



BRISC

BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND

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Recorder News

Barkflies in Scotland – Bob Saville	p1
Get out on your local beach with the Marine Conservation Society – Anne Saunders	p3
What’s special about the Firth of Forth – Anne-Marie Smout	p4
Update on the Wildlife Counts Project – John McFarlane	p6
LRC Update	p7
▪ All change at LWIC – Sara Hawkswell	
It page	p7
▪ Latest additions to the NBN Gateway	
▪ Website for sharing bird videos	
Book Reviews:	p8
Running a Biological Recording Scheme or Survey: a handbook	
Wildlife Recording in Dumfries and Galloway: Review of 2006	
Chair’s column	p2
Editorial	p2
Contact addresses	p2
Website’s private pages password	p2
Deadline for next issue	p8
Advance notice of 2008 Conference & AGM	p8

began to twig that there was a great deal still to be discovered about psocids and that much could be learned by recording in Scotland.



Trichopsocus dalii, a typical barkfly (3mm life size)
photo Alby Oakshott

BARKFLIES IN SCOTLAND

By Bob Saville

There is a general rule - Scotland is home to far fewer species than its southern neighbour. Certainly, if the first edition of the Royal Entomological Society's Psocoptera handbook was anything to go by, it would hardly seem worth recording anywhere north of southern England. Anyway, I did - and after discovering a species new to Britain from along the Water of Leith in the middle of Edinburgh I realised that things were not so black and white. I later found out that this new species, the strikingly dark *Epicaecilius pilipennis*, was until then only known in the world from three specimens and was considered to be endemic to Madeira. It was then that I

I think at this point an introduction is necessary - Psocoptera is a still rather little known order of insects which occur both indoors (booklice - c.30 species) and out-of-doors (barkflies - 68 species). The species are small (1-7mm), have long antennae, biting mouthparts and a characteristic domed area between the eyes and the mouth (postclypeus). Some barkflies are wingless and can look a bit like springtails; the winged species hold their wings in a tentwise fashion and resemble miniature lacewings with much simplified wing venation. They may be little known but their profile is being raised as a result of the launch of the National Barkfly Recording Scheme, which is actively gathering records from Britain and Ireland, storing them at the Biological Records Centre (BRC), and making them available via the NBN Gateway.

Apart from *E. pilipennis* there have been several other unexpected finds in Scotland. When Keith Bland handed me a couple of barkfly specimens that he had caught in a malaise trap on Rum, I was surprised to see that they were

continued on p.3.



Notes from the Chair

In my last few years with SNH there had been substantial annual sums earmarked for the support of LRCs. I had been involved with legal and financial aspects in the south east of Scotland and my perception was that SNH, not to mention the local councils and inhabitants, derived considerable benefit from the financial support that SNH provided; not all grants could be clearly shown to provide such a positive return.

Another of the reasons that I worked hard to ensure that our local agreements were in place was because I could see that the exchange of data by electronic means was far superior to maintaining and sharing information by hard copy. Of course, whilst the sharing of information gave access to others, it did also mean that the original provider did not know who would access it and what they would do with it. Whilst this is still an issue, ways and means are being found to reduce risks by enabling restrictions to be placed on particularly sensitive information.

I am not a computer person but I have always recognised that developing technology has the ability to make life easier for us in some way or other. Perhaps the sheer volume of information now available can give the feeling of being swamped but the ability to pass information around and for us to be able to access it, relatively easily, has had enormous advantages. What I had not fully recognised was the complexity behind the scenes in order to make all of this information available from all sources to all people.

The NBN Gateway was just beginning to twinkle and it was obvious, to me, that it was the universal answer to our prayers; as soon as everyone had their data on it and everyone used it as their first point of call life would become a dawdle! Planners, developers, societies, individuals would all have the same information, enabling all to argue from the same piece of electronic data. It was then that I discovered that it was not just a question of making an electronic connection but that the respective computers also had to understand each other.

Well things have progressed, or is it advanced? In this month's edition of NBN News, the newsletter of the National Biodiversity Network Trust, (www.nbn.org.uk/nbnnews) there are a number of articles showing that the problems of exchanging electronic data are being overcome. There is an article on 'Websites for National Societies and Recording Schemes', which has been established by the Biological Records Centre (BRC). There is information on the new Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) portal (<http://data.gbif.org>) and an intriguing article, by Jo Purdy of the NBN, on using networking sites, such as Facebook, MySpace, or Bebo, to assist with recording.

