



Sussex Recording Update

Newsletter of the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre

Welcome to the Sussex Recording Update

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The number of records held by SxBRC has increased from 360,000 in February 2001 to over 470,000 records in October 2001. We hope to reach 500,000 by the Recorders Seminar in February. In conjunction with the increase in records is an increase in volume of enquiries received by SxBRC, up a third from last year.

Growth and change has naturally rolled over into the area of staffing. Nadine Russell joined SxBRC in June as the Assistant Biodiversity Records Officer (replacing Rebecca Jones). In September, Stuart Colgate came on board as Temporary Data Input Officer. A position designed to aid us and our partners to deal with backlogs of data needing to be entered on to Recorder 3.3.

As always the Record Centre has many committed and enthusiastic volunteers - Alan Gillham, Sue Kirk-Bell, Peter Challis, Harry Montgomery, Liz Smith, Roger French, Margaret Curtis, Charles Hull, Guy Smith, Janice Hyatt, Naomi Forbes, David Pyle, Andrew Lawson and Paul Vincent. We are extremely grateful to them for their input throughout the year.

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What's in this issue?

- 2001 Projects
- Calling for ...
- Summaries of Talks at the 2001 Recorders' Seminar
- Updates on your Projects in the works
- Conference and Seminar Notices
- Information Request Form

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Calling For?

At the Recorders' Seminar in February 2001 many of you told us about your projects and requested aid or information.

- Birds**
 - John Hobson, the Sussex Ornithological Society's County Recorder, is asking for all records of bird sightings, breeding records, surveys etc... with OSGRs to not less than 4 figures.
Contact: 23 Hillside Road, Storrington, West Sussex, RH 20 3LZ
 - Barry Watson, Chair of the Committee for Biological Recording, is involved with work on Barn Owls. He would like to have anyone with knowledge of current construction that has planning permission and has barn owls roosting there to contact him.
Contact: abwatson@mistral.co.uk
- Fish**
 - Francis Parfremment, Bass Anglers Sport Fishing Society and West Sussex Wildfowling & Conservation Association is interested in measuring the size and abundance of bass in their first and second years.
- Arthropoda**
 - John Badmin is monitoring and surveying leafhoppers in Perry Woods. This project has been going for 18 years. He is interested in all information about the biology/ecology of leafhoppers.
Contact: jsb5@canterbury.ac.uk
 - John Paul, County Orthoptera Recorder, is keen to get data on grasshoppers and crickets so he can work on the re-mapping of these species in Sussex.
Contact: tatrix@pavillon.co.uk
- Mammals**
 - Simon Curson, Sussex Mammal Recording Society, has asked recorders to do more mammal recording and send the data to SxBRC. (forms enclosed)
Contact: sxbrc@sussexwt.org.uk
 - Stephen Savage, Seawatch Foundation, is working on the monitoring of dolphins in the Channel. They have support for the western end of the channel but are looking for support for the eastern end.
Contact: ALLSAVS@aol.com
- Habitat**
 - Richard Allum from the High Weald AONB would like any information regarding where heathland sites are and to know about anyone interested in surveying the heathland across the AONB. This information will help the project take off.
Contact: r.allum@highweald.org
 - SxBRC is looking for records of species in ponds and other pond related data for Sussex to help the Pond Inventory to develop and expand.
Contact: sxbrc@sussexwt.org.uk
- Parish Survey**
 - Arnold Madgewick, Ferhurst Society Biodiversity Group, is looking for records and recorders to assist in a parish survey. The group has been focussing on garden birdwatching, land use, butterflies, owls (and boxes), bats (populations and boxes), meteorology, phenology, hedgerows and woodland data, and verge information.
Contact: JMRoxan@aol.com
- Habitat Action Plans**
 - Fran Southgate, of Sussex Downs Conservation Board, is writing the Maritime Cliffs HAP and would like advice from those with expertise in the area. She is particularly interested in the Hastings area.
Contact: FSOUTHGATE@southeastwater.co.uk
 - John Patmore, of Eco-logically, is working in the field of Ghyll Woodland Ecology. He is involved with the Parkland/Pasture Woodland HAP and would like to hear from anyone interested in setting up Internet chat and workshops to develop HAPs.
Contact: JM.Patmore@eco-logically.com
- Computer Aid**
 - Roy Ticehurst, Friends of Bedelands Farm LNR, asks for advice on formatting records and databases as well as collecting and recording techniques. The information will be used in the 'The Story of Bedelands' to be published next year.
Contact: roy.ticehurst@computerweekly.net
- Record Centres**
 - SxBRC is always looking for key new Sussex data sets.
Contact: sxbrc@sussexwt.org.uk
 - Alistair Kirk, Surrey Biological Records Centre, asked recorders to share any data that they gather on forays into Surrey.
Contact: akirk@surwild.cix.co.uk

Biological Recorders Seminar 2001

Summaries from talks.

