

NBRC Newsletter 05

November 2012

NBRC News

NBRC has a new logo! We would like to say a special thank you to Cheryl Roberts, Design & Communications Officer at The Wildlife Trust who designed a set of logos and also to everyone who participated in the voting process.

We now have a website: www.northantsbrc.org.uk
This site is still under construction so please be patient with us. We would like to say a special thank you to Keith Balmer, Biodiversity Network Officer at Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre who helped us in the construction of the website

We welcome James Skinner, data officer for the NBRC. James was covering Nathalie while she was on maternity leave. As Nathalie came back working part-time, James is able to carry on working for the NBRC. So there are now three part-time data officers for the NBRC: Nathalie, Rachel and James. Taxon group responsibilities have been divided between us as follows:

Nathalie	Birds Plants Bryophytes Lichens Bees
Rachel	Amphibians and Reptiles Mammals Dragonflies Fungi Spiders True Flies Crickets, Grasshoppers and allied
James	Moths Butterflies Beetles Plant Galls True Bugs Aquatic Invertebrates

We also welcome Jackie Ulyett, centre manager for Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre. Jackie will be working with us two days a week for the next twelve months. She will help with the management of the NBRC in place of Oliver Burke.

A new Development Manager for the records centres covering Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough will be appointed in the next few months. This new position is to ensure the strategic vision, financial stability and sound management of three local records centres for the next three years.

Local News

Sandy Spinney Quarry BioBlitz

NBRC organised a BioBlitz event on the 15th/16th June 2012 at Sandy Spinney Quarry near Cranford. We would like to thank everyone who participated and contributed to this very successful event.

Covering around 16.5 hectares, the site consists of two main gulleys created from previous quarrying activity. This has produced an intricate mix of habitats, with grassy clearings, slopes of varying aspects, a plateau, ditches and a lake. They all have varying amounts of vegetation cover from scrub to secondary woodland.

So it is not surprising to find a great variety of species there. A total of 1020 records were recorded for the whole event (taking into account a few weeks in May and then later in July/November). The number of records collected is very impressive. We found 713 species this year which is very close to what was found the previous years.



Elater (Ampedus) quercicola, Sandy Spinney Quarry, 16th June 2012.

The group with the most species recorded were the vascular plants with 163 species, followed by the beetles with 87 species recorded, then the moths with 62 species recorded, the Bugs with 53 species recorded and the flies with 51 species. The most common beetle recorded was the 7 spot ladybird

(*Coccinella septempunctata*). The most common butterfly recorded was Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*) and the most common birds recorded were BlackBird (*Turdus merula*), Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) and Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*).

Sandy Quarry Spinney is already a well recorded site. Nonetheless, the species list has been extended to include an impressive 549 new species thanks to this event. A lot of them are overlooked common species but there are certainly some interesting additions. Brian Eversham said: "there were some species I'd never seen before - I was particularly glad to find the scarce dead-wood beetle, *Hedobia imperialis*, and to get some photos of *Elater quercicola*."

Notable species include:

Sky Lark	bird	Bird Red, UK BAP 2007
Common Linnet	bird	Bird Red, UK BAP 2007
Yellowhammer	bird	Bird Red, UK BAP 2007
Hedge Accentor	bird	Bird Amber, UK BAP 2007
Common Bullfinch	bird	Bird Amber, UK BAP 2007
Song Thrush	bird	Bird Red, UK BAP 2007
<i>Cladonia chlorophaea</i>	fungus	Status-NR, Status-NS
<i>Ampedus quercicola</i>	insect - beetle (Coleoptera)	Notable-B
<i>Hedobia (Ptinomorphus) imperialis</i>	insect - beetle (Coleoptera)	Notable-B
<i>Longitarsus dorsalis</i>	insect - beetle (Coleoptera)	Notable-B
Dingy Skipper	insect - butterfly	IUCN 2001 Red List VU, UK BAP 2007
Grizzled Skipper	insect - butterfly	IUCN 2001 Red List VU, UK BAP 2007
Scarce Chaser	insect - dragonfly (Odonata)	RedList_GB_post2001-NT
<i>Myrmica schencki</i>	insect - hymenopteran	Notable-B
Large Nutmeg	insect - moth	UK BAP 2007
Latticed Heath	insect - moth	UK BAP 2007
Concolorous	insect - moth	UK BAP 2007
Small Phoenix	insect - moth	UK BAP 2007
Ghost Moth	insect - moth	UK BAP 2007
Shoulder-striped Wainscot	insect - moth	UK BAP 2007
White Ermine	insect - moth	UK BAP 2007
Cinnabar	insect - moth	UK BAP 2007
<i>Xanthoria ucrainica</i>	lichen	Status-NS
Common Lizard	reptile	UK BAP 2007

