 software and makes extensive use of the Internet, whilst the other two Centres use bespoke databases developed from PC based software. None of the South Yorkshire centres currently use GIS. Both the Doncaster and Rotherham Centres are under threat of closure, with the Rotherham Centre recently been given an eighteen month “stay of execution” whilst its position is reviewed by Rotherham City Council. The more recently established North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC), devolved from the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Trust in 2000, covers North and East Yorkshire. NEYEDC has two full time members of staff and administrative support based in offices in York. NEYEDC holds

records in Recorder 2002 and uses MapInfo and Idrisi GIS software. Extensive biological records are held by both the Yorkshire Dales and The North York Moors National Park Authorities both of which have agreed in principle to pass data on to NEYEDC as soon as administrative issues related to data exchange licences can be resolved. NEYEDC is currently breaking even, however, its operation is based on a large number of relatively small service level agreements and a suitable source of capital funding will be necessary if the Centre is to grow. At the time of writing this report, there is no biological record centre serving the South bank of the Humber and the surrounding area, though there are is an extensive data collection at the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust offices in Horncastle. There is currently a steering group investigating the feasibility of a biological record centre to serve historic Lincolnshire on behalf of the Lincolnshire Local Biodiversity Plan (LBAP) Partnership. A stakeholder consultation has been undertaken by the consultants Baker, Shepherd and Gillespie and a feasibility study by the Somerset Ecological Record Centre (SERC). The process is currently stalled by a failure to agree on the model for the Centre. The majority of the steering group favours an independent record centre model, whilst the local authority contingent of the LBAP partnership are adamant that they will only fully support a biological record centre within Lincolnshire County Council, the primary role of which will be to support the development process.



Biodiversity Infrastructure in the Yorkshire and Humber Region
In recent months a coherent structure, which links biodiversity activity on the ground to the regional structures, has been formalised from existing organisations in the Yorkshire and Humber Region. The infrastructure can be summarised as follows: -



- The Yorkshire and Humber Region has twenty-three sub-regional biodiversity action plans, including those produced by each of the district and unitary councils, the National Parks and the Lincolnshire County BAP. Each plan is produced by a partnership that co-ordinates local actions and report progress to JNCC via the Biodiversity Action Reporting Scheme (BARS).
- The biodiversity partnerships have recently instituted four sub-regional fora to allow co-ordination between LBAPs, identify potential collaborative projects and secure joint partnership funding.
- Each sub-regional LBAP forum has a place on the Yorkshire and Humberside Biodiversity Forum (YHBF). The forum is composed of representatives of a wide range of stakeholder groups including statutory bodies, local authorities, non-government organisations and charities. NEYEDC is a member of the YHBF. The purpose of the forum is to facilitate regional biodiversity auditing and to promote and support regional and sub-regional biodiversity projects. The YHBF has an agenda to establish itself as the biodiversity advisory group to the regional assembly. The YHBF currently has a web site that has details of regional biodiversity audits and reports on the region's LBAP actions, but is developing a project called E-Cology, which will be an online database of biodiversity data at the regional level.

- The YHBF has two seats on the Regional Environment Forum. The Regional Environment Forum (REF) has a wider remit than the YHBF but draws members from similar organisations and acts as environment advisor to the regional assembly. The REF is developing a regional data hub, which will serve environment data to the region and will host the E-Cology web-database.
- The REF has a seat on the Regional Assembly. The regional assembly has recently recognised a suit of biodiversity indicators, which will be adopted as soon as it can be demonstrated that they can be effectively monitored. The indicators will be used as part of the process of benchmarking sustainability in the region. Information about the status of the indicator species will be served to the region via the E-Cology database. The YHBF is currently managing projects aimed at developing these regional indicator species.
- Projects identified through this infrastructure are receiving funding from the regional structures, which are currently being administered on an ad hoc basis by members of the YHBF.
- The way in which North and North East Lincolnshire can be dawn into this framework is still unclear.

The role of amateur naturalists in establishing and maintaining the flow of data in the infrastructure is recognised at every level, as is the role of Biological Record Centres (BRC) in collating, analysing and distributing the data. The exact role of the Record Centres in this regional infrastructure, however, is currently unclear. NEYEDC recently hosted a meeting of the region's BRCs to address this issue and a paper is being prepared for the next meeting of the YHBF. The thrust of the paper is a report on the degree to which the region's record BRCs are willing and able to contribute towards the data flow required by the developing regional infrastructure, to identify obstacles to this involvement and ways in which they could be overcome with special reference to additional funding and resources.