Atlas 2000 in Sussex

The Atlas 2000 project was organised by The Botanical Society of the British Isle & the Biodiversity Record Centre to produce an updated Atlas of the vascular plants of the British Isles. The recording period was 1987-1999. Members of the Sussex Botanical Recording Society did most of the Sussex recording. From the start, our data was submitted directly as a computer file. As well as easing the data transfer, this also allowed us to perform ongoing analysis of the accumulated data and to use this to guide our recording. For example, areas with low totals were identified and recorders asked to go there. Also, habitats which had apparently been under-recorded in each 10km square were identified and recorders directed to those habitats. Of the 1961 different species recorded, 400 (of which 50 were native species) were found in a single 10km square. Considering only native species, fourteen which were recorded in the Sussex Plant Atlas were not found in this survey and eight were found in far fewer squares. The most notable changes was for Corn chamomile (*Anthemis arvensis*) which declined from twenty to five 10km squares and, of these, several were deliberate plantings with wild flower mixtures. On the brighter side we refound 13 native species thought to be extinct and discovered 3 native species never known before in Sussex.

Alan Knapp (Sussex Botanical Recording Society)

Biodiversity Action Planning Where we are in Sussex

Biodiversity seems like a modern fashion - well, perhaps it is, but the work that has gone on in relation to this apparent direction in nature conservation has had the effect of bringing wildlife more into the mainstream. How we got to where we are came from a string of events starting in 1992 with the Rio Earth Summit, at which 150 countries agreed to prepare plans and strategies for enhancing biodiversity. This was taken further in the UK in 1994 when the government published "Biodiversity-the UK Action Strategy", setting a clear general policy to conserve and enhance nature, at a national level as part of an international convention. In the same year "Biodiversity Challenge" was produced by NGOs, predicting that the government version would be general and called for more detailed planning. This spurred the government to set up a steering group consisting of government

The Wild Orchids of Sussex Book in Progress

At last year's seminar, I spoke briefly to draw your attention to a book in preparation, and to seek opinions on its content and input. There was an excellent response, especially from correspondence and anecdote on past botanists. We devoted a section to those people who have contributed to orchid study in Sussex from the mid-17th Century onwards. In the course of 2 years I visited 13 museums, examined 134 herbaria and 126 scientific files at English Nature. There was also extensive correspondence.

There is a section on Sussex Botanologia, individual descriptions of species with colour illustrations of all forms known in Sussex and distribution maps, hybrids are listed and in most cases illustrated. There is a short piece on 'Factoids', species that may appear in the future, a complete list of all the museums and their herbaria, a glossary and an index.

Among the oddities discovered during research, I found some radically earlier dates for the first records of a number of species, and some unusual records. For example, *Herminium monorchis* (normally 5-15cm tall), and *Pseudorchis albida* (now absent from Sussex was known in 13 tetrads, with many records from Worth, Tilgate and St. Leonard's Forest).

With current apparent climate changes, it is interesting to speculate on species which may turn up new in Sussex, or which may return in the wake of warmer, wetter weather.

David Lang

and non-government people to start writing Biodiversity Action Plans. This background has led to nature conservation being considered at a political level that we could only have dreamed of 15 years ago, but we must remember to do the work in a manner that prevents it being compartmentalised as it was in the past.

In 1996 the Sussex Wildlife Trust published their "Vision for the Wildlife of Sussex" presenting the Trust's idea of biodiversity targets, which were ambitious but achievable. That same year the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership was formed with the aim of preparing Biodiversity Action Plans that would have cross-sectoral support. From 1998 onwards Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans for Sussex were being developed. There are now another 10 in the final stages before publication. The system is working well but circulation is limited, so although plans are getting out to the people in influential positions, wider circulation has not been possible. (They will be available via the Biodiversity Partnership website in the near future)

Tony Whitbread (Sussex Wildlife Trust)

Great Crested Newt Monitoring Project

The reason why the Great Crested Newt is so heavily protected is that it is declining rapidly across its range, which includes most of Europe. In the UK, and particularly Sussex we have a real stronghold of the species, thus we have a need for a higher priority for conservation. It is, however, thought to be rapidly declining here as well, but with an estimated 18 000 populations in the UK it

