

NBRC Newsletter 18

Autumn/Winter 2019

Coming into the final stages of WILDside, we are in the process of writing up the final project evaluation and reflecting on the tremendous boost to Northamptonshire wildlife recording, as supported through National Lottery Heritage Fund support, which this project has delivered over the last two and a half years. A huge number of records have been directly generated through the project, with support for recording across wider taxonomic and geographic coverage. The volunteer hours clocked up is a huge testimony to everyone involved! We will be sharing the project evaluation, so we, and others in the recording community, can learn from what has worked well. All project partners are looking at how we can continue to support the successes.

WHY WE RECORD WILDLIFE ...

A CONCERN FOR BIODIVERSITY AND HOW WE MONITOR IT. BEAUTY & INTEREST OF THE SPECIES I FIND. BEING OUTSIDE. EXERCISE WITH AN OBJECTIVE, INTELLECTUAL. BORN WITH AN INTEREST IN RECORDING UNUSUAL SPECIES. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE THAT CAN BE USED LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY FOR CONSERVATION. ENJOYABLE. USEFUL. ADDS TO THE BIG PICTURE. FINDING NEW AND EXCITING SPECIES FOR NORTHANTS. I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT RECORDS ARE FOR DECISION MAKING. GENERAL INTEREST & INCREASE THE COMMON GOOD. GENERAL INTEREST IN WILDLIFE. INTERESTED IN NATURAL HISTORY FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS. HAVING HAD A CAREER IN IT. DESIGN TEXTILES INSPIRED BY NATURE. SO HAVE ALWAYS OBSERVED IT. I LOVE BEING OUTSIDE IN GREAT COUNTRYSIDE WITH AN OBJECTIVE THAT MAKES A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION. I CAN REVIEW CHANGES YEAR BY YEAR. I ENJOY LOOKING FOR AND IDENTIFYING SPECIES. I ENJOY WATCHING ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR (BIRDS). I ENJOY BEING OUTSIDE. LOOKING AT WILDLIFE & RECOGNISE THE VALUE OF RECORDS. I LIKE TO KNOW THE SPECIES I COME ACROSS AND RECORDING THE FINDINGS MAKES SOME USE OF WHAT I SEE. I'M AN OUTDOORSY PERSON AND MY BIRD KNOWLEDGE IS HIGH. IMPORTANT TO RECORD TO GET TO KNOW WHAT IS AROUND WHAT HABITATS ESPECIALLY IN UNDER RECORDED AREAS LIKE THE SOUTH WEST OF THE COUNTY. INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY. INTEREST AND CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE. INTEREST IN THE SPREAD AND DIVERSITY OF SPECIES IN MY LOCAL AREA. INTEREST IN TAXONOMIC GROUP (ALGAE). INTEREST IN THE WORLD AROUND US AND ECOSYSTEMS. INTERESTED IN WILDLIFE MY ENTIRE LIFE. IT IS GOOD TO KNOW WHAT CAN BE FOUND FOR AN AREA. ITS IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHATS HAPPENING TO WILDLIFE. AS AN INDICATOR OF IMPORTANT FACTORS SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT. KNOWING THE IMPORTANCE OF HOW MY RECORDS WILL BE USED. I USE THEM TO TRACK HOW SPECIES ARE FARING YEAR ON YEAR. LIFE LONG PASSION FOR ENTOMOLOGY LOVE OF THE OUTDOORS THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO DATA THAT WILL BE USED IN CONSERVATION & THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN NEW THINGS. LOVE OF WILD THINGS AND PLACES AND A DESIRE TO CONSERVE THEM. I LIKE SHARING THAT ENTHUSIASM WITH OTHERS. CONSERVATION MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO COUNTRYWIDE INFORMATION & THE BIGGER PICTURE. PERSONAL INTEREST. INFORMATION FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & CONTRIBUTION TO COUNTRYWIDE KNOWLEDGE. RECORDS ARE USEFUL FOR IDENTIFYING VALUABLE HABITATS AND SITES, AND HOPEFULLY LEAD TO THEIR CONSERVATION. THE LOVE OF BEING OUTSIDE. TO HELP US GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT. WILDLIFE & CLIMATE CHANGE. LOVE OF WILDLIFE.

LOVE OF WILDLIFE
LOVE OF THE OUTDOORS

TO INFORM RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

LEARNING, SHARING AND BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

Feedback from WILDside recorders at the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Record Centre

Sp Adobe Spark

Feedback from recorders gathered in WILDside

Sadly, at the end of this month Ryan will be leaving us as part of the record centre team, however he will be

joining the Wildlife Trust Monitoring & Research team starting in January and still with us as our Aculeate Hymenoptera county recorder. A key tool of WILDside, from feedback gathered, has been the 'gaps on the map' approach. As part of his new role, Ryan will be working with the Wildlife Trust Monitoring and Research team for the next few months in development of an updated interactive version of this and wider applications of the tool for conservation, as well as supporting the wider work of this team.



The NBRC team at our first ever Northamptonshire Biological Recorders Conference, delivered as part of WILDside

It has been busy as always over the summer with surveys, workshops and BioBlitz'. The whole team have supported summer surveying including two WILDside BioBlitz' (with drone imagery gathered to support) and Wildlife Trust surveys; including the water for wildlife otter, mink, and water vole surveys, ecology group dormouse footprint surveys, rapid grassland surveys, and the Wider Countryside Local Wildlife Surveys. Notably, Nathalie has this year supported two Wildlife Trust BCN run training workshops on Stoneworts (led by Chris Carter) and Urban Plants (led by Brian Laney), following on from her WILDside run Aquatic Plants course last year. James led a Moth walk as part of a second year request from the Friends of Hunsbury for a Bat/Moth night event. Rachel was out with the drone for the 'Farming for the Future' project <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/farming-future>, to capture in HD video of the RSPB loaned Rotary Ditcher in action creating shallow channels and ditches for breeding and overwintering wading birds. Over this period, your records have been coming in via our website, from active recording groups and individuals, and in response to national and local surveys.

