



N B R C

Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre

Annual Report 2022-23



Background

The Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre (NBRC) is a not-for profit, impartial, independent provider of biodiversity and geographical information. The centre launched in 2006 for the custodianship and provision of biological data in Northamptonshire. The centre is one of nearly fifty county-based Local Environmental Records Centres operating across the UK whose collective aim is to support biological recording, data curation and provision of environmental information for decision-making.

Working closely with local authorities, environmental consultants, conservation organisations, educational institutions, and the general public along with various recording groups across the county, allows the NBRC to promote wildlife recording and furthering the importance of biodiversity data.

NBRC is hosted by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire and is based at the Trust offices at Lings House, Lings Way, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE

Our Vision

A modern, effective & trusted centre for local wildlife recording and biodiversity information access

Our Mission Statement

To champion and support all aspects of biological recording in Northamptonshire, by;

- offering a local facility for the collection, validation, verification, collation, storage, analysis, sharing and use of environmental data.
- providing access to an effective evidence base to guide strategies, plans and decisions that have potential to impact on biodiversity and
- sharing biodiversity information more widely.

in order to

- increase understanding of the natural environment, and
- ensure that development and natural resource management achieve better, more sustainable outcomes within and beyond the county.

Our Values

Independent, straightforward, helpful and evidence-led, we are honest, professional, and impartial in the services and support we provide to all. We are committed to:

- Working collaboratively with others.
- Promoting and valuing the efforts of the county's biological recorders and organisations that utilise biodiversity information.
- Being a learning and enabling organisation.
- Developing our services, technical skills and information infrastructure to continually meet a range of user needs.
- Conducting our business with integrity in an open, honest, transparent and accountable way.
- Making the most of available information whilst recognising its limitations and seeking future improvements.
- Recognising and investing in our staff and volunteers as our greatest resource.

Our Objectives

Ensure access to quality biodiversity information through developing our skills and services to meet the needs of environmental decision makers, maintaining data quality and security and continually achieving operational financial security.

Continually enhance the breadth and depth of biological and environmental information held in our database through engaging, supporting and developing volunteers' skill in recording activity, building effective sharing relationships, and enhancing our database with both recent and historic coverage.

Improve and maintain effective operational standards, policies, procedures, and reporting in accordance with National Biodiversity Network and Association of Local Environmental Records Centres guidance

Staff and Volunteers

In 2022-23, NBRC was managed by Josh Hellon full time until September 2022 during the recruitment process following Rosalind Johnston's departure in March. In September NBRC successfully recruited a new Centre Manager, Richard Coppins (0.6 FTE) There are three data officers working at NBRC Nathalie Hueber (0.6 FTE) James Skinner (0.6 FTE) and Rachel Tate (0.6 FTE)

Additionally, we would like to thank all the volunteers and county recorders spend hours of their own time supporting our LERC without who we would not be able to function. Our volunteers support us through digitising historic biological records, through gathering species records over the year, through skills sharing and training for identification. Our county recorders ensure current quality species data is supplied annually for incorporation into our database - together they help us continually improve the environmental database we hold; current and historic. We meet with our County Recorders twice a year and organise an annual recorders BioBlitz in the summer - this year held at Bragborough Hall

Partnerships & Collaboration

Following restructuring at NBRC along with the local authorities in 2022, the decision was taken by the group to disband the current steering group in December 2022. In 2023 the NBRC will look to reform the steering group and will be contacting groups involved with the record centre for representatives. This will include the local authorities, conservation organisations, educational institutions along with the local recording groups

Finance

For 2022/23 information requests have remained high and NBRC has continued to complete work for several different service level agreements for Anglian Water, North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and the Environment Agency. NBRC also has a hosting agreement with the Wildlife Trust BCN for which NBRC provides 'in kind' services.

A surplus of £26,902 was generated in 2022/23 following an income of £89,973 and an expenditure of £63,071. The majority of this year's expenses has gone to staff salaries although this was lower than had been expected following restructuring. There was also a significant increase in the number of data searches received compared to the previous year.

For the 2022/23 forecast our estimates for information requests reflect the ongoing economic uncertainty caused by high levels of inflation. There has been a budgeted increase in the project work due to ongoing projects that are due to be billed in the coming economic year. This will allow for reinvestment into the dataset in the following year.