Monitoring Habitat Use by Bats at Ebernoe Common NNR

Recording bats poses a special set of challenges. They are difficult to see because they are small, nocturnal, highly mobile and have cryptic roosting habits. Experienced bat workers can identify them in the hand, but it is illegal to capture, handle or otherwise disturb any uninjured British bat, except by licence from the relevant statutory conservation organisation. One alternative is to monitor bat activity with ultrasonic bat detectors, which transform their calls into audible sounds. We have been monitoring habitat use by bats at Ebernoe common NNR with automatic devices that record their calls. We have also used radio tracking to trace patterns of habitat use by individual bats. Ebernoe presents a variety of habitats arising from former management, natural succession and storm damage. Our data show that bats use all of these habitats, but that usage varies between species. Large old trees, storm-damaged stumps and areas of dense holly undergrowth provide ideal roosting conditions for the rare barbastelle and Bechstein's bats. Presence of these features may explain why colonies of these rare species gather at Ebernoe to breed. Radio-tracking data show that both species forage off the reserve as well as on it. Nursing female barbastelles may travel as far as 16 km from the reserve to forage. This highlights the importance of conserving the area surrounding a reserve, as well as the reserve itself.

David A. Hill, Frank Greenaway and Patrick Fitzsimons

Vegetated Shingle on the Sussex Coastline

Vegetated Shingle is an internationally rare habitat. Sussex is lucky to have about 25% of the vegetated shingle in Europe. Vegetated shingle is uniquely adapted vegetation that has evolved to be able to withstand a great deal of battering by waves. The plants have typically adapted to high concentrations of salt from the spray, strong winds, shifting shingle and a low supply of fresh water. There are some nationally scarce and endangered plants such as Chiding Pink. Many invertebrates are specially adapted to these rare plants and many birds use the shingle for roosting.

Preserving the vegetated shingle is a multi-

is very difficult to get a handle on what the overall population is doing and why.

The Environment Agency is therefore funding an R&D project to answer some of these questions and with the help of Froglife and Southern Water / BTCV Pond Warden Scheme, detailed amphibian surveys will be carried out in randomly selected ponds across the southern region. The project was delayed due to Foot and Mouth but is rescheduled for next year. If you are interested in volunteering please register with Froglife on 01986 873733.

Mark Elliott (Environment Agency)

Vegetation Survey of Ashdown Forest

Ashdown Forest has a long and varied history of use. It was used for many centuries for rough grazing and harvesting of the natural vegetation—trees for timber and fuel, bracken for animal bedding, thatch and potash for the glass industry, gorse for fodder and fuel, heather for thatch etc.

For the past 3 decades the Ashdown Forest Conservators have undertaken to monitor the site through a vegetation survey once a decade. The rationale was to begin with the baseline and through a series of surveys see the progression of the site. The three surveys, in 1981, 1991-1992 and one to be completed next year, were done to the National Vegetation Classification criteria but accomplished through different means. In 1981 Collin Corfield set out to survey Ashdown Forest and map it using tracing paper, colour pencils and a lot of hard work. The next survey done by Nicolla Muggeridge was more technologically advanced using a CAD programme to the same effect as all the colour pencils the decade before. This year the survey is with ArcView GIS and a differential GPS making this the most accurate of the three surveys.

The Millenium Mapping Company has made available a complete set of orthorectified aerial photographs of the UK making it possible to drape computerised transformed photographs over OS maps accurately. This has never been done before. The 2001-2002 survey is made even more accurate by the use of a differential GPS, which is corrected by a radio signal (the accuracy is to sub-metre, 20-30 cms.) If anyone wishes to visit the Ashdown Forest Conservators to see the work being carried out there on vegetation surveys please contact us directly.

Chris Marrable (Ashdown Forest Conservators)

faceted issue. It is difficult to deal with problems such as fly tipping of garden wastes, building site rubble and refuse, Local Authorities spraying to clear the shingle of vegetation, and the addition of shingle to beachesto prevent losing coastal areas, which if done without care by adding non-washed shingle creates a semi-hard packed area impenetrable for plants to try to grow through. The hardest issue to deal with is protection of the coastline. This can be remedied by working with Local Authorities and contractors.

Awareness of the value of the vegetation locally and internationally is high on the list of priorities. All sectors of society need to become aware of the plight of one of our precious natural areas.

Jane Corke (former Vegetated Shingle Officer-Arun District Council)



Records Update

In the last issue we carried a report that the very rare water beetle *Haliphus Furcatus* had been recorded at Ebernoe Common, subject to confirmation. That confirmation has not been forthcoming and the record must now be regarded as incorrect.