James has been recently focussing on processing the most recently received datasets for 2019. The data will then be sent out to our County Recorders for verification. Notable data sets received so far include the latest Butterfly data David James, County Recorder

for Butterflies and from County Caddis dataset from UK Caddis Recording Scheme Organiser, Ian Wallace, who has ensured all local environmental record centres have access to the considerable body of data he has collected <https://nbn.org.uk/ian-wallace-nbn-conference-2019/>. Thanks to Brian Laney all of our Great Crested Newt records held have been verified by and are currently being imported into Recorder. He has also been busily entering and updating plant data for the county in preparation of the upcoming BSBI Atlas due in 2020. <https://bsbi.org/atlas-2020>

Our database is closing in on a one-millionth record, with records received over the year currently being processed for incorporation. Our most recent summary of the data, up to April 2019, held is available in our 2018-19 Annual Report available on our website. Along with our three long-term volunteers, who work with Rachel in the digitisation of historic records, we now have a new volunteer working with Nathalie on checks of LWS data to ensure accuracy. This summer, 38 site surveys were completed and she is now making a start on processing ready for the spring panel meeting. Requested up-to-date data and GIS layers have now been provided for all our SLA partners for the year including our new partnership with South Northamptonshire District Council. It is momentous for sound ecological decision making in the county that we now supply data to councils in both the North and South of Northamptonshire. We aim, through working together, as part of our Steering Group, to ensure we continually develop and meet local data need.

To this aim, in developing our drone service, the team are looking at developing mini-projects for use this technology for conservation planning and monitoring. These case studies will be shared on our website. Our website has been developing, with thanks to Rachel there is now an 'all species' map now on the website, at 10k resolution, and we now have data download functionality. She has also recently completed the much-needed migration of the NBRC website to a new webserver. This new webserver includes SSL security certification and greater support. We have agreement to share details of recording support in the county on our website and additionally intend to launch a new 'look out for survey' in the new year.

Lastly, a small note to celebrate the 10th anniversary of this newsletter! As a way of keeping in touch more regularly and we aim to start a blog feature on our website and provide updates as they occur to your inbox, to support this please ensure your contact info is up to date. The full summary of all the local recording

news will continue bi-annually and we thank you for your continued interest and support.

Rosalind Johnston, NBRC Centre Manager

Keep our mailing list up to date. Email nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk with any changes to your name and contact details, and let us know your contact preferences and interests.

Northamptonshire Biological Recorders, ALERC, NBN Conferences & National Record Centre News



At the end of September we, with thanks to WILDside, hosted the first ever recorders conference in the county with over 40 wildlife enthusiast attendees.

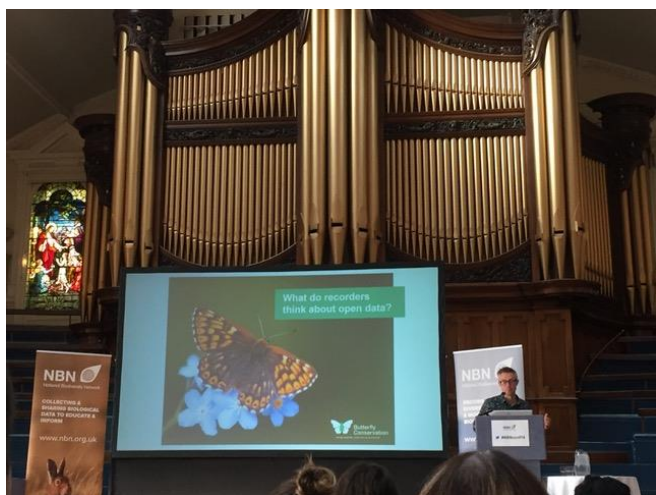
Talks by local Country Recorders covered Bryophytes, Diptera, Vascular Plants, and Water Beetles.

External speakers from the national Biological Records Centre and Back from the Brink, Rockingham Forest project gave wider context to citizen science and biological monitoring. It was wonderful meeting local naturalists, from those just getting involved to the many of you who are out and actively surveying and recording regularly in the county. Feedback gained from the event has been very helpful to us in planning how we, as a record centre, can best support you.

Following on from this, myself and Rachel attended the most recent ALERC conference where we heard case studies of successful service partnerships from GiGL and Transport for London, and our neighbour TVERC and the National Trust. The breakout sessions attended included discussion of Open Data and spatial mapping tools. ALERC is now starting the process of creating a new strategic plan for 2020-2025. This will incorporate technological advances and changes to environmental policy. The aim to help LERCs nationally to support the targets set out in DEFRA's 25 year environmental plan for Biodiversity Net Gain. The annual licence for Recorder6 users was also launched for organisations and individuals to support continued development and gain access to dictionary updates <https://nbn.org.uk/tools-and-resources/recorder6/>.

In November, we took the WILDside project to the NBN conference to share the lessons learnt throughout the

project. The feedback mapping 'gaps on the map' approach Ryan developed as part of the project in particular struck a chord with others in the recording community. For his personal recording contribution, Ryan was, for a second year running, nominated for terrestrial recorder of the year an incredible achievement and testament to his work with BWARS. This year the title went to Ian Wallace who it was fantastic to meet in person and thank for his very recent contribution to our database and to record centres nationally. We have a new chairman in place this year at the NBN, Neil Hodges, and the annual report is now live. With received Lottery Funding the trust are looking at building their organisational resilience and sustainability, as part of the afternoon discussions I joined a breakout session discussing the proposed monetisation of the NBN Atlas and how a national service could complement the existing work of local record centres in meeting large scale data need.



