



BRISC

BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND

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Recorder News

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Bio-Recording Activities of a Scottish Wildlife Trust Group

This is a shortened version of a talk given at the BRISC conference.

Safeguarding Wildlife Interests in the Planning Process

Our SWT group has a team of six who screen all the Stirling & Clackmannanshire local authority (LA) and the forestry planning

applications (PA). For a recent objection to a PA for an engineered mountain bike track through an ancient oak woodland we brought together data from 14 sources and a number of local naturalists. The field work records associated with reviewing planning applications can however, turn up nice surprises. Recently while walking the route of a proposed cross country footpath over the Craigs at Callander we found a colony of small white orchids, the first ever record in VC 87.

Helping Achieve LBAP Objectives

Originally written by BRISC Chairman Jonathan Willett, the Stirling Biodiversity Action Plan includes Juniper, Sticky Catchfly, Frog Orchid, Birds-Nest Orchid, Lesser and Greater Butterfly Orchids, Large Heath and Northern Brown Argus butterfly action plans. Our group monitors the populations and where they have declined, tries to find remedies. For instance the last Frog Orchid site in our area is strimmed and counted every year and as a result the numbers have been increasing. The major habitat

action plan we support is 'Unimproved Pastures' where 35 sites are monitored. We do this by counting 'Axiophyes' or attractive plants that volunteers can be quickly taught to recognise. We use GPS to record the position of individual plants and produce population maps on Google Earth. For example our records of the northern hay meadows in Braeleny north of Callander showed the Greater Butterfly Orchid counts decreased from 426 in 2009 to 43 in 2017. We believe this is the result of a grant-promoted change from winter to summer grazing which was introduced to favour Black Grouse. Together with the BSBI we have approached SNH and the land managers of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park to try and change the time when the cattle are put out.

Citizen Science

Our group has done a lot of research on the role of insect pollinators in the fertilization of orchids. With the help of staff at Buglife we have discovered that Broad-leaved Helleborines are

pollinated almost entirely by female wasps (1). As Charles Darwin predicted in his book on the 'Fertilization of Orchids'(1862) we found that Greater Butterfly Orchids are pollinated by noctuid moths (2) where the pollen masses are glued to the visiting moth's eyes. This happens as the moth probes with its proboscis for the sugary nectar in the flower's long conical nectary or spur. This local study was extended to a national project to see if different populations of Greater Butterfly Orchids had evolved differing spur lengths to accommodate the varying proboscis sizes of different species of moths.

We have also surveyed the flora of The Kings Park in Stirling. A complete list of all plants in this ancient royal hunting park was published over a century ago so we were able to make a comparison (3). The 1908 list contained 225 species and we found 247 species in 2013. But this apparent increase in biodiversity obscures a much more profound change. Only 144 of the original



Volunteers carrying out the annual survey of the Greater Butterfly Orchid meadows in Plein Country Park

species were re-found and the 80 that were lost were all native plants like Yellow Star of Bethlehem, Early Purple Orchid, Wild Pansies, Agrimony, Mullein, Sweet Violets etc. More than half the new records were non-natives like Spanish Bluebell, Daffodils, Red Currant, Pirri Pirri Burr, Leopard's-Bane, Sitka Spruce etc.



A Gold Spangle moth caught in a Greater Butterfly orchid meadow with 9 club like pollen masses of the orchid attached to it's compound eyes Just as Charles Darwin predicted.

Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS)

Initially Stirling Council did not recognise LNCS although Clackmannanshire did. Together with the Stirling Biodiversity Officer we persuaded Stirling Council to recognise LNCS in the latest review of its Development Plan. In our area LNC assessment will involve an imminent hand over to TWIC. To facilitate this process we have retrieved all the local LNCS paper

files from an SWT store and converted them to an electronic format. Together with BSBI and TWIC a start has also been made to resurvey some of the original Clackmannanshire sites.

The Future

Throughout the winter we organise talks that are often addressed by wildlife record collecting organisations. On a number of occasions we have been told that our area was under-recorded and are urged to do something about it. Such an appeal by the local moth recorder John Knowler fell on fertile ground and we obtained a grant for a moth trap and generator which has been out on 48 nights during the last summer. We are also currently forming a mammal recording group.

Roy Sexton

Roy also acknowledged the participation of 52 volunteers without whom these projects would be unlikely to happen.

References

1. Wasp Pollination of Broad Leaved Helleborines Journal of the Hardy Orchid Society Vol 13 (2016) 88-93
2. Moth pollinators of Greater Butterfly Orchids Journal of the Hardy Orchid Society Vol 11 (2014) 14-24
3. King's Park Flora a Century of Change The Forth Naturalist and Historian Journal Vol 37 (2014) 17- 31

Associated articles are available on line from the Forth Naturalist and Historian:

www.fnh.stir.ac.uk/journal/backissues/index.php

Hardy Orchid Society :

www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk/



The Chairman's Column

Jonathan Willet

Happy New Year to you all! It is the middle of winter and the sun is shining and it is feeling rather mild. I have heard of Blackbirds and Ravens with chicks, which is incredibly early. We did have three days of winter snow so far this year but I am sure that there is more to come.