There are also a number of possible new county records. Unfortunately our records may not be up to date for those groups so please notify us if you have seen (or know anybody who has seen) any of these in the county before:

<i>Nelima gothica</i>	harvestman
<i>Opilio canestrinii</i>	harvestman
<i>Ampedus quercicola</i>	beetle

<i>Anisodactylus binotatus</i>	beetle
<i>Cantharis figurata</i>	beetle
<i>Hedobia (Ptinomorphus) imperialis</i>	beetle
<i>Microlestes minutulus</i>	beetle
<i>Silpha tristis</i>	beetle
<i>Limnephilus auricula</i>	caddis fly
<i>Limnephilus marmoratus</i>	caddis fly
<i>Deraeocoris (Deraeocoris) flavilinea</i>	true bug
<i>Physatocheila dumetorum</i>	true bug
<i>Dasineura glechomae</i>	true fly
<i>Dicranomyia pauli</i>	true fly
<i>Limonia macrostigma</i>	true fly

Overall Sandy Spinney Quarry Bioblitz was a very successful event. It would be quite interesting to repeat the event in 5 or 10 years time to compare the similarities and the differences.



Large Alder Sawfly *Cimbex connatus*, Great addington gravel pit – 17th June 2012. This is probably the first record for the county.

Interesting Records for the year

Diptera Records – John Showers

The wet Spring and Summer has meant that a lot of fieldwork has been lost and overall the season's records have been down on last year. However there have been some interesting sightings. Several records of the large soldierfly *Stratiomys potamida* have been received from the South-West of the county. This species has only been recorded occasionally in the past few years. The large wasp mimic hoverfly *Volucella inanis* was recorded in several sites in late Summer and appears to be increasing. This species was first recorded in the county about 10 years ago after expanding its range from the South-East. The even larger hornet mimic *Volucella zonaria* was also recorded in Northampton. Another hoverfly that has been expanding its range recently is *Rhingia rostrata*. Records of this are down on the past couple of years but I did find it at Rothwell Gullet, a new site for this species. Two other hoverfly species that are very infrequently recorded in the county also turned up: *Epistrophe diaphana* and *E. grossulariae*. The blowflies, *Calliphoridae*, are ubiquitous but not often recorded, partly because they are not easy to key out and can be dominated by a few extremely

common flies. Also comprehensive keys for the UK fauna are not readily available. Tony White has been looking at these visiting ivy flowers around Byfield. He has recorded *Pollenia angustigena* and *P. pediculata* as well as the spectacular *Cynomyia mortuorum*. This species is a dark metallic blue "bluebottle" but it has a brilliant yellow forehead and face, making it quite distinctive, but Tony's record is the first I have received for the county. For pictures of this and other news on flies in the county see my blog: northantsdiptera.blogspot.co.uk



Volucella inanis – found in the office at Lings on 1st August 2012

Butterflies Records transect review for Twywell Hills and Dales - Douglas Goddard

During 2012, the transect count was completed on all of the 26 weeks of the recording period, though the poor summer weather meant that it was often carried out in less than ideal conditions and no butterflies were seen until week 3. During a dire week 4 the count was entirely of roosting butterflies! Grateful thanks to Andy Wyldes, who again carried out the surveys, some also completed by me.

Butterfly Species Trends Twywell Transect 2011/12			
Small Skipper	+51%	Common Blue	-51%
Essex Skipper	SAME	Holly Blue	-----
Large Skipper	-6%	Red Admiral	+100%
Dingy Skipper	- 11%	Painted Lady	-----
Grizzled Skipper	-34%	Small Tortoiseshell	+33%
Clouded Yellow	-----	Peacock	+192%
Brimstone	-22%	Comma	-25%
Large White	-36%	Speckled Wood	-94%
Small White	-77%	Marbled White	SAME
Green-veined White	-87%	Gatekeeper	-24%
Orange-tip	+14%	Meadow Brown	+104%
Green Hairstreak	-36%	Ringlet	+23%
Small Copper	-21%	Small Heath	-56%
Brown Argus	-68%		

----- denotes species not recorded in one or both years, **UK BAP species in bold**

The weather this year in particular played larger part than usual in the fortunes of the butterflies on site. Of the 25 species recorded, only seven showed an increase and two Painted Ladies were seen after no records the previous year. Fifteen decreased in numbers and two remained the same as in 2011. All three of the BAP species on site

were fewer in number than the previous year, partly attributable to last summer's drought and the cool, wet spring in 2012. They all had an exceptional year last year and numbers were still reasonably good as a result of this though poor weather for breeding may well result in a more drastic reduction in their populations next year.