Harry Montgomery - Rare Species Inventory Co-ordinator

Many new, exciting projects are in the works at SxBRC. . .

In the last 6 months we have been able to see more than 6 projects on Recorder 3.3 begin, end or come near to completion.

On the top of the list is the new position of Temporary Data Input Officer. Stuart Colgate has taken on this post with great enthusiasm. His role is to spend his time between all the partners of the SxBRC putting on backlogs of species data. This includes important chalk grassland survey data, SNCI data and SWT reserve data.

The Francis Rose Notebook Project is on the way to completion and is set to finish in the summer of 2002. With over 210,000 records computerised so far it has taken a vast amount of time and effort of many people to make this project flow as smoothly as it has done. There are actually more records than originally believed. This has extended the project. Judith Church has done an amazing job in entering the records.

Last February the British Dragonfly Society-Sussex Branch gave us 2 box-loads of their RA 70 cards. These have all been entered onto Recorder by Sue Kirk-Bell, who has really enjoyed working on this project learning a great deal about dragonflies in the process. This project will be a great aid to BDS-SB for producing their provisional Dragonfly Atlas for Sussex.

The SxBRC has begun to work on collating the datasets held by partners and associates of the SxBRC, which is done through imports and data transfers. The data we receive is added to our own and duplicates manually removed. The largest of these imports has been from Rye Harbour. A total of 61,000 records were imported smoothly which marks an important addition to the dataset.

Our dataset incorporates records from almost every taxonomic group. Recent additions focus on mammal and fungi records. The mammal records have continually flowed in, with the aid of Alan Gillham, who entered all the Sussex Mammal Recording Group's records as well. The entering of fungi records is now picking up speed with the help of Margaret Curtis.

The Pond Inventory has reached a stage where we are able to generate reports to support several large scale monitoring projects. The inventory now holds over 14,000 pond sites, covering all of West Sussex and parts of East Sussex. This exciting ongoing project is already showing interesting distribution patterns.

The Sussex Botanical Recording Society has put together an excellent publication A Register of Scarce Plants in Sussex. SxBRC played a role in supporting the society in the publication of this document. Nearly 200 copies have been sold and the feedback has been extremely positive. (available from SxBRC for £10)

One of the projects beginning this year is a Hedgerow Inventory for West Sussex. Our long-standing volunteer Peter Challis was able to make it a reality by winning an Msc through BBC Wildlife Magazine. Through his masters, Peter, already extremely knowledgeable about Hedgerows in Sussex is able to apply new skills in statistics to the project. Peter has worked enthusiastically to get the support of the West Sussex County Council, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and the Horley-Crawley Countryside Project. The inventory is in its infancy currently. Included in the project will be the formation of surveying methods.

Update on your projects in the works!

The Selsey Parish Mapping Project has finished their Phase 1 map of Selsey Parish. With the help of SxBRC, the support of Chichester District Council, West Sussex County Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust, a map was digitised on GIS. A draft Parish Action Plan was completed in July by Joe Savill.

Henfield Birdwatch has published a comprehensive book on the Parish survey that was done under the guidance of Mike Russell (Seminar 2000). A repeat survey will take place in 2004. Copies of the Henfield Birdwatch publication are £2.50 available from SxBRC.

NEW PUBLICATION

A new publication is on its way. Patrick Roper has taken the plunge and agreed to be the editor of a new annual report on biological recording in Sussex. The report is focusing on recording activity in Sussex over the year. It will be ready for the seminar on February 23rd.

Anyone wishing to contribute please contact Patrick Roper on 07890 765545 or 01424 870208. Email: patrick@prassociates.co.uk

Please Note!

In February at the Seminar a date was set for the 2002 Seminar. Unfortunately, we have had to change that to February 23, 2002. For all those who wrote it in their diary for the 9th, we apologise. A booking form has been sent out. If you have not yet received one but would like to attend please call SxBRC.

Species Recovery Programme Tenth Anniversary Conference

**Wednesday 5th – Friday 7th December 2001
The Hayes Conference Centre Swanwick, Derbyshire**

In 1991 English Nature began the Species Recovery Programme. It is now celebrating its tenth anniversary. "The conference will highlight conservation successes and the development of new methods and management techniques from the last ten years. Current issues such as habitat management conflicts, translocation and invasive species will be the focus of interactive workshops".

**Contact English Nature if you are interested in attending.
01273 476 595**

The Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre is managed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust as a partnership project between West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, English Nature, the Environment Agency, Southern Water and Local Authorities throughout Sussex.