The SBIF Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland is now fully underway with the interviews having started and the online questionnaire just about to go live. The amount of work being put into this is pretty mind-blowing. I was one of the interviewees and after one and a half hours my brain was mush and I felt wrung out. I hope my interviewers didn't feel like that too! The interview allowed me to reflect on my career and volunteering in and for biological recording, raking up lots of memories. It made me realise that I had been involved in biological recording professionally and voluntarily for almost 20 years and at all sorts of levels, some of which I had forgotten. Namely being the Chairman of CARSE (Central Area Recording Systems for the Environment) or the Central Region LRC for 2000-3. Mind you that is more a reflection on my memory than anything else!

Nearly 60 of these in depth interviews will take place all with transcripts of the discussion. Add to that the questionnaires and there will be a lot of thoughts, opinions and facts to wade through. The Review certainly is doing as much research as it can. By the Autumn there will be the recommendations report. What it says will be difficult to ignore, I am sure, as it ties in

with lots of plans and strategies. If we really want to conserve and restore our biodiversity, it will make a very strong case for using biological data far more effectively across all of Scotland. I am hopeful that the powers that be can be persuaded of the value of managing our wealth of biological data and supporting its collection (and of course collectors!) far better.

A bit of good news in these dark days of public finance is that we have secured a small sum from SNH to support three bursaries for under-26s this year. If you would like to improve your biological recording skills then please do apply: <http://www.brisc.org.uk/Bursaries.php>

When I was out yesterday looking for Golden Eagles, none seen but some rather fine Bramblings were, and I spied some spider's webs covering a manure heap in a field. I had never seen that before. On investigation there were hundreds of little red spiders in the webs, which covered several square metres. What an unusual sighting! I am making enquiries to find out what species they are. It just goes to show nature is full of surprises.

I should mention that the conference and AGM went very well with over 30 people attending who got to hear some excellent talks. There was a great buzz about the place and the talks about local nature conservation sites did spark some interesting discussions. The presentations from the conference are available on the BRISC website.

Do remember to get all your records submitted to your local record centre or Scheme and Society of your choice. Enjoy the winter, if it comes and here's to a bountiful 2017 for biological recording.

January 2017



Editorial

Sarah Eno

The NBN news (pages 16 - 19) is extensive this time because of the very important information about the move from the NBN Gateway to the Atlases. With Scotland having been a successful testing ground, the other countries are now following. I often find NBN news rather dry but this is a more juicy must-read to keep up to date and to offer help where you can. There is also a special plea on page 19 to participate in the SBIF Review.

The back page has the list of BRISC Committee members as voted for at the AGM and co-opted since. We have been very fortunate to recruit 3 new members - Kelly Anne Dempsey, Sarah Jayne Forster and Chris McInerny as vice chair. Duncan Davidson did finally resign as treasurer but is still on the committee. That means we are still desperate for a treasurer (which is not a large job) - see details on page 20.

A report of the BRISC conference follows so my editorial is especially short.

NEXT ISSUES.....

The two further issues for 2017 are due out in late May and September.

- **The deadline for the next issue is 12th May 2017**
- **Please send articles, news, events and reviews, in Word & photos in jpeg preferably, to me at:**
- **saraheno@riseup.net**

BRISC Annual Conference

Linlithgow Burgh Halls

Saturday 29th October

The Conference this year was attended by about 36 people, and concentrated primarily on biological recording on sites – the who, what and why. We started with Dr Hannah giving a fascinating history of the Scottish Wildlife Trust's (SWT) Wildlife Site system which found funding to survey further special sites, not notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest for their potential biodiversity. By 2000 through the Scottish Wildlife Action Programme (SWAP) there was a staff of 11 FT and 23 seasonal surveyors (the majority of the latter coming from SWT habitat surveying training teams) including 6 Management Advisors liaising with land managers. By 2001 when SWAP wound up, 3082 sites had been surveyed and 514 had passed the Site Assessment scoring. The assessment system for these sites has developed through various iterations and the current version can score several more aspects of a site, such as social or educational use. In some Local Authorities (LA) the assessment process for potential Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) is continuing on an expert volunteer basis. Different Councils have different names, from Sites of Important for Nature Conservation (SINCs) to LBS...but there is an enduring legacy of approved sites which, in many LA's have a degree of protection through the Planning process. The other output of lasting consequence were the many careers launched through SWAP and the SWT training teams for many people, a large number of whom still work in conservation.

Graeme Wilson then ran through the LBS process which TWIC carries out for Edinburgh, the Lothians, Scottish Borders and recently, Stirling & Clackmannshire

sites. For the Borders, TWIC assembles the paperwork which includes a site map, aerial view, habitat networks for context, species spreadsheet of all available records and the Assessment Report which has developed into a sophisticated scoring document. All the paperwork is made available on the Borders LBS forum for the expert volunteer group and the Council Biodiversity Officer to look at before they meet to discuss and approve, reject or recommend for further survey or research. The approval of the sites is communicated to the landowners and the sites will be



highlighted on the Council's planning maps in due course.