The last one particularly intrigued me, and I wonder if there is anyone amongst our Members who might see how BRISC could benefit from joining in; please contact me if you think there is. There might be something in it to assist with the continuation of interest that the Wildlife Counts Project has built up. I do not understand how these things work behind the screen but I do understand that they do and wish to look at ways where BRISC can tap into them for its advancement. Patrick Milne Home

PS For those of you not able to access things electronically I am very happy to arrange for a hard copy of NBN News to be sent to you.

To access Members Only pages on our website use

Username whales
Password dolphins



Editorial

It was with great personal sadness that I heard Sir John Burnett had died last July after a short illness. He was 85. Whenever we met he always wanted to know about BRISC and what was doing up here. I last saw him at the NFBR conference in May this year, where he looked

poorly but nevertheless took full part in the proceedings. Retiring after a distinguished academic career (amongst other things he was Principal and Vice-chancellor of Edinburgh University), he became deeply involved in biological recording as the foundation for nature conservation and eventually in setting up the NBN. When the Scottish launch of the NBN took place in Edinburgh 2001, he led the proceedings himself, outlining the ambitious plans behind the NBN, which owed much to his own thinking, and was characteristically welcoming and listening to everyone. Whenever he was on a platform he stressed the vital importance of providing decision makers with access to quality data to help safeguard the natural environment, and he was not shy of seeking to enlist the support of ministers and secretaries of state. His contribution to the NBN Trust, which he chaired from 2000-2005, is unequaled, and his knowledge, humour and good sense will be sorely missed. An appreciation can be found in the current NBN News (see above).

New rules from the EU have meant that farmers from September this year will no longer be compensated for set-asides, and it is likely that these oases will become things of the past. The reason is that extra land is now needed for producing bio-fuels in order to combat climate change. It is ironic that what is meant to solve one environmental problem often has bitter consequences for another. In Scotland, no new scheme has been put in place for the replacement of such agro-environmental losses. We now look to our new SNP government to see how far up the hierarchy come environmental issues, though the Government is to be congratulated on the quick decision to change present regulation and 'call in' potential disastrous proposals such as the ship-to-ship oil transfer in the Forth (see article below).

The Scotsman's Wildlife Watch, run in conjunction with SWT, took place again in June and all records were passed to BRISC and subsequently forwarded to the relevant LRCs. An article analyzing the results was published in *The Scotsman* on 17 September which also provided good publicity for BRISC. Every bit helps.

Trevor James retired from as NBN Development Officer for National Societies & Recording Schemes at the end of September, but fortunately he has been re-employed to do two days a week at Monks Wood for the next couple of years, so that he will still be contactable there. Trevor will also be organizing the NBN's annual conference at the Natural History Museum in London on 16 November 2007. For details see (www.nbn.org.uk/default.asp)

Included with this mailing is a Member's Questionnaire – please give it a few minutes of your time and return it in the sae provided.

Anne-Marie Smout

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Continued from p.1.

Kolbia quisquiliarum, the 'classic' southern England chalk downland species. But really this just highlights the extent of our ignorance and how much more recording is needed to get even an approximation of the true distributions of these species. And this does not just apply to rare species - our understanding of the common species is still rudimentary. Shake a tree and you find *Ectopsocus briggsi*, shake another and you find it again, shake ten trees and you find it every time. You start to suspect that *E. briggsi* is common everywhere. Go to West Lothian - nothing! OK, time for a rethink - maybe it only likes dry conditions. Go to western Scotland - it's all over the place. Time for another rethink! There are a great many such puzzles waiting to be solved.

So, how to get involved? Starting is easy - all you need to do is go onto the BRC-hosted barkfly website (www.brc.ac.uk/schemes/barkfly/homepage.htm) which tells you everything you need to know about finding and recording them and much more besides. There are vastly more areas of Scotland that have no barkfly records than those that do. You could easily come across a new species (six have been found in almost as many years) but even if you don't you will undoubtedly make a major contribution to the knowledge of these fascinating insects.