NBRC Expenditure	<i>2021/2022 Actual</i>	<i>2022/2023 Actual</i>	<i>2023/2024 Budget</i>
Staff Salaries/ Training/Recruitment	£78,618	£61,738	£77,378
Subscriptions (e.g. NFBR, ALERC) & office consumables	£509	£210	£520
IT Software and hardware as well as website support	£1217	£642	£1545
Other Costs	£2541	£481	£1,054
TOTAL	£82,885	£63,071	£80,497

NBRC Income	<i>2021/2022 Actual</i>	<i>2022/2023 Actual</i>	<i>2023/2024 Budget</i>
Information Requests	£49,868	£53,432	£45,000
SLAs	£27,794	£29,782	£32,489
Project work	£6,150	£6,759	£16,300
TOTAL	£83,812	£89,973	£93,789
Balance	£927	£26,902	£13,292
Reserves	£68,914	£69,841	£83,133

Achievements in 2022-23

Sites

NBRC sites datasets are updated and managed by our partners the Wildlife Trust BCN with assistance and support of NBRC staff. Staff assisted with 8 Local Wildlife Sites surveys over the summer and attended the 2022 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) selection panel meeting in March 2023. In 2022, 42 Local Wildlife Sites went through the selection panel and had their citation either created or updated; this includes some Protected Wildflower Verge sites. We continue to improve our LWS database through data cleansing. As of 31st March 2023, we have now completed all 729 LWS new citations and 117 PWS new citations out of 269 surveyed PWS.

There were no further changes to the sites information held this year.

Table 1 Sites information held in NBRC database (updated April 2018)

<i>Non-Statutory Sites</i>	Number of Sites	<i>Statutory Sites</i>	Number of sites
Local Wildlife Site	729	Site of Special Scientific Interest	57
Potential Wildlife Site	1098	National Nature Reserve	2
Local Geological Sites	55	Local Nature Reserve	18
Protected Wildflower Verge	30		
Pocket Park	81		
Wildlife Trust Reserves	37		

Habitats

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats have been mapped in all Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) sites in Northamptonshire and are updated as new information becomes available. This data is provided, updated, and managed by our partners the Wildlife Trust BCN.

Table 2 Habitats information held in NBRC database (updated February 2022)

BAP habitats	Area (ha)	Other Habitats	Area (ha)
Acid Grassland	165	Other Open Water	1772
Calcareous Grassland	267	Scrub	294
Eutrophic Standing Water (+2ha)	1617	Undetermined Grassland	1223
Floodplain Grazing Marsh	1138	Undetermined Woodland	4799
Lowland Fen	146		
Lowland Heathland	2.5		
Lowland Meadow	752		
Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland	4727		
Open Mosaics	185		
Purple moor grass & rush pasture	0.8		
Reedbed	34		
Traditional Orchards	6	Total BAP habitat	9450.3
Wet woodland	186	Total Other habitats	8078
Woodpasture & Parkland	225	All habitats	17528.3

Species

The NBRC database currently now holds over 1.5 million (1,559,355) species records (of these over 1 million are verified), covering 12,365 species in 57 taxonomic groups. James manages this data and ensures quality through **validation** (checks on the “completeness” and accuracy of the record) and **verification** (expert assessment of the accuracy of identification for confidence in the observation) where supported by a national or county recorder, on all received records before incorporation into the NBRC Recorder6 database*. In rare cases where verification is not possible, the records are omitted until they can be assured or entered as unverified (to be considered during decision making) until this can be corrected. This quality assurance process is imperative to deliver reliable robust information for confident data led ecological decision-making. * Historical records may not have all undertaken the full quality procedure as we now have in place for database incorporation.



Cicada orni. A first for Northamptonshire. Recorded in Ashton, Oundle, Northamptonshire (Martin Izzard)

In 2022-23 179,763 records were added, including:

- Over 100,000 bird records from the 2021 bird dataset
- Over 62,000 butterfly records (2021 and 2022 datasets, plus some added from 2018, 2019 and 2020)
- Over 3,500 records from the 2022 Local Wildlife Sites surveys
- 52 datasets were received, 77% of received data has been validated ready for verification.

Northamptonshire benefits from a wealth of expertise from our county recorders who work with us in annual updates for their taxon groups.

Species information updates in NBRC database (updated April 2023)

County Dataset	Current date records to in R6	Last time updated in Recorder 6	No of records	Planned Update
Bryophytes	December 2021	Spring 2022	24,775	Spring 2024
Butterflies	December 2022	Spring 2023	158,395	Spring 2024
Diptera	November 2017	Autumn/Winter 2018	25,691	Ongoing. 2023/2024
Moths	December 2019	Spring 2021	579,811	Autumn/Winter 2023
Water Bugs	December 2016	Spring 2017	8,582	Autumn/Winter 2023
Plants	October 2015	March 2021	141,798	Ongoing. 2023/2024
Dragonflies	November 2003	March 2004	2,549	Uncertain
Birds	December 2021	Spring 2023	259,947	Ongoing. 2023/2024
Hymenoptera	May 2020	Spring 2022	626	Ongoing. 2023/2024
Amphibians & Reptiles	1905 - 2022	2023	2,110	Uncertain
Fungi	Currently no county recorder for this group		4,427	Uncertain
Lichens	National Scheme was contacted for database access. Need to re-establish communication		n/a	Uncertain
Mammals	There is a county recorder for this group, but there is currently no exchange of records		n/a	Working with PTES, Northamptonshire Badger Group, Wildlife BCN
Coleoptera	There is a county recorder for this group, but no specific exchange of records has taken place		n/a	Uncertain
Trichoptera	Currently no county recorder for this group. National dataset received		n/a	In progress