Roy Sexton is part of a SWT team whose work is guided by the Stirling Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). He described some spectacular recording on special sites and the efforts of local people to conserve and protect the species thereon. Part of this talk is reproduced in this issue.

How the LA uses the biodiversity information was amply illustrated by Stuart McPherson, the East Lothian Biodiversity officer. Although as he said, his work is almost full time on a computer, using datasets provided by TWIC, Stuart has worked out the pattern and isolation of Great Crested Newt sites for example, and

uncovered geographic gaps in biodiversity information. Using a series of GIS overlays, he has also been developing a Network analysis of the habitats and species, thus assisting advice in planning and conservation. Stuart finished by musing on what the future might hold, especially post Brexit ... and as the Internet gets more powerful.

The last talk before lunch was given by Ellen Wilson (RSPB). Against a background of lunch service noise, she gamely took us through the review process which SBIF is carrying out. Further information can be found on page 19.

A brief AGM was followed by four fascinating talks by BRISC bursary awardees. This is an excellent new feature giving the speakers a friendly audience on which to practice public speaking and the audience, treats by way of the work they are doing.

Sarah Jane Forster spoke of her work Giving Nature a Home – an RSPB project in Glasgow to connect children, families and community groups to create a city-wide wildlife garden and celebrate nature within Glasgow. Sarah spoke briefly about the 6 Ambassador Species and 6 Schools to concentrate teaching of ID skills, such as using keys for difficult invertebrate groups and the use of iRecord. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/at-home-and-abroad/scotland/glasgow/>

Spiders were next up with Kirsty Goodman (2016 bursary) describing her PhD project on "How Spider Communities are affected by typical Plantation Management". She is looking at the species and their functional diversity – see her report on page 12.

Steve Porch who was a bursary recipient in 2015, mentioned the importance of Solitary Bees. For starters they are more numerous and more diverse than honey bees and 100 times more efficient as pollinators! But sadly, he hasn't much time for bees now as he has a job with Glasgow Flower Power in Pollock Country Park.

The Project runs for 4 years until 2016. It aims to establish a sustainable wildflower nursery to produce 10,000 wild plants each year for nature conservation projects throughout the entire city. Obviously this involves a lot of community engagement. However, he is also hoping to develop an ID guide for Solitary Bees.

The Grow Wild website has excellent reports: <https://www.growwilduk.com/>



Adrian Sumner examining a mollusc

The day finished with a very happy bunch of recorders walking around the Linlithgow Loch talking about snail, galls, ash die-back (Jonathon found an example on a young sapling ash), wondering where Keith had got to and admiring a fine stand of yellow waxcaps (no fungi expert there to ID them!) on a front lawn.

Sarah Eno

Awards News

Craig Macadam, Buglife's Conservation Director, was awarded the RSPB Species Champion award (2016) for Scotland in



Craig - second from left (Photo courtesy of Buglife website)

recognition of a decade work. Craig has championed the conservation of invertebrates for nearly a decade and has developed Buglife Scotland from a single part-time post to an established conservation organisation. See more at: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/news-&-events/news/top-award-for-conservation-director>



Sandy and Brian Coppins were awarded the Bob Saville quach at TWIC's autumn 2016 conference. It was given in appreciation for their tireless contributions to lichen recording, research and recorder support as teachers and mentors over many years.

News from Ayrshire

Hello everyone, my name is Aisling and I am the project officer for a new and exciting project which Southern Uplands Partnership has just launched.



Aisling with her dog Coral

It is a two-year wildlife project - *Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?* - which will engage people throughout the region and encourage them to get involved in wildlife recording – collecting information about where different plants and animals live. It will work with local wildlife enthusiasts of all abilities – beginners and experts – and help to create a focal point for local environmental data. It is hoped that this will be continued thereafter through expansion of Dumfries & Galloway Environmental Resources Centre (DGERC), depending of course on the outcome of the current Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF) review.

Ayrshire is home to a wealth of wildlife which lives in the broad range of habitats that Ayrshire provides, such as farmland, bogs and a stunning coastline. Yet many taxonomic groups are under-recorded, and the lack of an active local environmental records centre means that there are lots of opportunities to improve collation, sharing and use of information at a local level.

A key part of *Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?* will focus on training communities and individuals to gather information about local wildlife. Over the next two years I will be running a programme of events throughout Ayrshire which will provide people with new skills that focus on getting communities and individuals out identifying and recording wildlife in their area. The subjects of the training days will begin with an Introduction to Wildlife Recording workshop at the end of January, followed by a series of training days throughout the spring and summer on amphibians, reptiles, butterflies and dragonflies. If you fancy coming along to any of these days, keep an eye on the Facebook page for upcoming events!