Bob Saville, Biodiversity Data Officer, LWIC

Get out on Your Local Beach with the Marine Conservation Society!

By Anne Saunders

What better way to spend a few hours at the weekend than a walk on the beach? Fresh air, beautiful scenery and even the chance to see some of Scotland's fantastic wildlife, what more could you ask for? Of course, what you might also see is some of the thousands of items of litter dumped on UK seas and beaches every year. From litter dropped by beach users, to nets and ropes from fishing boats, to household items flushed down the toilet such as cotton buds, the volume of rubbish ending up on our beaches is increasing dramatically. The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) Beachwatch 2006 report reveals that litter on UK beaches has gone up by a staggering 90.3% since 1994.



Beachwatch 2004

Photo Calum Duncan

This litter is not only unsightly for the thousands of people who use the UK's beaches every day, but it poses a threat to wildlife and the environment. Plastic bags and balloons are regularly eaten by a variety of marine species, including dolphins, sea birds and turtles, which mistake these items as food. Marine wildlife is

at risk from drowning after becoming entangled in items such as fishing nets, fishing line and plastic bags. Chemicals and oil dumped in the sea pollutes the water and can kill vulnerable marine species.



Beach cleaning can be good fun too

Sadly, individual beach visitors are the biggest culprits, responsible for over 33% of the litter found on beaches and many of the top ten most commonly found items. Sanitary waste was the third largest category in 2006, at over 10% of all litter found. One example of sanitary waste is cotton bud sticks, the second most commonly found item, which end up on our beaches after being flushed down the toilet. Crisp and sweet wrappers rank as the fourth most commonly found item, reflecting our careless attitude to packaging. Cigarette stubs have also increased steadily since 1994 and are now the eighth most common item. These have the potential to climb even higher as outdoor smoking increases, following on from the UK-wide smoking ban. MCS is calling for a UK-wide environmental education campaign to change people's litter dropping and flushing habits.



A group from PriceWaterhouseCoopers in April 2007 at Yellowcraigs Beach, East Lothian.

Photo PriceWaterhouseCoopers

So, apart from not dropping our litter in the first place, what can we do to help our beaches and wildlife? Start by joining the Marine Conservation Society's Adopt-a-Beach project, and adopt your favourite beach. The project involves cleaning a minimum of 100m of your beach four times a year, and surveying the litter that you find. It is a great project for community groups, schools and businesses. Over 60 beaches are already registered in Scotland, so check if your nearest one is on the list at (www.adoptabeach.org.uk). If it is not, why not

adopt it yourself? To register as an organiser or volunteer, please contact Sue at MCS now on 01989 567807, or email aab@mcsuk.org.

Anne Saunders
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What's special about The Firth of Forth

By Anne-Marie Smout

This summer a handsome new leaflet *Wildlife around the Forth* was published by the Forth Estuary Forum. The text offers a "Welcome to the Firth of Forth – one of the best places in Scotland to get close to seabirds, seals and a variety of marine wildlife". The Forth Estuary Forum has promised that the leaflet will be available at more than 150 outlets and in particular at the SUPERFAST ferry terminal at Zeebrugge, Belgium, so that overseas visitors can get a good if brief introduction to the abundant wildlife that inhabits this dramatic approach to Scotland by sea.

I am proud to say that BRISC can take some of the credit for the appearance of this leaflet, because as a member of the Fife Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership, BRISC has for some time been banging on about the desirability of such a leaflet to inform tourists – and locals for that matter - about some of the spectacular wildlife they might encounter, from the deck of the SUPERFAST, or indeed by visiting some of the many nature reserves in and around the Forth. This suggestion has now happily been taken onboard. The full leaflet can also be downloaded from the Forth Estuary Forum's website at (www.forthestuaryforum.co.uk/wildlife).

So what is special about the Firth of Forth? It starts at Stirling, where the river is still just tidal and stretches 100km before meeting the open North Sea. Being 31km wide at the mouth it is the largest estuary on the east coast of Scotland. The many islands dotted throughout its length not only enhance the scenery, they are also home to an outstanding number of seabird colonies, and the bays along the coasts provide safe wintering areas for divers, grebes, ducks and waders. The Forth is a Mecca for bird watchers at any time of the year.



