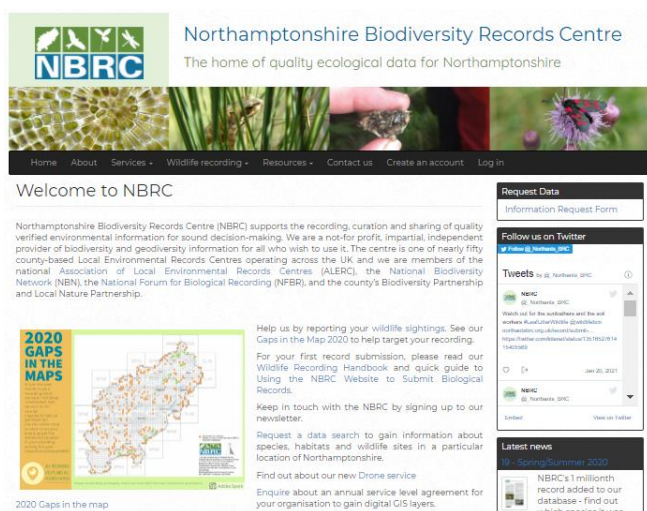


NBRC Newsletter 20

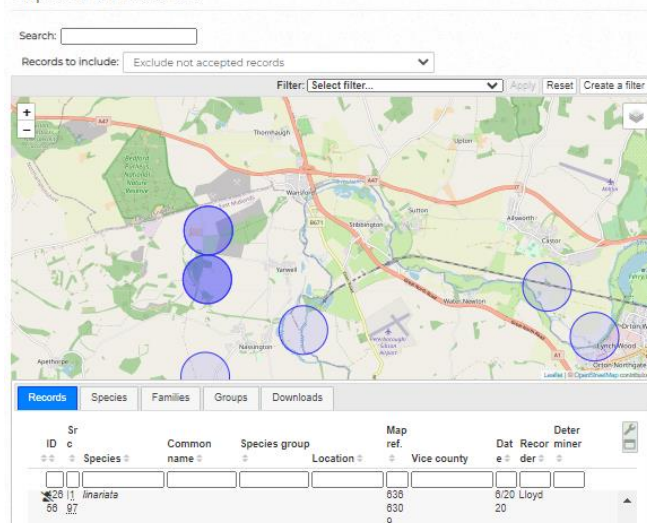
Autumn/Winter 2020

You have been keeping us wonderfully busy with your submitted records of the species of Northamptonshire; the [WILDSide Recording Community](#) has been a great home for sightings and support. You have not been stopped in noticing and supporting our local nature - recording in gardens, out on local exercise walks and further afield when restrictions allow. Our website has received **over one thousand records, covering over five hundred taxa** since the first lockdown began! Many of you will have noticed our website has had a re-vamp of late, shifting to the latest platform with SSL security, whilst retaining all the recording features, 'look out for' surveys and resources to support local recording and ecological reporting.



Thanks to the support of the **Environment Agency**, we have now launched our latest survey **'Look out for Ponds'** – our first habitat based *look out for* in order to generate missing information on this key home and resource for many species. We are looking to you to report the locations of ponds *big or small* in our county, the survey is available as 'paper and pen' and as 'mobile' app tools, help us with your local knowledge! The survey includes a host of support materials if you wish to take on the challenge of reporting pond species, covering aquatic invertebrates, amphibians, plants and regular mammal and bird visitors.

Explore all records



Beyond direct website submission, we know you also submit directly to our county recorders (David James recently reported over 25,000 butterfly records for 2020!) and via other online channels such as iRecord. If you aren't sure of which surveys we receive you can always check our [annual report](#) which lists our partners or ask the team nbrc@northantsbrc.org. Direct record submissions to our [website](#) or via our county recorders (as listed on our new [resources for recorders page](#) on the website) are generally processed more swiftly as we get all the needed parts and can contact you if required to complete a record. WILDSide seems to have inspired us all to expand our recording repertoire. The ever-increasing taxonomic coverage in your submissions is fantastic to see! It seems many have used the wealth of virtual training at our fingertips this year through [Wildlife Trust BCN Training Courses](#), the [Field Studies Council](#) and a host of others as can be seen through this wonderfully compiled list of resources as put together by the [South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre](#).

These species records will start their journey with us, be validated and verified (where we have a county recorder), to build the quality and trusted ecological database we need to inform local decision makers, planners, landowners, conservationists and wider research – all stakeholders in achieving protection and enhancement of Northamptonshire ecology. We focus and prioritise our attention on recent verified records.

Each year, we work to process with priority the significant datasets identified by need via our local stakeholders. This year, we are embarking on the mammoth task of tackling a huge plant dataset, by



habitat, which we aim to add to the database to support decision making for habitat and associated species protection. We have, as you know, over the last year worked hard to add a bulk of bird data covering nearly a decade of recording, ahead of reassessment of the SPA status of the Upper Nene Valley, and are working with our new county recorder to keep this up to date.