Not only will the project seek to get people out recording, but it will also help to mobilise past records for Ayrshire, which have been untouched for years. As part of the project we have already managed to access over 30,000 records for Ayrshire from an old Recorder 2002 database, which we are gradually re-importing into

Recorder 6. We are also in the process of advertising for volunteers to assist with digitising paper records lurking in the vaults of The National Trust and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. It is an exciting time for the *Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire* project, and we are well on target to hit our aim of mobilising 100,000 records!

The project is funded by Ayrshire LEADER 2014-2020 Programme, the Heritage Lottery Fund and all three Ayrshire councils.

The project is in its early stages and a website is in the process of being developed. In the meantime, we have a Facebook page which has links to a recording form on which you can submit any records you have while the website is being developed. Look at Facebook and Twitter for updates and upcoming wildlife events in 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/whereswildlifeinayrshire>

<https://twitter.com/wildayrshire>

Aisling Gribbin
Project Officer
07850081513



Angus's Fantastic Coastline

The www.marinelifeangus.co.uk website promotes Angus coastal sites and its amazing wildlife. Angus is perfect for land based cetacean watching and the website has hosted a citizen science project recording whales and dolphin sightings since 2011. Sightings of Bottlenose dolphins, Minke whale, Harbour porpoise, Common dolphin and even Humpback whales have been submitted by visitors to the coast at various locations.

This collection of data has allowed for the first time, a greater understanding of how species are using Angus waters, and will aid future conservation. Highlighting the best spots to enjoy land based watching, another important element of the project will also hopefully diversify the wildlife tourism product in Angus.

Where to Watch

Records from the public allowed the mapping of areas on the Angus Coast that are sightings Hotspots. Some spots are better for viewing certain species and different behaviours (Fig. 1). Elevated spots on headlands and at river mouths are some of the best areas to watch feeding and socialising behaviours. Angus is home to renowned salmonid rivers such as the Rivers North and South Esk and both



Identiplant - FSC distance learning course available in 2018 in serious botanical ID training. It will open for applications in December 2017 See FSC website:

<http://identiplant.co.uk/>

river mouths are attractive to foraging bottlenose dolphin in particular.

What's Been Observed

The data can be broken down and a

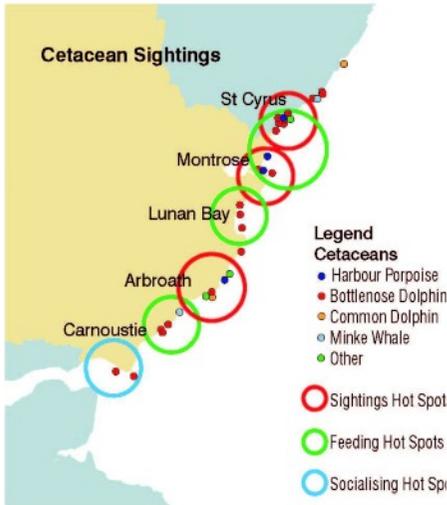


Fig. 1 Cetacean sightings, feeding and socialising hotspots have been identified on the Angus coast. The occurrence of particular species shown allows land based watchers to identify spots of particular interest to them.

simple snapshot of behaviours and also human encounters with species can be seen below.

- Most common species recorded, Bottlenose dolphin – 73%
- More sightings submitted from North Angus – 66%
- Most sightings were from 0-100ms from shore – 45%
- Most encounters were approximately 15 mins – 34%

- Most common behaviour was traveling – 48%
- Feeding behaviours more commonly seen near river mouths and bays – 59%
- Most common pod sizes are between 1 & 5 animals – 57%

Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The results of the survey are submitted to the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership's "Marine & Coastal Working Group". Tayside Priority species include Bottlenose dolphin, Harbour porpoise and Minke whale. Working group leader Kelly Ann Dempsey who manages the project said "It is hoped that by raising awareness of cetaceans in Angus waters and learning more about their behaviour we can protect them at a time where Scotland's coastal waters face big challenges. Understanding how species use the water surrounding our coast also allows us to promote local wildlife tourism opportunities and shows just how accessible our beautiful, varied coast is".

A small publication Whale & Dolphin Watching on the Angus Coast was produced by the group and can be found on the website alongside the submit a sightings page at www.marinelifeangus.co.uk

For more information please contact info@marinelife.org.uk

Kelly Anne Dempsey
Project Manager

BRISC PROJECTS

Bursary reports

In the summer of 2016, with thanks to support from a BRISC bursary, I was able to attend a course on beetle identification at the Field Studies Council Juniper Hall centre.

Beetles (Order: Coleoptera) are the largest order of all the insects, with over 4000 species in the UK. There are a huge number of groups within this that exploit many different habitats and food sources, from aquatic beetles, deadwood specialists, to dung beetles and carrion feeders.

We visited a local site (Ashstead Common), as well as explored the field centre grounds, to collect our own specimens, by sweeping vegetation as well as collecting pitfall traps. During the weekend we learned how to identify many groups and species. Many species are large, brightly coloured and easy to identify from sight. Other though are much more difficult and require microscopy to examine smaller features such as antennal and tarsal (feet) segments to identify them correctly.