During the two days we heard from keen naturalists, recording projects and scientists. Sir John Lawton reflected on his life of studying the natural world. Harriet Carty of Caring for God's Acre described their recording project for burial grounds as shared in our 'surveys' section. Dr Philip Stevens described the MammalWeb platform and the use of public participation for camera trap monitoring of mammals – a project we hope to support in Northamptonshire with two loanable camera traps. There were a number of talks looking at open data and the uses of data for decision making, from butterfly conservation looking at recorders attitudes, from BRERC and the impact as a LERC of going 'open', and from Dr. Sandy Knapp in her work building open data networks. We heard from the State of Nature team and their recent report detailing UK biodiversity decline. This was echoed by the chair of Natural England Tony Juniper as he argued that significant changes are needed in the way we conserve, praising the landscape scale approach to nature

recovery. Dr Roddy Fairley impressed on all the importance of data to create the urgent policy action needed in light of the challenges we now face.



Rosalind Johnston, NBRC Centre Manager

Presentations and slides are now available online for this conference <https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/nbn-conference-2/nbn-conference-2019/nbn-conference-2019-presentations/>



To everyone who took part, thank you!

This is my final update for you from the helm of the WILDside project. It has been a great pleasure to work within the records centre to support biological recording in the county and learn myself more about Northamptonshire's wildlife. The project has been a real collaboration between the records centre, the wider Wildlife Trust, volunteer recorders and key partners, so thank you to everyone that has got involved. I would just like to reflect on some of the things that we have achieved together.

The [WILDside Recording Community](#) Facebook group has grown and is nearly at 200 members. This group is a great way for people interested in biological recording to contact one another and share sightings and their enthusiasm for the natural world. My thanks go to everyone that has contributed to this group. The group will continue to be led by the community, and moderated by the records centre.

We have had 21 talks at the [Northamptonshire Natural History Society](#), each one reflecting a different taxonomic group or aspect of biological recording. These have been very popular and engaged with this community. We cannot thank the NNHS enough for working together with us on this. Our seasonal surveys have resulted in around 250 records and started people off recording, some of which now record other species. In fact, during the course of this project, we have received records from over 150 new recorders. Our events have been well attended and we have managed to put on around 40 workshops, 7 BioBlitzes and surveyed over 40 sites, the majority of which are local wildlife sites. We also had our first ever Northamptonshire Biological Recorders Conference. This was a hugely successful event and is something we are looking to repeat in the future.

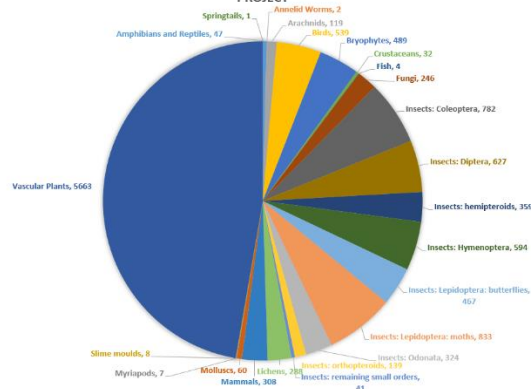


John Showers presenting at our first ever Northamptonshire recorders conference

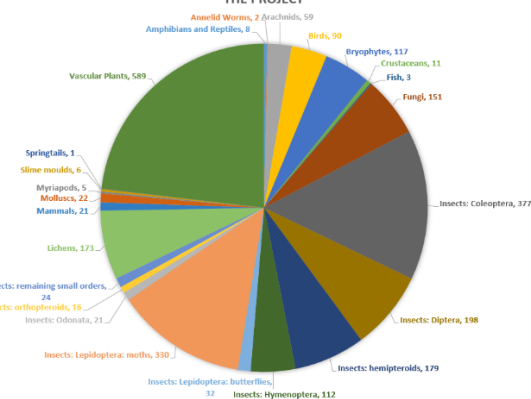
We now have better resources to support recorders as we have the [three counties recording handbook](#), do check this out on our website if you have not seen it already! This guides you through the process of submitting biological records to your local environmental records centre. We have also produced a [guide to submitting your records through our website](#). We also have many books and ID guides, which you can use and borrow from our library.

Records are the bread and butter of the records centre and we cannot thank everyone enough who has submitted records to us, including those throughout the course of the project. Since the start of the project, WILDside has generated over 12,000 records of over 2500 species. This is vast underestimate as it often takes a while for records to come into us and they come to us in a variety of ways. These have focused on key sites such as local wildlife sites and have filled in gaps on the map for which we had no records. We are in the process of updating this map and making it available online.

NUMBER OF RECORDS OF EACH TAXONOMIC GROUP AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE PROJECT



NUMBER OF SPECIES RECORDED IN EACH TAXONOMIC GROUP AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE PROJECT



WILDside has certainly helped to reinvigorate biological recording in the county and highlight its importance. Many of the things that the project started will continue after it finishes at the end of 2019. We hope to repeat the recorders conference in the future, as this was a great event. We also will be hosting more talks at the Northamptonshire Natural History Society. The records centre will continue to promote and support recording as much as possible. Please email nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk if you have any ideas for ways in which we may be able to support biological recording in Northamptonshire.

Finally, I must say one last huge thank you to everyone that has been involved with the WILDside project. It has been a huge pleasure to work with you all. Thank you also to the National Lottery Heritage Fund who provided the majority of the funding for this project.

Ryan Clark, WILDside Project Coordinator



10 years of NBRC BioBlitz' events: highlights of the two BioBlitz's held in this year at Yarwell Quarry and returning to Abington Meadows

Our 10yr anniversary! Yes, quite amazingly, it's been 10 years since NBRC held its first ever BioBlitz event, this being at Abington Meadows in July 2009. At that time the Wildlife Trust had not long taken on the management of the site, and the BioBlitz was held in order to get some baseline data.

As part of our 'BioBlitz anniversary' we were keen to revisit the site with a view to see what had changed. Abington Meadows has a wide range of diverse habitats. It contains locally rare semi-natural wetland habitats, which include wet grassland, marginal vegetation and fen/swamp communities, river backwaters, ponds, reedbed, willow scrub and mature hedgerows.