Particular victims of the wet conditions were the three Whites, which were very uncommon everywhere in their first broods, and the Small Copper, Common Blue and Brown Argus. The last three all rely on larval foodplants in shorter turf, but these plants became sparse last season as a result of the drought and struggled amid the lush growth of grasses in the exceptional rainfall this year. Lack of sunshine limited their opportunities to mate and lay eggs. Only one Speckled Wood was seen this year compared with eighteen the year before.

Some of the grass-feeding species benefited from the luxuriant growth which occurred – Small Skippers showed a very encouraging increase, Meadow Browns recovered from a poor year in 2011 to double their numbers and Ringlets increased by 23%. An improvement in the weather in August and September led to an increase in the number of Red Admirals, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells visiting the good display of flowers.

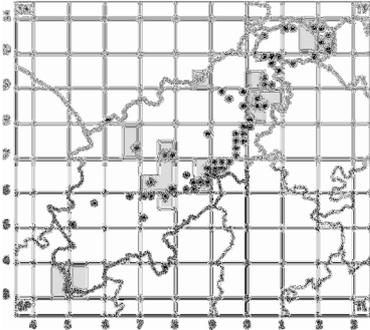
Overall totals of butterflies on the transect decreased for the third successive year, largely due to the much lower numbers of Common Blue and Small Heath in particular: 1811 was the total for 2012, 1995 for 2011, a reduction of 9%.

County Atlases

A new Flora of Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough – Gill Gent and Rob Wilson

Seventeen years ago, in 1995, a new Flora of Northamptonshire & the Soke of Peterborough was published, updating the original flora written by the famous local botanist George Claridge Druce published in 1930. Even since the start of the 21st century the local landscape has noticeably altered. The expansion of towns and villages and the different farming practices have wrought many changes with the consequent loss and creation of various habitats and some five years ago it became obvious that although the new flora was then only just over a decade old, the information it contained was becoming rapidly outdated and we planned to produce a supplement to the 1995 Flora but at the request of the Wildlife Trust we changed our plans and commenced working on a totally new Flora.

This was an opportunity to considerably improve the original book, with a greatly expanded text giving more detail on both past and present distribution of some 1800 species. The distribution of some 600 species is mapped on a 2km grid as opposed to the 5km grid of our earlier book. This shows the distribution in much more precise detail with the course of waterways and roads that form the major habitats of species such as Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii* (illustrated opposite) and Danish Scurvy-grass *Cochlearia danica*, being much more easily followed on the maps.



Collecting the data to produce the maps and the text involved an enormous amount of work for a small group of enthusiasts who visited every 2km square in the county (numbering well in excess of 600) during the next few years and recorded species from the various habitats at different seasons within each square. At the same time many hours have been spent at the keyboard (and countless cups of coffee have been consumed) collating and computerising the data, writing the text (almost a quarter of a million words).

As well as the section where the distribution of the individual species is discussed, there are introductory chapters describing various natural areas and habitat types within the vice-county, the geology, the weather and the reasons for the changes in distribution with some thoughts about what the future may hold for our wild flowers.

Apart from a final check the book and the artwork is now virtually complete and it is hoped that the 590 page hardback book will be published in March or early April 2013. To pre-order your copy at a promotional price please contact NBRC using the details provided at the end of the Newsletter before 31st March 2013.

Butterflies of Northamptonshire – Douglas Goddard

- The first book exclusively on the butterflies of the county, 112 pages, 300 photographs in colour
- Descriptions of the butterfly habitats of Northamptonshire with details of ten important sites with public access to see the butterflies of the county
- Descriptions, life cycles, trends and distribution maps of the 36 species resident in the county plus historical summaries of rare migrants and extinct species

- Features on the work of Butterfly Conservation and management for key species, Gardening for Butterflies, 'BB' and the Purple Emperor

To order your copy now please contact NBRC using the details provided at the end of the Newsletter.



Musk beetle *Aromia moschata*, Abington Meadows, Northampton – 21st June 2011. This is probably the first record for the county!

Meet your fellow recorders

I've worked for the Local Records Centre for Bedfordshire & Luton, the Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre (BRMC) since January 2009, first as a Data Officer and as Centre Manager since June 2010. I've very recently started dividing my time between the BRMC and the NBRC as manager of both centres, which is going to be an interesting venture!

Before working in the Local Records Centres I spent nearly 20 years working for the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (or the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology as it once was) at Monks Wood. Most of my work there was at the national scale, preparing maps and large databases for assessments of the impacts of acidification and eutrophication on habitats and ecosystems. Having worked at Monks Wood I was very aware of the role of the Biological Records Centre, sometimes making use of their data in the projects I was involved in. I've always particularly enjoyed the mapping side of my work, using the basic data to illustrate and help inform decisions, be it at the national or local scale. Jackie Ulyett

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Thank you for your contributions

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