As well as identification we were also shown how to start our own reference collection. We were shown how to card and pin specimens, and how to label them correctly. Carding was difficult, trying to get the legs and antennae in the correct position- particularly for the tiniest specimens!

The biggest decision having done the course is how to apply and further my

knowledge. I have left confident in being able to identify beetles down to family level. But with 4000 species in the UK it a daunting task to become an expert in identifying all species. There is no one book that covers all beetles, but many books dedicated to particular families.



The start of a reference collection.

With this in mind I have decided to focus on two groups- the seed and leaf beetles (Chrysomelidae), and the ground beetles (Carabidae), both with an active recording scheme. I plan to



Protapion difforme - ~3 mm long!

start collecting specimens to add to my reference collection, improve my identification skills, and generate records for the recording schemes. I

also hope to use this knowledge to further other people's interest in beetles, by helping at wildlife events, such as with Edinburgh's Wild Reekie Group

<http://wildreekie.blogspot.co.uk/> as well as posting pictures on twitter to show how stunning beetles can be @Mike_W_Smith.

Mike Smith

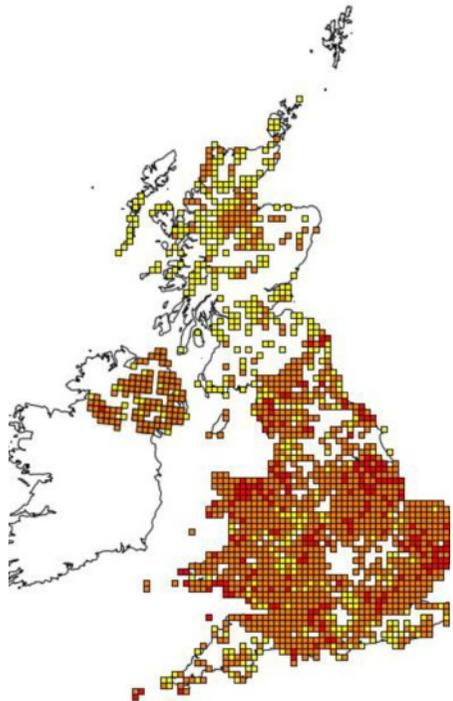
Spiders and where I went.....

I first attempted to identify a spider as a student on an invertebrate taxonomy course. It was difficult. I identified around four spiders in four hours. Aside from the few large species with patterns on their abdomens, most spiders seem to need to be examined closely with a high power microscope and plenty of light. I gave the group little notice after this experience and shifted my attention to more "obliging" groups of arthropods such as macro moths and ground beetles to begin my journey as an entomologist. This was great fun but I had always wanted to give spiders another go.

Since January this year, I have become a PhD student in biology tasked with finding out about biodiversity in plantation forests and the resilience of these ecosystems. This involves running pitfall traps at a number of sites throughout the UK – including eight in Scotland. Pitfall traps are an excellent method for collecting large numbers of ground-dwelling

invertebrates, especially spiders and ground beetles.

Spiders, although well studied in forests in Ireland and Southern England, are poorly studied in Scotland. In addition, biological recording of this group is sparse (see figures two and three for records coverage). This would be a great opportunity to improve on our knowledge of spiders and was the



All spider records in the UK. Yellow squares: 2000 to 2016, orange squares: 1950 to 1999 and red squares: 1600 to 1949. Crown copyright and database rights 2011 Ordnance Survey

excuse I needed to have a second go at mastering their identification.

Using a new style of key for me was an interesting experience – the Linyphiidae key is basically a table summarising a small number of features of these numerous and minute spiders and it works very well. I have also picked up some new spider sampling techniques that I hope to try out in my own time.

I now have 200 samples from across the UK to keep me occupied over the winter and look forward to building a large list of species records for the study sites. These records will be shared with site managers and the public so I hope they will add to our understanding of spider ecology and distribution in the UK.

Kirsty Godsman

Mammal Identification

I attended a mammal identification course at Kindrogan Field Centre which was a Mammal Society course led by the John Haddow, famous in the bat world. Bats were forgotten about for the weekend though, as we ventured through the variety of terrestrial mammals (native and non-native) found in Britain.

From tracks and signs to specimens galore and small mammal trapping to analysis of owl pellets, I can now identify mammals, other than bats, using a variety of techniques previously unknown to me. A lack of equipment is no longer such a problem

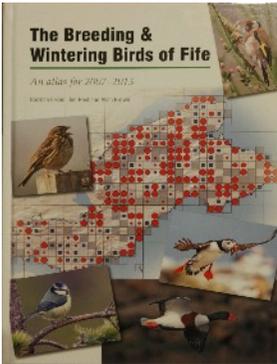
as recording mammals is so simple, especially with the number of recording tools and apps at our fingertips.