The Bass Rock, turned white from 140,000 nesting gannets *Morus bassanus*

Perhaps the most spectacular common breeding birds are the gannets, of which about 140,000 nest on the Bass Rock and get

their Latin name from here. The Isle of May, a National Nature Reserve, is home to huge numbers of auks and other seabirds. The leaflet has not room for too many details but the annual census in The Isle of May 2005 General Report, published by SNH, gives 18,858 pairs of guillemot, 4713 pairs of razorbills, 1070 eider nests, as well as numbers of shags, kittiwakes, fulmars, and gulls. Arctic, common and sandwich terns are all present in varying numbers. Puffins nest underground in old rabbit burrows, so they are difficult to census, but it is thought that more than 40,000 pairs are present.



The Isle of May, National Nature Reserve

The Isle of May is also a hot-spot for migrants, both spring and autumn, and at times unbelievable 'falls' of migrant birds occur, such as 50 long-eared owls (29/10/89), 10,300 fieldfares (27/10/04), 30,000 blackbirds (28/10/04) or 15,000 goldcrests (11/10/82).

It would take a lot of space to list the many national rarities that have been recorded on the May, but the arrival of a calandra lark was undoubtedly the highlight of 2006. The Isle of May Bird Observatory and Field Station Trust keeps extensive records, not just of birds, but also of other wildlife seen on or off the island, including bats, lepidoptera (a moth trap is operated regularly), seals and cetaceans. The Trust's annual report recounts highlights, provides a systematic species list, and gives a running totals of all the ringing records carried out over the years by ringers since the Trust was established in 1934. The Low Light (the island's second oldest lighthouse) offers basic facilities for members to stay on the island. To apply for membership, contact Sheila Russell, Clober Farm, Milngavie, Glasgow G62 7HW, Tel. 0141 956 3871.

The Forth Estuary Forum's leaflet gives very useful information and contact details of boats leaving from Anstruther for the May and from North Berwick for the Bass Rock, as well as boat trips to many of the other islands in the Forth, and wildlife cruises organised from South Queensferry. The Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick has cameras positioned on some of the islands, so that visitors can see live close-ups of gannets, auks, seals and much else. They also organise island photography trips.

Scotland has international responsibility for grey seals. About half the world's population of these animals – also called Atlantic seals - breeds around the coast of Britain, with 90% of these in Scottish waters. More than 1000 individuals come every autumn to the Isle of May to pup. The pups are left to their own devices at just three weeks old, and it is not unusual to see baby seals hauled up along the coast. The smaller common

or harbour seals are less numerous, preferring the Tay estuary, but they can still be seen around the islands further up the Forth, and last winter a pod of killer whales or orcas turned up to prey on these seals in the inner Forth.

Cetacean sightings have been increasing in the last decade or so, probably due to the vastly improved water quality in the Forth. SEPA is hugely to be congratulated for all the work they have undertaken towards this end. Most frequent reports relate to bottle-nosed dolphins, with schools of up to 100 leaping and cavorting around yachts. Most probable the animals are on their way to or from the Moray Firth, where there is a well-established colony, but schools seen in the Forth have many young with them so they may be breeding here as well.

This autumn an unusual large school of common dolphins were seen in the outer parts of the Forth, eventually passing close to Fife Ness. Harbour porpoises are also present but scarce, while the most commonly reported whale is the Minke, which frequently comes right up to the railway bridge. But other species of whales are also present at times, such as fin or hump-backed whales – mostly unseen.. How frustrating it is that only when these magnificent creatures are in trouble do we properly notice them, such as the sperm whale that spent its last days up above the Forth road bridge with thousands of people turning up to get a glimpse. Some years ago we found a corpse of a white-sided dolphin washed up at Anstruther. What better was to watch for all these amazing animals than from the deck of the SUPERFAST.

Nor should one forget the massive leather-backed turtles that come into the Forth from time to time. One was washed up near Crail some years back (see issue No 54 – July 2004).