Abington Meadows 2019 © Ryan Clark

Unfortunately, the weather was far from ideal on the day of the Abington event. Rain and strong winds had meant the moth trapping and bat walk had to be cancelled. An ok morning the next day turned into a complete wash out in the afternoon with a torrential downpour. This left our planned thank you barbecue, which Ryan had put considerable effort into organising, being ended before it began, with everybody huddled under the gazebo, and cars hastily removed off site.

Currently a total of 938 taxa, covering 32 taxon groups are known to have been recorded at the site and the event will surely have added some new records and information to this. All in all though it perhaps has to be said that it wasn't quite the event we had hoped for.



Highlights...

The gazebo not blowing away in the wind.

Watching us try to construct the barbecue without instructions.

Turning burgers and sausages the next day without the proper utensils

Our second BioBlitz site, and another which people were very keen to visit was Yarwell Quarry. Formerly, and perhaps best known by many as Andrew's Quarry, this private site lies adjacent to part of the Wildlife Trust's Old Sulehay Nature Reserve



Yarwell Quarry 2019 © Nathalie Hueber

A large ex-sand quarry, with a fairly open landscape surrounded by steep slopes and young woodland. The most recent land use had been a 4x4 course, which had left numerous tracks across the undulating landscape. The predominant habitats are large areas of flat sandy ground with limited plant growth, large waterbodies, birch woodland, calcareous grassland and steep cliff faces of exposed rock.

We visited in April, and again in June, and although better, like with the Abington event, both dates weren't ideal weather-wise, with generally cool and windy conditions. However, Yarwell showed its potential with two fantastic records being discovered by Ryan even prior to the Bioblitz itself, during the site risk assessment visit.

One, turned out to be a new county record, Jersey Cudweed (*Gnaphalium luteoalbum*) and the other, a new site for Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), which is rare in Northants. Things didn't stop here with a 2nd new county record for the site, Variegated

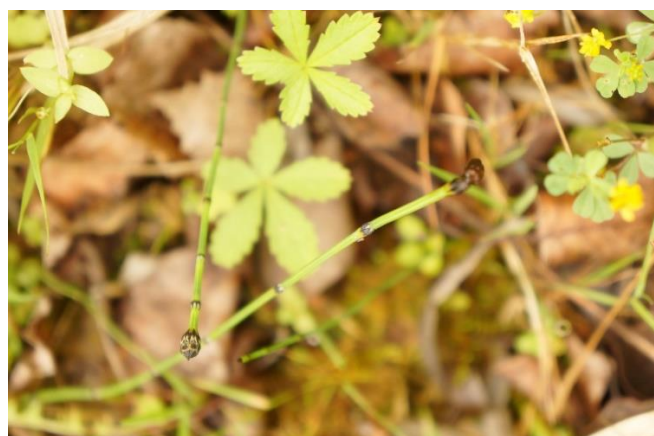
Horsetail, discovered by an extremely jubilant Brian Laney during the April date. From Brian's reaction when I saw him I think it was safe to say he was pretty pleased with this find.



Jersey Cudweed (*Gnaphalium luteoalbum*), June 2019 © Nathalie Hueber



Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), June 2019 © Nathalie Hueber



Variegated Horsetail (*Equisetum variegatum*), July 2019 © Nathalie Hueber

Invertebrates didn't disappoint either with entomologist, Dr. Peter Kirby recording a hugely impressive list of 309 species covering 13 taxon groups in June. This list included 241 common, 46 local, 9 NS, 5 Na (*Squamapion cineraceum*, *Gymnetron rostellum*,

Neophytobius quadrinodosus, *Macrosteles quadripunctulatus*, *Argogorytes fargei*), 7 Na (*Mogulones geographicus*, *Trachyphloeus alterans*, *Cathormiocerus spinosus*, *Zacladus exiguous*, *Olibrus pygmaeus*, *Macrosteles frontalis*, *Megalonotus praetextatus*) and 1 RDB3 (*Lygus pratensis*) species.

County diptera recorder, John Showers reported having swept 6 male of *Tipula couckii* from short vegetation near the lake. This species which is fairly scarce in Northants is associated with marginal mud, or seepages. John also took several *Dicranomyia sericata*.

Despite the sun being few and far between on the April visit, surprisingly, some pretty good bees were seen. A male *Andrena barbilabris*. Associated with sandy areas it is believed to be quite scarce in the county due to its scarce habitat. A female *Nomada ferruginata*. A rare species that is a parasite of *Andrena praecox* which is dependent on willow blossom. A really good record and although not the first for the county there are definitely very few records. A nesting aggregation of *Andrena bucephala* was seen along with its cuckoo *Nomada hirtipes*. Northants is pretty much as far North as they have been recorded.



***Cerceris ruficornis*, June 2019 © Nathalie Hueber**

Two wasps also stood out during the June visit. The 3rd new county record for the site was a new wasp *Cerceris ruficornis*, recorded by Nathalie on the June visit and later identified by Ryan. Also seen was a 4th county record for *Odynerus spinipes*.

Vertebrate highlights included around 10 Sand Martin nest holes being seen. A Little Ringed Plover was also seen during the April visit, and possibly the same one was still present on the main lake on the 26th June. No evidence of breeding though. A privately owned site, species records were perhaps understandably fairly low with just 299 taxa known, covering 18 taxon groups. We will have added a huge amount of species records to the site which is fantastic news for what is a superb site.



Sand Martin nest holes © Nathalie Hueber

Undoubtedly, there could still be further exciting finds from both these events still yet to be identified as we do not have full results in for either event. A full report of both will be published in our newsletters next year. Finally, we are hugely grateful to all those people who helped in the organising, running and attendance of both these events, and would like to say a huge thankyou to everyone concerned!