I've dabbled a little in small mammal trapping before and a bit of badger surveying here and there, but my focus has mainly been on bats. So I was delighted when I received my certificate in Basic Mammal Identification stating that I had demonstrated competence in British land mammal field identification skills by passing a written assessment with distinction. With that in the bag, I have been inspired to get out and get more active not only with the newly formed Stirling Mammal group but also my local group for the Lothians, taking my newly learned skills and putting them into practice. I thoroughly enjoy the small mammal trapping side of things and would like to carry out small projects within my local area.

I have also recently become an Ecologist, my first full-time role that doesn't just consist of bat activity surveys. After completing the course, I now feel more confident in my role at work and will now be able to use my newly formed skills in mammal identification through the use of field signs when out carrying fieldwork.

All in all the course was immensely useful and I am grateful to BRISC for the opportunity to participate. Whether it's for work or just for fun, I can now record mammals wherever I am.

Heather Campbell



Book Review

The Breeding & Wintering Birds of Fife, and Atlas for 2007-2013

Elkins, N., Reid, J.B. & Brown, A.W. 2016. The Breeding and Wintering Birds of Fife - an atlas for 2007-13. Scottish Ornithologists' Club, Aberlady.

ISBN 978-0-9512139-6-4

<http://www.the-soc.org.uk/the-breeding-and-wintering-birds-of-fife/>

The Breeding & Wintering Birds of Fife (BWBF) is comprehensive atlas representing a huge undertaking, covering 213 species, presented in a clear, easy to read and accessible format. This Atlas contains plenty of useful maps of the distribution and abundance of wintering and breeding bird species in Fife, with beautiful photography of all species covered.

The Atlas builds on previous work undertaken in the 1990s, the Fife Bird Atlas (Elkins *et. al* 2003) (FBA) as well as the updated Bird Atlas (2013). There is a clear message that the BWBF should be used in conjunction with the previous FBA as this BWBF lacks the in-depth ecology of individual species and migration patterns. The ordinary birder may find that the species account is what holds the most

value. Nonetheless, each species is covered with accompanying maps and previous distribution data where available, in order to present an updated account of bird distribution and abundance in Fife.

The species accounts are handily presented in taxonomic order, which will be easy to use for anyone with familiarity to the Collins Bird Guide, and also accompanied with an index to English names in the back of the book.

Why read or buy?

The BWBF would complement many a naturalists reference library, from occasional local twitcher to the serious academic, and of course everyone in between. The book can be used as a guide to finding certain species for 'year listers', as the maps are divided into 2km² grids and give a good indication to areas worth staking out. Equally though, the book can be used as a preliminary research tool by academics and enthusiasts for monitoring conservation trends.

The maps for each species offer a good visual representation of the survey results. For well documented species four maps are included to show distribution numbers during winter and summer, the breeding status and a comparison map to the previous FBA breeding status.

The maps are let down slightly by uneven survey effort, but the limitations of the data are discussed in the survey coverage section.

The status for each species in Fife, as well as the UK conservation status (green, amber and red), are given for each of the 213 species in the atlas. Furthermore, the text for each of the species accounts provides details on the distribution of the species in the wider area with reference to

the NBA (National Bird Atlas) as well as other national and local surveys. Useful statistics are also presented along with previous trends for the species, and in some cases likely reasons for population increases and declines.

Of particular note....

For some species such as the corn bunting, which only occurs in Scotland on some western islands and Fife, the atlas gives further interesting and detailed information. For example, describing how local farming practices have helped sustain a healthy population of corn buntings since a decline in the early 2000, the BWBF shows a recent growth. The species account includes a histogram of number of singing male corn buntings from 1995 to 2013.

For a common species such as the oystercatcher the atlas reports the same grim trend as for the rest of Scotland, with the lowest breeding records in 2013 of 400 pairs compared to 1400 pairs in the 2003 FBA. These figures are noted to be consistent with the 30% decline in breeding oystercatcher populations across Scotland over the period 1995-2011 (NBA).

One species that was not recorded during the surveys from 2007-2013, but is still presented in the BWBF is the black grouse. Sadly the atlas points to the fact that this species is most likely extinct as a breeding bird in Fife, with the last record in May 1996 in the Cleish Hills. Due to habitat changes at the Cleish Hills black grouse is unlikely to breed here again, but in a comforting note the BWBF acknowledges that suitable habitat may be present at the Lomond Hills.

The great ornithological knowledge of the authors really shines through in this work. Written by retired meteorologist and secretary of FOAG (Fife Ornithological Atlas

Group) Norman Elkins, professional ornithologist Jim Reid, and treasurer of FOAG with a long history of involvement of Fife Nature, BTO and SOC, Allan Brown. Most of the excellent photography in the BWBF was taken by well known local bird watcher and photographer John Anderson.

Overall a fantastic book, a satisfying and interesting read, and a privilege to have as part of any birdwatchers library.

Espen Helland and Alex Turner

EVENTS

The **Edinburgh Entomologists Club** has a series of talks running in Edinburgh, and a two day gathering in Berwickshire in June. Based on Eyemouth, there will be excursions to this very rich coastal area.