Being two sides of A3, the *Wildlife around the Forth* leaflet has only space to list eight sites to visit: Blackness, Kinneil Foreshore (Bo'ness), Cramond Foreshore, Levenhall Links (Musselburgh), John Muir Country Park, Kilminning Coast (Fife Ness), Coastal Centre Dysart, and Carlingnose Point. Many others could be listed, such as Aberlady (geese, waders, terns), Hound Point (watch for skuas preparing to fly west overland in autumn), Skinflats, and on the north side Torry Bay, St Margaret's Marsh, Dumbarnie Links, Largo Bay (perhaps the only regular place in UK for wintering surf scoters), and Kinraig nearby, just to list a few. St Abbs Head, albeit strictly speaking outside the Forth, could be included, as it scenically adds much to the drama and also offers a wealth of wildlife for the visitor.



View of Kinraig from Earlsferry,

The Forth Estuary Forum has promised to put details of more wildlife sites to visit on their website, including how to reach them, what facilities they offer, etc, though at the time of writing, this still has to happen.

In between are also many other spots where interesting plants flourish. My own favourite is *Astragalus danicus* or purple milk-vetch, which has hung on around the coast since the ice age. Bloody cranesbill, meadow saxifrage and cowslips abound in places. *Asplinium marinum* or sea spleenwort grows on salt sprayed rocks. Northern marsh orchid is especially plentiful but the rare pyramidal orchid is also present in a few places. The nature reserve at Aberlady lists 550 species of plants, some rare, and clustered bellflower *Campanula glomerata* grows on Ferny Ness nearby. Pettycur by Kinghorn holds Scotland's only known colony of wild clary *Salvia verbenaca*. Kinraig is home to scarce plants such as henbane *Hyoscyamus niger*, sea-kale *Crambe maritima* and yellow-horned poppy *Glaucium flavum*, while the population of rock-rose support the northern brown argus butterfly, a species also recorded at Guillane and North Berwick. Grayling butterflies are recorded at the last two sites too. The small SWT reserve at Dumbarnie Links, which is about all that remains of the original large dune system bordering Largo Bay, has an enviable long species list of 1453, including 902 insects and 202 other invertebrates, all carefully recorded by Gordon Corbet, who is voluntary reserve manager for the site.



Northern Brown Argus on Kinraig Purple milkvetch *Astragalus danicus* at Earlsferry ness

It is impossible in this short space to do justice to the huge range of wildlife in or around the Forth, and the rich underwater life of sponges and sea anemones, or the many species of fish (including the endangered blue shark) that inhabit the water, have had no mention. Fortunately, field naturalists have been active in the area for many years, and most groups are consequently well studied and recorded. There are publications filling different slots and focusing on different aspects of the wildlife. Here are just a few: *Plant Life of Edinburgh and the Lothians* (2002) by Smith, Dixon and Cochrane, published by Edinburgh University Press (reviewed in *BRISC Recorder News* no 48, January 03) details amongst many other things the botanical wonders along the Lothian coast. Much useful information can be gained from the SWT's *The Nature of Fife*, edited by Corbet and published 1998 by Scottish Cultural Press. Especially relevant are Matt Bentley's chapter 'The shore, the estuaries and the sea' and Robert M M Crawford's chapter 'The landward coast'. Local bird reports are produced yearly for Fife (available from www.fifebirdclub.org) and for Lothian (see www.lsoc.btinternet.co.uk/LBR.htm), and give information on the annual occurrences of waders and seabirds; Ron Morris, who

for many years has visited the islands in the Forth as part of the Seabird Team's work, published privately two booklet in 2003, *The Wildlife of Incolm* and *The Wildlife of Inchkeith* (reviewed in *BRISC Recorder News* No 52, January 2004). Both are available from Hillside, Haughgate Street, Leven, Fife KY8 4SF and list all the flowers, insects, mammals and birds recorded there.

Readers are reminded that all past issues of *BRISC Recorder News* can be downloaded from Members Only pages on BRISC's website. Up-to-date passwords are given in every new issue.

Two local records centres, the Lothian Wildlife Information Centre (LWIC) and Take a Pride in Fife Environmental Records Centre (TAPIF ERC) can also provide detailed information on many groups, and are keen to receive new records for their databases. Contact details can be found on BRISC's website.