James Skinner, NBRC Data Officer

‘Farming for the future’ project, experience from the field using our drone to gain video footage

The Farming for the Future project is a 3 year project that’s being run by The Wildlife Trust BCN Wider Countryside team. The focus of the project is to work with farmers and landowners in the Nene Valley from Northampton to Peterborough to help restore and create meadow and wetland habitats. It also aims to undertake vital infrastructure improvements to tackle diffuse pollution and aid water quality.

For the creation of wetland habitat, a series of shallow ditches and scrapes were made to enable water to be retained on land beyond the winter months. This new wetland habitat will allow the establishment of a range of fauna and flora and provide new nesting and breeding spaces for overwintering and breeding waders.

The UK’s only rotary ditcher was hired from the RSPB via RC Baker contractors. This machine was required to ensure that the width and depth of the scrapes and ditches could be created to within a couple of centimetres. You can find out more information about this project, how the position and size of the ditches and scrapes were planned and about the rotary ditcher on the [Farming for the future blogs](#) on the Wildlife Trust BCN website.



Drone video snapshot taken at Upton

We were asked to take some video footage of this unusual piece of machinery in action at two of the six sites and record the creation of the new habitat. This was a very different project to the creation of static image aerial footage following a predetermined route that we have been used to.

Neither the pre-flight assessments of the area nor the on-site assessments showed any difficulties or issues. We have to check for nearby aerodromes, public access, proximity to roads and for any structures on site that could cause problems, such as pylons. So, the sites themselves were ideal for taking footage. However, the thought of closely following this piece of moving equipment that throws out soil scattering it across a large area did raise concerns and on site I proceeded with great caution.



Planned scrapes on site at Upton

Starting in Upton, I knew it would be a steep learning curve. I began by understanding the route it would take, and importantly, getting to know how fast the machinery moved. This meant I could maintain a safe distance from both the equipment and the flying soil.

I needed to capture both close up and as an overview for the project. The hours of practice flying E.T. (our drone named by competition winner John Showers after the Drone fly) without the GPS stabilisation for our flight assessment paid off as the GPS signal kept dropping in and out, effectively leaving me with intermittent 'breaks' at this site. Taking video footage from different angles means that the directional controls on the remote control don't tally with the way the drone is facing in the air and it becomes quite difficult to remember which direction you need to move the controls. This type of flying is challenging as you can find the drone flying off in a direction you aren't expecting which you need to be practiced to correct!



Planned scrapes on site at Stoke Doyle

For the second site at Stoke Bruerne, my confidence had grown as I had a much better idea of what to expect and could anticipate when the rotary ditcher was going to stop, change direction or more importantly reverse. This meant that I was able to fly closer to the moving machinery. I was also able to use another manoeuvre in reverse that we'd had to learn for our flight assessment. Moving backwards and upwards in a diagonal direction, panning out and away from the machinery showing the ditches and scrapes that it had created across the site.

I certainly found this project a challenge but also thoroughly enjoyed being able to put the skills we'd learnt for our flight assessment to the test. We will be back, visiting all six sites in the New Year once the ditches have filled with water to take some aerial

images and see how the newly created habitat is shaping up.



Drone video snapshot taken at Stoke Bruerne

Rachel Tate, NBRC Data Officer

See our drone page for updates and bookings:

<https://www.northantsbrc.org.uk/services/drone>

First wildlife recording experience leads to a rare find of *Silpha tristis*



Silpha tristis found whilst on a family nature walk in Bradlaugh Fields

Back in early June this year, I was walking around Bradlaugh Fields with my children, Owen and Callan. I made sure they brought their little camera with them so that they could practice taking pictures of wildlife. I stopped along the path near the Quarry Field as I saw a mouse or a vole crossing the path. I didn't see it clearly and the children missed it all together, so we sat there waiting quietly for a few minutes to see if it would come back. Unfortunately it didn't, but just as we were losing patience, Owen spotted a beetle crossing the path. I grabbed it and asked them to take some pictures before we released it. Having found *Silpha atrata* before I could see that it was a carrion beetle so I explain that it was probably looking for snails or other dead animals.

When I downloaded the pictures from the camera, I realised that it was the wrong shape for *Silpha atrata*, as the pronotum isn't rounded at the top but looks like it has been cut off. So, we had a look at other *silphidae* beetle online and Owen pointed out that it looks like *Silpha tristis*. A lot of other *silphidae* beetle looked very similar though. Having checked the key on the *Silphidae* Recording scheme website (<https://www.coleoptera.org.uk/silphidae/home>) I thought that it was a good match indeed. So, I've sent the pictures to local experts for verification and proceeded with teaching them how to use our NBRC recording form online. After creating an account, finding our location on the map and uploading the pictures they created their first record. They were both very pleased to see that it had been verified a few days later and considered as correct.

Unlike *Silpha atrata* (*Phosphuga atrata*) which can be found in woodland and gardens, *Silpha tristis* favours more open areas especially sandy places. Not much is known about the beetle but it isn't very common inland. We had only one record in Northamptonshire at Sandy Spinney Quarry during our Bioblitz in 2012. It is probably under-recorded and worth checking in other quarry places. It probably feeds like other *silpha* species on soil invertebrates and others such as slugs, snails and caterpillar.

So our little walk around Bradlaugh Fields was very productive indeed. Callan also found a 24 spot-ladybird. The children can't wait for the nice whether to come back so that we can go walking around and see what we can find. I'll just have to help them recording their sightings into our website!

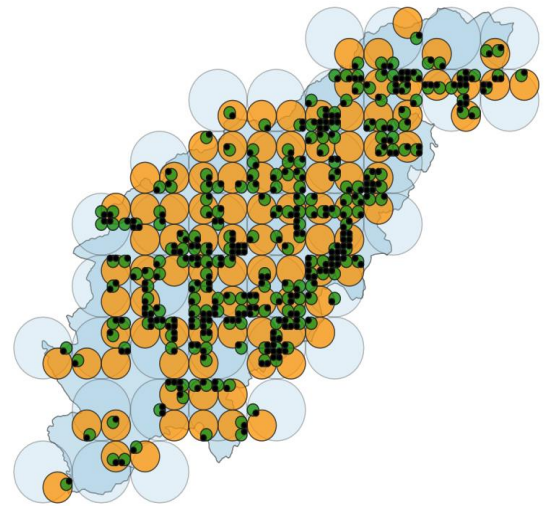


Entering the record into the NBRC website

Nathalie Hueber, NBRC Data Officer

Aquatic bugs recording round-up of the year

For 2019 the data has continued to increase by 906 records to 9924 in the dataset. iRecord has expanded and 382 records were added from there. This now covers 47 of the 67 species in the group leaving realistically (considering Northants habitat) just 6 more likely to be found.