<http://www.edinentclub.org.uk/>

Scottish Recorders' Gathering - **Butterfly Conservation Trust** is Saturday, 18th March 2017 at Battleby Conference Centre, by Perth. All welcome - more details will follow in due course.

<http://butterfly-conservation.org/244-10101/scotland-recorders-gathering.html>

The **BTO/SOC Spring Conference** is on Saturday, 18 Mar 2017 at Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline, More details & to book see: <http://www.the-soc.org.uk/>

The **TWIC Spring Conference** is 29th April, Brunton Hall, Musselburgh. The theme is Farmland Biodiversity. Details of programme to be finalised.

Watch the website:

<http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/>



NBN News

January 2017

Moving from the NBN Gateway to the NBN Atlas

The beginning of the year seems an appropriate time to give an update on the progress of the initial phase of the NBN Atlas and provide broad timescales for some aspects of the work.

The purpose of this initial development stage (which we aim to have completed by the 31st March 2017) is to have a functioning biological data infrastructure that matches, but does not necessarily replicate, the functionality of the NBN Gateway. However, this is just the first step in building a new infrastructure to meet the wants and needs of the whole Network.

Once we have the core functionality in place, further development of the NBN Atlas will be progressed with greater involvement of our partners and stakeholders. One of the advantages of the Atlas platform is that it can be continually developed and refined allowing the infrastructure to grow and evolve as the needs of the Network change. There will be plenty of opportunities over the coming months (and years!) for your input into the discussions and decisions on further functionality and customisation of the main NBN Atlas, as well as the country portals. More details on future stakeholder workshops and engagement will be publicised in due course.

Timescales

The next few months will be an extremely busy time for the NBN Secretariat, in order to ensure that we have everything in place for the launch of the initial phase of the NBN Atlas at the end of March. Below is an outline of the main aspects of NBN Atlas related work we will be undertaking each month.

January 2017

- **Sensitive species lists finalised**
- **Data upload to NBN Atlas started**
- **Initial spatial layers uploaded to NBN Atlas**
- **NBN Atlas available for user testing**
- **Advice on how to transfer historic data currently published on the NBN Gateway and how to manage and publish historical data onto the NBN Atlas**

The back-end of the NBN Atlas infrastructure is currently in development and is expected to be ready for user testing by the end of January. We will be setting up a user testing group, if you are interested in being involved, please email us at support@nbn.org.uk

In order for testing to be successful, it is important that we have enough data on the NBN Atlas to really see how it works. So, thank you to those who have returned their Data Partner Agreements already and if you haven't yet done so, we would really appreciate it if you could return them as soon as possible.

February 2017

- **Clarification of what constitutes “Commercial Use” published**
- **Web services guidance published**
- **NBN Atlas Wales available for user testing**
- **Process for data upload to the NBN Atlas published**
- **NBN Gateway – final deadline for data submissions 28th February**
- **28th February - absolute deadline for return of Data Partner Agreements to transfer data from the NBN Gateway to the NBN Atlas. (Data may be submitted directly to the NBN Atlas after this date. Data partner agreements will still have to be completed for direct upload to the NBN Atlas)**

March 2017

- **Live NBN Atlas launched**
- **NBN Atlas Wales launched**
- **NBN Atlas Northern Ireland launched (subject to funding being received)**
- **NBN Gateway decommissioned**
- **NBN Trust Open Data Policy available**

It is important to reiterate that the NBN Atlas which launches at the end of March will **only provide functionality to the same level as the NBN Gateway**. Much of the additional functionality the NBN Atlas

infrastructure is capable of will be developed and implemented later.

The transfer of data from the NBN Gateway to the NBN Atlas

The datasets which **will** be transferred to the NBN Atlas from the NBN Gateway are those which meet **all** of the following conditions:

1. Data Partner has completed and submitted a Data Partner Agreement to the NBN Trust.
2. Data Partner has given permission via the Data Partner Agreement for the dataset to be shared through the NBN Atlas at either:
 - a. the same level of access as currently available to the public on the NBN Gateway; or
 - b. the full level of access (ie full enhanced resolution with all available fields: ‘Recorder’, ‘Determiner’, and attributes where supplied).
3. Dataset has a Creative Commons or Open Government Licence associated with it on the NBN Gateway.

The datasets which **will not** be transferred to the NBN Atlas from the NBN Gateway are those which meet **any of** the following conditions:

1. Data Partner has **not** completed or submitted a Data Partner Agreement to the NBN Trust.
2. Data Partner has **not** given permission via the Data Partner Agreement for the dataset to be shared through the NBN Atlas at either:

- a. the same level of access as currently available to the public on the NBN Gateway; or

b. the full level of access (ie full enhanced resolution with all available fields: 'Recorder', 'Determiner', and attributes where supplied).

3. Dataset does **not** have a Creative Commons or Open Government Licence associated with it on the NBN Gateway.

Sensitive records

Records within datasets on the NBN Gateway which have been flagged as '**sensitive**' will **not be transferred** to the NBN Atlas.