So what are the threats? Many of the islands and much of the coastline enjoy international and national designations: Ramsar site, Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). For some years the sandeels that provide the food for most of the breeding seabirds have been in trouble (see also 'Monitoring seabirds in the Firth of Forth' by Sarah Wanless in

BRISC Recorder News no 58 (July 2005), and this is more than ever the case today, with puffins e.g. trying to feed their young pipe fish, which at best provide little sustenance and at worst choke the chicks.

Largo Bay is in danger of over-fishing the shell fish there and disturbance to the sea duck and waders by kite-based recreation. A serious threat to the whole ecosystem was recently encountered by a Melbourne shipping firm applying to the Forth Ports plc for a license to carry out commercial ship-to-ship oil transfer at a site off Methil in Fife. The potential for a disastrous oil-spill would be obviously be enormous and could wipe out whole populations of seabirds as well as having serious economic consequences for local communities. This proposal highlighted the complexity of current marine law, where all the above-mentioned designations only provide one legal aspect that decision makers have to take into account. Following public outcry, the new Scottish Parliament announced in June an amendment to current regulations which will give ministers power to 'call in' such proposals. For timeline and what happens next, consult the RSPB's website at

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/sites/scotland/firthhofforth/index.asp>
Anne-Marie Smout



Map of the Firth of Forth from Wikipedia: Firth of Forth



Rock formation supporting auk colonies on Isle of May

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BRISC Wildlife Counts Project

By the time you read this article we will most likely have completed the second year of the Wildlife Counts Project. For me, it has been both a rewarding and a frustrating experience. As I write, I am anxiously awaiting responses from the various funding organisations that have been approached to extend BRISC's commitment to biological recording through its wonderful Wildlife Counts Project. On a more positive note, we have reached out to over 550 people over the course of 2007, including over 350 participants during our BioBlitz event which was covered on BBC Landward on the 22 July.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/player/?item=landward>)

The workshop format of adopting a more general approach has proved very popular with volunteers and trainers alike. Our 'Pollinators & Wildflowers' events have worked really well, with the events at Plean and Bonniefield Nature Parks very well attended. Volunteers included members of the 'friends of Cumbernauld Glen' group, an SWT reserve, who used the events to add to their knowledge and understanding of pollinating

insects and the wildflowers they depend on. This additional tuition provided by BRISC is being used to good effect, with the implementation of their wildflower meadow plans for next year well under way.

BioBlitz will surely become an annual event? I see BioBlitz as a fantastic opportunity for the scientific community to engage with members of the public on an annual basis, facilitating the exchange of expertise and stimulating interest in more diverse and under-recorded groups. There was tremendous support for the event from many organisations and experts and the added bonus of BBC LANDWARD coverage helped to raise awareness of the importance of biological recording. Hopefully we can raise the bar again for 2008, breaking the record achieved in 2007. To do this we need support from many more experts and organisations, particularly botanical expertise, which was lacking at BioBlitz 2007. More details on BioBlitz can be found at <http://www.brisec.org.uk/bioblitz07.php>.

The project has provided Central Scotland with its first ever record for the Narrow Bordered 5-spot Burnet Moth, *Zygaena*

lonicerae. This significant discovery was one of many highlights of a wonderful day out at Bonnyfield Nature Park. The finding of a rare moth further supports Falkirk Council's ambitions to turn Bonnyfield Nature Park into a Local Nature Reserve and was a welcome addition to their species list. The records we have accumulated are in the process of being mobilised and will be ready to disseminate at the end of the year.

The recording fora are now well on the way to providing recording activities for our more experienced recorders who are now in a position to expand their knowledge and skills outside of the project. We will be working closely with the Local Authorities and conservation organisations to provide our recorders with activities to carry out throughout the year. There has been interest from RSPB, SWT, Bumble Bee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation, BSBI and Woodland Trust Scotland with lots of interesting activities such as mammal surveying at RSPB Barons Haugh and re-establishing the walking of a butterfly transect in Callendar Woods.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported me as the BRISC Wildlife Counts Project Officer. It has been an amazing journey, and if we are successful with the funding applications I hope that the journey continues.