Spiders	There is a county recorder for this group, but no specific exchange of records has taken place	n/a	Uncertain
Hemiptera	Currently no county recorder for this group	n/a	Uncertain
Orthoptera	Currently no county recorder for this group	n/a	Uncertain

Information Requests

- A total of 346 data searches were completed by the NBRC during 2022-23, an 11% increase on the last two years (324 during 2021-22 and 309 during 2020-21).
- Of these, 293 were commercial enquiries (263 commercial enquiries last year) and 53 were completed free of charge (61 last year).
- The breakdown of free of charge enquiries is as follows:

Requestor	Number of searches
Local organisations/partners	0
Wildlife Trust BCN	8
Local Authorities Service Level Agreements	0
Other Service Level Agreements	0
Private Individuals and students	6
Cross border searches (no charge)	13
National Schemes/National Projects	3
Did not go ahead	13
Referred to Mammal Recorder	10

- The average turn-around time for providing data was one day. All requests were completed within 10 working days of receipt of confirmation to supply data.

Biological Recording & Engagement

It is important that the services the NBRC can provide are continually promoted so that anyone requiring biodiversity information for Northamptonshire knows where to look. With this in mind we try to engage with a broad range of people through various means. This year we have:

- Produced an annual report which is available on our website (northantsbrc.org.uk)
- Promoted our “look out for...” surveys on the NBRC website, highlighting species that are easily recordable at various times of the year
- Engaged with our recording community through social media posts on Twitter and Facebook
- Attended the monitoring and research conference to promote the record centre
- Steered three meetings with the County Recorders to discuss updates within the recording community

Regional/National Collaboration

The NBRC works with regional Record Centres across the UK. All staff members attended the 2022 ALERC meeting where the theme was 'Taking care of business' with talks focusing on LERC business development. There were also additional workshops during the day including discussions of developments with R and iRecord. In addition to this the NBRC attends regional meetings with other record centres to further discuss working procedures and discuss more localised issues.

NBRC continues to work with Wildlife Trust BCN, our host organisation, and followed NBN trust guidance to ensure we are compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Our Privacy Policy and Terms of Use, last updated 07/2020, are available on our website and we plan to add documented organisational policies to our website. Our aim is to ensure the NBRC operates effectively and continue to review our procedures to make a submission to become an ALERC accredited Record Centre.

Project Work

The NBRC has been involved in several projects this year including:

Rockingham Forest Vision

This project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage fund which aims to encourage local communities to connect with natural and cultural heritage of Rockingham Forest. The project is also aiming to improve the remaining core wooded areas through connecting the fragmented plots to produce a more biodiverse landscape.

As part of the project the NBRC have been commissioned to provide data for 10 parishes within the project area along with Habitat Opportunity Maps for the parishes to help create their parish recovery plans. The NBRC will also be providing Bioblitz events at Kings Wood as well as Hazel and Thoroughsale Wood.

During 2022/23 the NBRC has sat on the steering group for this project, helping to guide the initial plans. The steering group has overseen the production of an impressive user guide which will be useful for the Parishes designing their recovery plans.

Bragborough Hall Bioblitz

This year the NBRC undertook a BioBlitz at Bragborough Hall on July 9th 2022 with the help of the county recorders. The estate offered a broad variety of habitats including woods, ponds and meadows. Datasets from this Bioblitz have been collected and added to the NBRC database this includes new records for 443 species across 24 taxon groups. Currently, a total of 661 new records have been added to the database. We hope to continue running these events for years to come as they provide a great opportunity to develop our understanding of an area as well as being an opportunity to increase engagement in biological recording.

Ancient Woodland Inventory Update

The Ancient Woodland Inventory Update is a project, part funded by the Woodland Trust and Natural England, aiming to update the existing inventory which was originally compiled in the 1980s and contains inaccuracies due to the restrictions of the equipment available at the time, amongst other issues. The aim of the project was to produce a more accurate layer along with the addition of small woods (0.25-2ha) that were not including on the current Ancient Woodland layer.

The team at NBRC have worked to produce the first phase of the project. This involved comparing different datasets including the modern-day aerials along with 1st Edition Ordinance Survey Maps (Epoch 1, 1843-1893) to identify areas which show woodlands that have been present since the 1800s. Having finished this phase of the project the remaining work has been sent to the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire who have Ancient Woodland Inventory Officers in place to finish the project.

The Future of NBRC

Following the restructuring that the NBRC have been reviewing processes to accommodate the changes to the amount of staff time available at the record centre. The next year will include reinstating the steering group to allow the record centre to remain impartial and guided by the demands for data. This will enable the record centre to continue towards becoming accredited by ALERC.

Additionally, we will endeavor to improve the standard of our service through engaging with our recording community, encouraging best recording practices and ensuring our record centre is sufficiently equipped to deal with the increasing demands for data. To do this the NBRC will continue to promote its services through various means including social media, conferences, and updates to the website.