Complete and return your Data Partner Agreement and assign a data licence

Data Partners who wish for their datasets to be transferred to the NBN Atlas from the NBN Gateway should ensure they have completed and returned a Data Partner Agreement **before the 28th February 2017**. This is in line with the final submission date for the NBN Gateway. The Agreements have been sent to each dataset administrator for the NBN Gateway, so please check there in the first instance.

Data Partners who would like their datasets to be transferred to the NBN Atlas but have not associated a **data licence** with their dataset on the NBN Gateway should do so as a priority. It is not sufficient to return a Data Partner Agreement without an associated data licence on the NBN Gateway.

Sharing data at a different level of access

Data Partners who wish to share datasets at a **different level of access** to either the current level of public access or full access (full enhanced resolution with all available fields) on the NBN Gateway,

must **resubmit the dataset** to the NBN Gateway **before the 28th February 2017**. Any re-submission must include instruction for the public access to be set as they wish it to appear on the NBN Atlas. The dataset will then be reloaded on the NBN Gateway at this new level of public access before being transferred to the NBN Atlas.

What happens after 28th February 2017?

After the 28th February, any new, updated or historical datasets which are not on the NBN Atlas but are intended to be, must be submitted directly to the NBN Atlas. The Data Partner Agreement must be submitted at the same time if this hasn't already been done. Further information on this process will be available soon.

Key dates at a glance

- 28 February 2017 – deadline for data submissions to the NBN Gateway, including any resubmissions for changing the level of access
- 28 February 2017 – deadline for adding a licence to a dataset on the NBN Gateway
- 28 February 2017 – absolute deadline for return of Data Partner Agreements
- 31 March 2017 – NBN Gateway will close
- 1 April 2017 – NBN Atlas will be live

Thank you for your ongoing support with this major change to how we share our biodiversity data. If you have any questions please do get in touch with the NBN Secretariat at support@nbn.org.uk

For further details on the NBN Atlas, please see the Where we Are section of the website and the NBN Atlas blogs at <https://nbn.org.uk/about-us/where-we-are/> and <https://nbn.org.uk/blogs/atlas-blog/>

The SBIF Questionnaire – your input is needed!

As you are probably aware SBIF (the Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum) is currently undertaking a 'Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland'.

As part of the information gathering stages of the Review we will be publishing a Questionnaire in order to gather your views on how the current infrastructure operates and how it could be improved. Please look out for notification of the Questionnaire's release; at the time of writing it is due out at the **end of January**. We will be circulating the details as widely as possible, including via the NBN's news pages and Network News.

Everyone is welcome so please do consider completing it – your views are important!

For more information about the Review (and to access the link when it is published) please go to the Review pages on the NBN website:

<https://nbn.org.uk/about-us/where-we-are/in-scotland/review/>

or contact Christine Johnston,
Scottish Liaison Officer
email: c.johnston@nbn.org.uk

Clyde and Avon Valley events

Pull on your wellies and grab a pencil - it's time to get involved in the Clyde and Avon Valley Wildlife Challenge and 500 Words Competition!

There are two competitions:

1. The Clyde and Avon Valley Wildlife Challenge #CAVWChallenge

Complete the 12 species checklist or join in with wildlife spotting events (see website for event), download your own spotting guides and enter your findings to iRecord, to tick off the 12 species that you are challenged to find on the checklist - links and downloads available see below.

2. The Clyde and Avon Valley 500 Words Competition

(open to children ages 5 - 9 and 10 - 12)

Pick one of the 12 species (goosander, otter, great spotted woodpecker, kingfisher, badger, blue tailed damselfly, bats, candlesnuff fungus, comma butterfly, nuthatch, roe deer and salmon) to write a fictional story or poem about, in under 500 words. Each entrant will win a certificate and be entered into a special prize draw.

The campaign is a partnership project between Heritage Lottery Fund supported Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership, North Lanarkshire Council, RSPB Baron's Haugh, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Wildlife Trust Falls of Clyde and South Lanarkshire Countryside Rangers.

See more at:

<http://www.clydeandavonvalley.org/join-in/clyde-and-avon-valley-wildlife-challenge-2017>

BRISC Committee members

January 2017

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BURSARIES

Biological Recording in Scotland (BRISC) and Glasgow Natural History Society (GNHS) are offering seven bursaries to anyone living in Scotland to cover some of the costs of attending a suitable training course in 2017. Up to £200 or 75% of the cost of the course, whichever is lowest, is on offer to successful candidates.

See for more information:

<http://www.brisc.org.uk/Bursaries.php>

Closing date is 31st January but worth checking website for any extension.

Treasurer's post - Vacancy

BRISC requires a new Treasurer. The committee thought that our excellent membership might know of someone who has suitable skills for this role and who is interested in wildlife/ biological recording. The committee meet 3/4 times a year for 2 hrs usually in Stirling or Perth with the treasurer giving a simple statement at the meeting. We have a total of around 100 members.

Are you or might you know of anyone who may be interested in the role? We can give more details on the job Treasurer on request to Jonathan Willet or Duncan Davidson - see left for details.