John McFarlane

LRC UPDATE

All change at LWIC

LWIC have at last been able to expand the staff complement to enable them to achieve more for Lothian wildlife. Sara Hawkswell is now Centre Manager for LWIC. Sara works part-time for LWIC (3 days a week) whilst still doing consultancy work for Biodiversity Solutions. Bob Saville is the Biodiversity Data Officer (a new title to reflect his focus on collating, analysing and providing access to data) and we are currently recruiting a temporary Data Assistant to help us with processing data and improving our existing data holdings.

Sara is no longer a Director of LWIC but the Director team has been strengthened recently and is now made up of Dr Adrian T Sumner (founder member of LWIC and a key member of the Conchological Society in Scotland), Dr Alastair Sommerville (founder member of LWIC, ecologist and (newly appointed) moth recorder for Midlothian), Craig Macadam (Conservation Officer for Buglife and organiser of the Mayfly recording scheme), and Colin Legg (Senior lecturer in botany for the School of GeoSciences at the University of Edinburgh).

Sara Hawkswell

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IT PAGE

Latest Additions to The Gateway

from Trevor James

As an update, after the latest additions to the datasets made available on 23 July 2007, the following is a list of all the additions since March this year:

Bat Conservation Trust:
The BCT/MTUK Bats & Roadside Mammals Survey

Botanical Society of the British Isles:
Vascular plant data for Scottish Vice-counties (VCs 80, 84,103)

British Bryological Society:
Bryophyte data for Great Britain (update)

Butterfly Conservation:
Butterfly distributions for Great Britain for the period 2000–2004 from Butterfly Conservation.

CCW: All Wales amphibian SAC monitoring data
Phase 2 Lowland Grassland Survey of Wales
UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Invertebrate data for Wales

Dragonfly Recording Network (British Dragonfly Society):
Dragonfly records from the British Dragonfly Society's Dragonfly Recording Network for the period up to 2006

Environment Agency:
Environment Agency white-clawed crayfish survey of the [River Lune](#) catchment 2004
Environment Agency freshwater invertebrate species (single species families)

Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL):
GiGL public survey records
GiGL professional survey records

Highland Biological Recording Group:
HBRG Mammals dataset.
HBRG Hymenoptera dataset
HBRG Fungi & Lichens dataset
HBRG Diptera dataset
HBRG Coleoptera dataset
HBRG Badger dataset
HBRG Arachnid dataset
HBRG Lepidoptera dataset
HBRG Fish and Herpetiles dataset

Ladybird Recording Scheme:
Ladybird Survey of the UK (update)

RSPB: Cirl bunting surveys (RSPB/NCC/EN/Defra)
Red kite reintroduction – sightings and radio contacts (RSPB/SNH)

St Helens Wildlife Recording Group:
St Helens Wildlife Dataset

SNH: Invertebrate Site Register – Scotland
Bat records for Scotland 1970–2007

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Registered office for NBN Trust and BioD Services Ltd
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Tel: 01636 670097 www.nbn.org.uk and www.searchnbn.net

Website for sharing bird videos

Are you into video'ing birds? If so here is a new site that might interest you. (www.birdcinema.com/) is an American run site open for anyone to view. Its main purpose is to allow people to share their videos with others for free. The day I checked it out I watched quite a long video (c.4min) of an American bald eagle and its young feeding on carrion, some ravens boldly snatching scraps from a brown bear as it devoured some unfortunate

animal, and some lovely hummingbirds visiting a feeder. You have to register to submit your own videos, and the site is open to both amateurs and professionals. Apparently it is simple to upload videos: “just as one would upload a YouTube video”. If readers are unsure (like me) of what YouTube is, read all about it in the Wikipedia at www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YouTube. At present it seems that most videos are of American birds, but there is no reason why it should stay that way. AMS

Book Review

James, Trevor. (2007) “Running a Biological Recording Scheme or Survey: a handbook to help scheme or society administrators”. To be published for free down-loading on the NBN Website Autumn 2007.