Northamptonshire's Water Bug Recording updated as of the end of 2019 at 10km - 1km

Four new species have been added which are mainly historical records found as I have been pulling in more records from other data sets. *Micronecta griseola* was a historical record that was found from Het News. *Saldula pallipes* was found at Lilbourne Meadows where it was in good numbers in the flooded fields, but also an historical record by Peter Kirby pre-dates this. *Aquarius najas* was also an historical record that was found in the River Welland at Doddington where it just comes inside the county border. *Gerris gibbifer* was an historical record that I have found from the NBN Gateway from Oakfields corner pond, near Stamford in 2000. One new 10km square was added this year and three were found to have no water in, therefore of the forty-five 10k squares we have just three left to record in.



Aquarius najas

Although the recording numbers are looking good, the weather has not been great for Water Bugs this year, and quantities have significantly been down with the timing of droughts and excessive water not having suited their breeding cycles. However, all the main species were recorded, and with complex breeding strategies, I am hopeful with an increase of water at the end of the year we will have an increase in populations next spring. Many species have also been extending their range this year. A second *Sigara iactans* was found at Thrapston and *Microvelia pygmaea* found in additional locations. *Aquarius paludum* however was only found from three sites but we have added and additional six sites to that this year.



Sigara iactans

Microvelia pygmaea

Photo ©Tony Cook

This year I have created four new family keys for *Nepidae*, *Naucoridae*, *Gerridae* and *Notonectidae* and these have complemented the Water Bug family key and identification guide. I have attended number of different promotional events too with Water Bug stands at the Kelmash Show, Barnwell Country Park, Wellingborough Angling Club open day and supported the Nenescape Project at Stanwick lakes. I also gave a talk at the Wildside recording conference and supported a Bug Hunting event at Pitsford Reservoir.

As my experience expands, I have also expanded the recording scheme into Shore and Litter bugs too. From an additional 28 species of which many are upland and coastal we have started with a creditable number of five species which could be difficult to expand much further.

The main surveys for this year have been:

- Tufa ditch analysis at Irthlingborough Lakes and Meadows
- Pitsford monitoring for NVEG monitoring programme for WT BCN
- Yardley chase pond monitoring
- Faxton Brook invasive survey monitoring for Environment Agency

- 2 BioBlitz's at Yarwell Quarry and Abington Meadows

Many Water Bugs pen portraits have been updated on the website as well as improved distribution maps and photo's.

Kevin Rowley, Water Bug County Recorder

Interested in learning more? Visit Kevin's blog

<https://sites.google.com/site/northantswaterbugs>

VC32 Moth Report: five new species and the resurgence of *Clifden Nonpareil*

The Northants Moth group has run several events over the course of the year, with mixed attendance. Many are attended by a "hard-core" of approx. half a dozen enthusiasts. These continue to be of great enjoyment however, and will likely continue in 2020. Many of these events have been in support of Butterfly Conservation project work, namely Back From The Brink (Rockingham Forest) and Woodland Wings (based around the woodland from Hazelborough to Salcey and Yardley Chase).

The latter project has been "beefed-up" by the inclusion of Heart Moth as a specific target species, and this year included a week-long BioBlitz in the Yardley Chase MOD area. The prime purpose of this for the moth community was to record the Heart Moth – a now very localized BAP species within the UK. The last time the moth was surveyed at this site was back in the early 2000's, up to 2006, with good numbers being recorded. I am disappointed to note that no Heart Moth were recorded on the site for the duration of the BioBlitz (and should be noted too that the species was recorded at another non-Northants site during the same period). Other one-off surveys in the south and west of the county at possibly suitable sites also returned no records. It is intended that further survey work will be undertaken in 2020.



Heart Moth (*Dicycla oo*)

2019 moth records have yet to be submitted to me, the annual dataset is often not complete until well into the next year (usually mid-March), but indications are that it was a good year in general for many moth species. Of particular interest was an apparent resurgence in numbers of the Four-spotted Moth (another BAP species), with reasonable numbers seen during regular transect surveys along the railway line at Werrington, Peterborough. Clearly this is in the administrative county of Cambs, and thus maybe not of significant interest to Northants per se, as the species is rarely seen outside of The Soke, but has been recorded in the county previously.



Four-spotted Moth (*Tyta luctuosa*)

An ongoing survey for another UK Bap species, the micro moth Liquorice Piercer Moth (*Grapholita pallifrontana*), revealed several new sites for the species, including some in the south-west of the county. I will hopefully have a full report available for BC shortly, and thus also be able to add some records of Wild Liquorice for the Northants botanical database.



Liquorice Piercer Moth (*Grapholita pallifrontana*)

Ash Die-back continues to be of concern. Although there are relatively few obligate ash-feeding moth species, the effects of some mass clearance works will no doubt affect the general flora of an area, and I assume will have negative effects on local invertebrate populations (i.e. compacted ground resulting in damaged sub-terranean pupae, loss of ground cover with increased predation, loss of understorey and short-term damage to eco-systems). I have seen this in action in local woodland, where some areas have been all but clear-felled

So far, 2019 has seen five species added to the VC32 moth list, which is slightly fewer than the previous few years – all these this time being of micro moth species. A second county record of Jersey Tiger was also recorded, this time at Cogenhoe. I am hopeful that this rather attractive moth is becoming established in the area, and is clearly extending its range in the UK. A similar tale for Tree-lichen Beauty. First recorded in VC32 in 2006 (a presumed migrant individual), with a handful of records in 2017 and 2018, one site in 2019 recorded nine individuals in one night! Another sign of probable colonization.