This year we are collaborating on a number of exciting projects with regional record centres CPERC and BRMC and our hosts the Wildlife Trust to benefit the whole Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire region. As Jackie Ulyett, BRMC Centre Manager describes in her [Monitoring and Research blog](#) as of December, we started work to update the **Ancient Woodland Inventory** for our three counties, with the initial stages funded by the Woodland Trust, and coordinated with Natural England. The project aims to bring mapped information up to date (the existing inventory was compiled in the 1980s) and produce a more accurate map of Ancient Woodland, including (for the first time) small woods (0.25-2ha). Further stages will need local support to enable archive reference and on-the-ground survey to complete of the final map, to be made accessible by Natural England as open data.

Thanks to a generous legacy, from Hubert Bean to the Wildlife Trust BCN, your biological records will be used to better inform reserve management and analysed for our own, local **State of Nature Report**. Ryan Clark, of the Wildlife Trust BCN Monitoring and Research team will undertake this exciting new project to inform future conservation. The report will cover local species trends and the key challenges for local conservation.

As Ryan says, “Every species counts, we don’t just want to know about the rare species! Keep an eye on our blog to hear about the events we have coming up next year to help generate records on our reserves. If you would like more information about how to record your wildlife sightings then please take a look at my [blog](#) or email me: ryan.clark@wildlifebcn.org”

We are all part of this vital cycle. Every record, once made, exists in perpetuity to inform and persuade decision-makers of the best actions for our local biodiversity. Every recorder is making a difference.

Rosalind Johnston, NBRC Centre Manager

Follow our [twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) for the latest from the team. [Email us](#) to keep our mailing list up to date with any changes in your details and preferences.



National Recording Network News from ALERC, NFBR & NBN Conferences 2020

This year conference season went online for the first time where we were treated to a host of speakers from recording groups, other LERCs, researchers and ecological data users. Many of the talks were recorded and viewable on the [ALERC](#), [NFBR](#) and [NBN](#) conference pages.



From ALERC we heard from representatives across the United Kingdom on changes expected to environmental policy, and sharing best practice in how LERCs have started responding to shifting needs in their development. A key topic discussed was the joined up approach of LERCs as achieved through centralised support for LERCs in Wales and the burgeoning replication and adaptation of the approach in Scotland. In England, as led by the Wildlife Trusts the Nature Recovery Network strategy was shared for discussion of LERCs place within this. At the AGM, we also heard of internal change, where we thanked Claire Blencowe and welcomed Deb Muscat, as she passed the baton of ALERC chair.

At the NFBR conference, we heard inspiring stories from the Field Studies Council’s move to virtual training sessions. The Wales Garden Bioblitz supported very local recording via virtual daily challenges and community submissions with experienced recorders on hand, resulting in over 7000 submissions. Nationally, Marin Harvey of the BRC showed how both numbers of recorders and numbers

of submissions have been boosted over the pandemic period through iRecord. By slowing our pace, noticing nature and exploring our locality a real records boost showed your care for nature and how this has helped people through some of the personal challenges we have faced! Very sadly, over the summer we heard of the passing of [Trevor James MBE](#) the NBN Trust Development Officer within the BRC from 2001 to 2014.

The NBN Trust celebrated its 20th anniversary this year. We were treated to talks from Buglife on their Important Invertebrate Areas (as now included in our data searches), Devon Wildlife Trust and the reintroduction of beavers, ALERC past chair Claire Blencowe on the history and future of biological Record Centres, and a keynote address from Dr Celia Madupin on Macroinvertebrate Biodiversity. We also heard a summary and highlights from the mini-bioblitz running alongside the conference, a virtual autumn survey run by ispot nature, fittingly getting us outdoors and observing.

Rosalind Johnston, NBRC Centre Manager

Brian Laney awarded the Oliver Rackham award by The Wildlife Trusts

Brian is well known to many in the county for his energy, enthusiasm and expertise on a wide range of species, his role as county recorder and his work in habitat management and rare plant propagation. The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, recently honoured Brian with the award in recognition of his work for Northamptonshire's fauna and flora, and particularly his habitat management work for rare plant conservation. Below he shares a recent 're-find' for the county and his work to conserve the species.

"Since the year 2000 I've been doing habitat management for rare and scarce plants across the Midlands. I need to do an update and count how many projects it is, as the list keeps growing! The last count was 12 but the list keeps ever changing. The good news, many of the species I try to help are responding to whatever type of management I do for that particular species.

So, yet another brand new habitat management project started just the other month at Bainton in the vice county of Northamptonshire for yet another great species I've re-found for my county and this time it's for Fine leaved sandwort (*Minuartia hybrida*).