This is the latest guidance note from the National Biodiversity Network and covers everything you need to consider when setting up or running a biological recording scheme, whatever the size - large, small, local or national. Of course, biological recording schemes are not new and the history of voluntary recording goes back many decades, so it is perhaps surprising that this is the first time that the knowledge and experience gained by the numerous voluntary schemes has been brought together into a single handbook. Of necessity it is not highly detailed but does act as a thorough checklist of matters to consider, with pointers to other sources of information. The handbook is written by Trevor James, NBN Development Officer for National Societies and Recording Schemes, and draws upon the experience gained initially by the UK Biological Records Centre and latterly the National Biodiversity Network in its discussions, seminars and assistance with voluntary recording schemes and societies across the UK.

A handbook like this is not intended to be a ‘good read’ but it will prove useful for anyone planning a new biological recording scheme or developing an existing scheme to the next level. It will also enable existing scheme organisers to see how their schemes measure up and I’m sure there is good advice and suggestions that many schemes could adopt. The advice given is sometimes rather generalised because of the need to include both small scale schemes run by a single person to lottery-funded organisation-based projects. There are occasional more meaty sections, the checkboxes, where more detailed information is included on topics such as Watsonian vice-counties, current management systems for biological records and putting data on the NBN gateway.

The handbook is divided into nine sections. A brief introduction is followed by a look at the different reasons for species recording, whether it is for distribution mapping, taxonomic and ecological studies, or monitoring. The handbook is not intended to cover site recording or habitat surveys. As a museum curator I was pleased to see the role of the specimen recognised and the need for collecting considered. The section on project planning and sources of funding is perhaps too general to be really useful. Field recording, in greater detail, emphasises the need for

precision recording enabling the data to be used for a variety of purposes perhaps quite different to the original purpose intended by the recording scheme. Managing data shows the currents ways this is undertaken by schemes. There is a brief look at available computer systems and the issues of validation, verification and ownership. Publications and training is another section where the advice is generalized, but there is a good section on feedback to recorders that will prevent your scheme earning the reputation as a ‘black hole’. Making use of data, covers atlases and other published accounts, websites and the NBN Gateway. The handbook concludes with a helpful glossary and web addresses of organisations, schemes and bodies mentioned in the text.

Any faults with the handbook? The fun element of recording is overlooked. After all this is one of the main motivations for being recorders. We enjoy doing it. This handbook tends to emphasise project plans, consultations, objectives and strategies but don’t let that put you off setting up or administering a biological recording scheme following the handbook’s sound advice. Mark Simmons

Wildlife Recording in Dumfries and Galloway: a Review of 2006. Published by DGERC. 48pp. pbk. Free copy from Lisa Gibson, Neighbourhood Nature Watch Project Officer, DGERC, Solway Heritage, Campbell House, The Crichton, Bankend Road, Dumfries DG1 4ZB, Tel 01387 247543, email info@dgerc.org.uk

The Environment Resource Centre for Dumfries and Galloway. has published this extremely attractive and interesting ‘Review of 2006’, funded through the Neighbourhood Nature Watch Project, and supported by Solway Heritage, SNH, Heritage Lottery Fund, Dumfries and Galloway Council, and Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Partnership.

The booklet, which is in full colour with many excellent photographs and useful graphs, represents the first review of wildlife recording in Dumfries and Galloway. It offers a wealth of delightful articles: plant recording in Kirkcudbrightshire and in Dumfriesshire; dragonfly and damselfly recording; butterflies, moths, seashells, freshwater fish, jellyfish and marine turtles in the Solway Firth; bird, bat, and mammal recording, whale and dolphin watching, and a section on target species for 2007. A detachable recording form can be found at the back, complete with return address. There are reports, with resulting dot maps, on the swallow and house martin surveys carried out in 2006, and a similar report for the 2006 adder survey, an interesting nightjar radio tracking project, and articles on the red squirrel in south Scotland and the water vole survey in Dumfries & Galloway. A very useful list of the county or vice-county recorders for the different taxa makes this a model of this kind of publication. It is also extremely heartening to read about all the productive and innovating activities which are taking place in this most attractive and wildlife-abundant corner of Scotland. AMS

Advance and provisional notice of BRISC’s 2008 Annual Conference and AGM: theme: Cairngorms National Park; venue Avimore area, date 28 March

Deadline for the next issue is 15 December 2007

All material – preferably in electronic form – to Anne-Marie Smout at anne-marie@smout.org or by post to Chesterhill, Shore Road, Anstruther, Fife, KY10 3DZ