Jersey Tiger Moth (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*)

The outstanding news for 2019 however is the apparent resurgence of the *Clifden Nonpareil* (or Blue Underwing as it is often known, *Catocala fraxini*). Up until this year, only a single record was known from around the turn of the 20th Century. So far (known to the author) there have been thirteen moths seen in the county this year! This reflects numbers seen in neighbouring counties, and is indicative of a significant range expansion from smaller known colonies in the southern counties. It will be of considerable interest to see if they are recorded in numbers again next year, and thus indicating species spread.



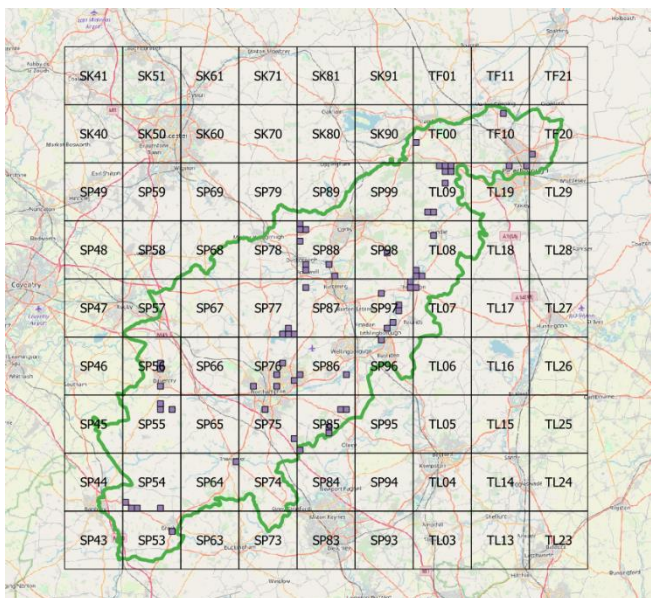
Blue Underwing (*Clifden Nonpareil*)

Mark Hammond, County Moth Recorder, VC32

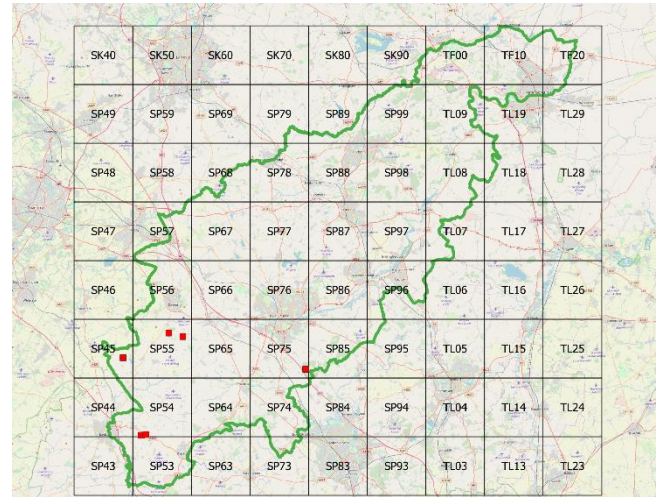
Year of the fly, diptera update from the 2019 recording season

The slow Spring start to the season was followed by a reasonable Summer and then a very rapid decline in the Autumn with the wet weather reducing sightings considerably. Still all was not doom and gloom, as reported in the previous newsletter we had the arrival of the dotted bee-fly *Bombylius discolor* and the houseleek miner hoverfly *Cheilosia caerulescens*. Following the latter's arrival I checked the houseleeks in my garden over the Summer but could find no evidence of larval feeding damage.

The WILDside project continued with its request for bee-fly records and we had a good response. Here are the maps of the 2019 records.



Mapped distribution of the Dark-edged Bee-fly *Bombylius major* 2019 © OpenStreetMap contributors



Mapped distribution of the Dotted Bee-fly *Bombylius discolor* 2019 © OpenStreetMap contributors

At the end of August, Mischa Cross at Pitsford Water sent me a photo of a fly she had found in the Pitsford Moth trap. This was the thick-headed fly *Leopoldius signatus*, family Conopidae, a very rare record for the site (found previously once by Kev Rowley back in 2014). These flies attack wasps in flight and lay an egg on the victim. When the egg hatches the larva enters the wasp's abdomen and eats its contents. Once it has exhausted the abdomen, the larva extends its mouth parts through the narrow "wasp waist" into the thorax where it cuts a couple of nerves. In worker wasps these nerves suppress the wasp's digging behaviour, whereas in queens these nerves are not active. By cutting the nerves the wasp starts to behave like a queen and starts to dig out a nest chamber in the soil. However, the fly larva kills the wasp before long and is able to pupate and overwinter in the soil. The following year the adult fly emerges.



***Leopoldius signatus*, a rare county record photo © Mischa Cross**

Pitsford Water also turned up a county first during the bioblitz at the northern end of the Scaldwell Arm. This was the parasitic fly (family Tachinidae) *Carcelia*

puberula, whose host is the larva of Black Arches Moth. So despite low numbers, we had a very interesting season. There are still quite a lot of flies taken this year to identify so maybe another unusual species will turn up.

John Showers, Diptera County Recorder for VC32

Want to get involved? Follow John's blog for the latest local news, get in touch and join the active survey group <https://www.dipterists.org.uk/northants>

Celebrating 50 years of the Northamptonshire Bird Report – 2019 report on sale now!

Since 1969, a total of 59 species have been added to the County bird list and Falcated Duck from eastern Asia has this year been added to the official British List after a drake was recorded in Norfolk and at various waters in Northants way back in 1987 and 1988.

A short article details this occurrence in the latest Report along with others covering the changes here over the last 50 years.