Environmental Record Centre for the Humber

The idea of an environmental record centre for the Humber has existed for some time, driven primarily by North Lincolnshire Council and Hull University, with support in principle from English Nature, Environment

Agency and some of the leading businesses based on the estuary. Over the last 18 months Yorkshire Forward has funded a Halcrow feasibility study for the proposed Centre. The feasibility study suggests that the project would require a team of four to maintain, analyse and distribute the environmental data and that up to £250,000.00 per year would be available to support the Centre on a sustainable basis. Yorkshire Forward has made a sum of money available to pump prime this development and is seeking tenders from organisations or partnerships wishing to tender for the project.

National Science Week

Over the last decade, the public perception of science has changed. The trust and enthusiasm that the general public expressed in the 1950s has given way to incomprehension, distrust and disinterest. As a result, millions of pounds of public and private money are invested each year to encourage public engagement with science. It used to be known as Public Understanding of Science, but PUS is not a very attractive acronym, and the gods of public relations have outlawed it. The high point of the Public Engagement with Science Year is National Science Week, which takes place in the second week in March. The event is coordinated by the BA and sees lectures, displays, demonstrations and "hands on activities" taking place at venues all over the country. It is the only week in the year when the attention of the general public and the non-specialist media alike are focused on Science, yet across the country, field biology and biological recording are poorly represented. At a time when both the amateur and professional organizations alike are bemoaning the demise of taxonomy, field biology and related disciplines, should the NFBR take an active role in this event.

Appeal from your Council.

Simon Pickles has at a time of immense pressure, produced the three articles above. Please email Paul Harding with news from your record centre, local society, museum or recording group with your activities. We should aim to produce two newsletters each year.

Email: pha@ceh.ac.uk

N.F.B.R. HONORARY OFFICERS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS 2003-04

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February 25, 2004



NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING

BANKER'S ORDER

To The Manager Bank/ Building Society

Branch

Address.....

.....

..... Post Code.....

Date.....Quoting Reference.....

Please pay to the account of the National Federation of Biological Recording, account no 00166065. Sort Code 20-97-01 at Barclays Bank, Winchester Group, PO Box 87, Winchester SO23 8TN the sum of £10 **NOW** and £10 on 1st January (delete now if appropriate) in each year until further orders from me in writing. **This cancels any previous orders.**

Signature.....

Bank a/c No.....

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

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(BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

Members wishing to pay by internet banking services should retain this form. The membership secretary would be grateful for either postal or email confirmation

NFBR Conference 2004

***Natural partners
– biodiversity observations and collections***

National Museum & Gallery of Wales, Cardiff

**Friday 2nd July & Saturday 3rd July 2004
with optional field excursions on Sunday 4th July**

**Preliminary notice
*Speakers to be confirmed***

Purpose

- To examine the apparent divergence between field observations, collections and archives, especially the role of museums in biodiversity documentation.
- To consider data quality, validation, networking, interoperability and access to biodiversity resources (e.g. information, records, specimens and archives).
- To examine progress in integrating the collation, management and providing access to biodiversity resources.
- To consider the need for future action in these areas.

Friday 2nd July

1000 onwards **Registration**

1030 **Coffee, posters and demonstrations**

Session 1

1100 Keynote address

Theme: Comprehensive, accurate and validated biodiversity information should be accessible to all at local, regional, national and international scales.

1130 Functions of museums and record centres and how they have changed

1200 The form and function of archival collections

1230 Use of technology in providing access to information about biodiversity

1300 Lunch

1345 **NFBR AGM for NFBR members**, or opportunity to view museum

Session 2

1430 **Local and regional biodiversity networks and LRCs – recent developments**

1500 **Links between national and international biodiversity and collections networks**

1530 **Tea, posters and demonstrations**

1600 **Developing networks of data suppliers**

1630 **Engaging the public: outreach, training and education**

1700 **Introduction to Day 2 workshops**

1710 **End**

Saturday 3rd July

1000 **Workshops 1-3 convene**

- 1 Data validation and verification
- 2 Management and role of collections
- 3 Management and role of archives

1100 **Coffee, posters and demonstrations**

1130 **Workshops 1-3 reconvene** (opportunity to choose different workshop)

1230 **Lunch**

1330 **Plenary session**

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Topics to cover | Feedback from workshops |
| | Funding |
| | Standards and their implementation |
| | Outreach and training |
| Proposal, discussion and approval of Recommendations | |

1500 **End and Tea**

Sunday 4th July

Optional field excursions to sites in South Wales.