The story of how the Report came into being. An account on Barn Owl Conservation in Northants from 1993- 2018 and also the Northants Barn Owl Project in 2018. The BTO's Grey Heron Census, the County Ringing Report and Systematic List for 2018. Migrant arrival and departure dates, the official County Birdlist and record requirements and records from nearly 300 contributors.

A County map with main birding sites, 42 colour photos and a number of illustrations, all for the give-away price of £7.50 or £9 post paid.

Available from:

Oundle Bookshop, 13 Market Place, Oundle PE8 4BA

or by post from

R W Bullock, 81 Cavendish Drive, Northampton NN3 3HL

Phone: 01604 627262

Price £7.50 (£9.00 including post)

Cheques payable to 'Northamptonshire Bird Report'

Help the committee make the report as comprehensive as possible by sending them your records to:

Chris Coe, 3 Manor Rd, Weedon, Northampton NN7 4QN, email c.coe898@btinternet.com

County recorders wanted

County recorders were all in your position at some point on their recording journey, growing in expertise and building in confidence to start leading and supporting others. If you wish to progress your interest in a particular group and inspire others to get involved with, recording then do consider putting yourself forward to help others. You can build your confidence, from coordinating local groups, providing a talk or species ID workshop, or getting in touch with various national schemes and societies are there to support. We can provide full details on request.

Birds

Please contact the Northamptonshire Bird Report Committee if you would be interested in taking on or sharing the work.

Get in touch: <https://northantsbirds.com/contact/>

Wildlife Trust BCN 2020 photography competition now open!

Enter your best nature or landscape photographs taken in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire or Northamptonshire on the theme of 'local gems' for your chance to win. Remember photos are a great tool to support your recording, if you know the four W's (what, who, when and where) let us know what you have found!

Submit: <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/get-involved/photo-competition>

Training Courses, Talks & Surveys Wildlife Trust BCN Wildlife Training Workshops 2020 Programme



New Years resolution to extend your knowledge and learn a new skill? Learn from the experts.

WTBCN's 2020 is now out and bookings being taken <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/get-involved/training-workshops>

Shields, Damsels and Lace

An introduction to the land based Hemiptera or True Bugs by Bob Gill

Free event on the 10th March at 7.30pm at the Northamptonshire Natural History Society, The Humfrey Rooms, 10, Castilian Terrace, Northampton. NN1 1LD

The Northamptonshire Natural History Society is a volunteer run society with groups covering botany, microscopy, ornithology and geology www.nnhs.info. Upcoming talks in January-February include: 2nd Thursday 2.30pm FERNs (botany); 21st Tuesday; 7.30pm OIL IMMERSION (microscopy); 18th Tuesday 7.30pm MOUNTING INSECT BODY PARTS (microscopy).

Beautiful Burial Grounds Survey

The Beautiful Burial Grounds project, as run by Caring for Gods Acre, aims to demonstrate the importance of burial grounds for biodiversity and make that data accessible through the National Biodiversity Network Atlas. They are running 96 training events, short films, toolkits and pop ups to support budding recorders all over the England and Wales (until 2022) and host an iRecord data collection form for public record submission. The project are currently looking for existing groups to support and can be contacted. The data collected is shared as Open Data and these same records are accessible via the NBN to local record centres, including Northamptonshire Biodiversity Record Centre (NBRC), for use in local decision making.

See <https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/our-beautiful-burial-grounds-project/> and for further information, contact Harriet Carty, Project Manager harriet@cfga.org.uk.

BSBIs New Year Plant hunt

Join in the #newyearplanthunt and you'll be contributing records both nationally and to us! BSBI have guidance on their website, the survey, now in its 9th year is timed to inform and help us understand how our wildflowers are responding to changes in autumn and winter weather patterns.

See <https://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>

Butterfly Conservation Conferences

Every year Butterfly conservation organises conferences for both butterfly and moth recorders both held in Birmingham. If you missed our conference and speaker Jamie Wildman, you can get another chance to hear about the successes of the Chequered Skipper reintroduction programme run by Back from the Brink in Northamptonshire's Rockingham Forest

Butterflies: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/uk-butterfly-recorders-meeting>

Moths: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/moths/moth-recording/uk-moth-recorders-meeting>

NBRC Contact Details

Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre

c/o The Wildlife Trust BCN
Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE
Tel: 01604 400448, Fax: 01604 784835

Email: nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk

Website: www.northantsbrc.org.uk

NBRC's staff members are Rosalind Johnston, Nathalie Hueber, Rachel Tate, James Skinner and Ryan Clark

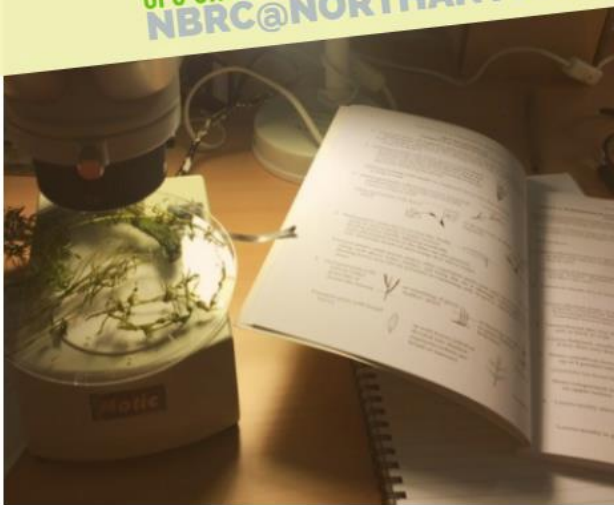


Happy New Year!

Come see us at Lings House this winter. Bring in your specimen, make use of our compound microscope and field keys for your more tricky finds. Browse our extensive collection of reference guides & recording equipment. Why not make your recording resolution to try a new species group for 2020!

Email for access and to see a list of the books and equipment we have:
NBRC@northantsbrc.org.uk

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LOTTERY FUNDED