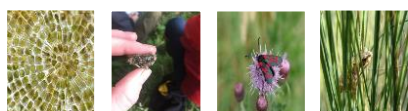


Fine leaved sandwort (*Minuartia hybrida*), the tall thin plant, with at its base (left), specimens of the far commoner Thyme leaved sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*) ©Brian Laney

A few months back I targeted Bainton as there were records for Fine leaved sandwort from the 90s, but we had no up to date records for the species from Northamptonshire. I got permission to check the area where the species occurred and whilst I didn't find the species in that particular spot, at almost dark I spotted the plant growing along a new fenceline that had been put in. Fantastic!! There was not one, not two but roughly in the region of around 400 plants. Yes! Yes! Yes!!

However, I was told the fenceline base gets sprayed so that it is clear of vegetation. The owner of the site agreed to mark the fence posts where I found the plants so that part of the fence base does not get sprayed off. So, in the short term there will be plants coming up along this section of fenceline in 2021.

One thing I did notice was a nearby slope where vehicles had access (probably to put in this new fenceline) where the ground had been disturbed and there was a number of Fine leaved sandwort plants on



this open slope. I asked the owners of the site if I could clear a section of this slope of vegetation so that it was bare soil, so any seedbank of the Fine leaved sandwort could germinate. I got the all clear! So, the other month with just using a garden fork I worked my way along this slope/slight embankment. All I did was remove any vegetation to expose the bare soil. There was no need of any deep digging. Fingers crossed in 2021 more Fine leaved sandwort plants will appear on this slight slope/embankment.

I found, on investigation, another 7 plants of Fine leaved sandwort in another area of the site, again on a slope. This time the disturbance was thanks to rabbits who have a warren on the slope. I hope the rabbits continue their good work and keep disturbing that particular slope. As these two populations are the only current site at Bainton for Fine leaved sandwort the records will be updated and added to the Northamptonshire Rare Plant Register.

Many thanks are in order to the kind owners who gave me permission to do this important work to help a rare species thought lost for my county of Northamptonshire. I can just imagine the late Rob Wilson and the late Gill Gent, both great Northamptonshire botanists and the previous county recorders who sadly passed away some years ago, smiling down on me from heaven."

Brian Laney, Joint Northamptonshire County Recorder for Plants with Alyson Freeman

New Year for #Northantsbirds

I'd like to thank all those in the birding community who've helped me, or wished me well, since I took on the county recorder role eight months ago. I've particularly enjoyed seeing and meeting some of you out and about in the field.

Thanks to those of you who have already sent me records for 2020. I've been delighted to see how many of you have been able to use our standard Excel format, also how many of you are using BirdTrack or eBird. I have [advice on my blog](#) for those of you who are new to using these mobile tools. It was very satisfying to receive, my first batch of hand-written records through the post. I've also received a steady stream of individual sightings by email since taking on the role. I really appreciate the time you've taken to share your records, whichever method you've used. Your records are invaluable and help protect the wellbeing of birdlife, both in Northamptonshire and in the wider world. Over the next few months I will endeavour to convert all of these 2020 records into a

master file which will form the basis of our systematic list and, ultimately, the annual report.

As Northants birders we have the chance to help out with some exciting habitat protection & conservation projects (lockdown permitting).

Golden Plover and Lapwing Survey

In partnership with Natural England and the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre, the Wildlife Trusts for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire are carrying out a survey to better understand the habitats used by wintering populations of Golden Plover and Lapwing, particularly in the Upper Nene Valley. The study area is focused on feeding and roosting locations around the Special Protection Area (SPA) gravel-pit sites but all records are encouraged. Given that this survey will take place during a period in which lockdown will continue to restrict our activities, I hope that a good number of records can still be provided from home, workplace or observations taken during daily exercise.

Golden Plover and Lapwing information sought:



Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) ©Jon Cook

What?

- A count of each species
- Activity – feeding/roosting (if known)
- A photograph may be useful but is not essential

When?

- Date and time

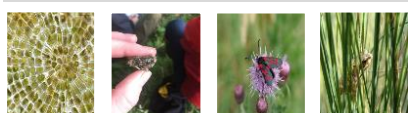
Where?

- Location – grid reference*, map & description
- Habitat type – grassland/arable (if arable also a crop type and stage if known)

Who?

- Name of observer

*biological records for this project are needed at high accuracy - we request **6 figure or above**



The [Upper Nene Valley is designated as a Special Protection Area \(SPA\)](#), which gives it a degree of legal protection, but the area also faces increasing human pressures. Data obtained by this and other studies have the potential to inform planning, land-use and other decisions and policies, which can help support the SPA designation with tangible action.

As county recorder, I am interested to receive records of these species across Northamptonshire and anything else you see, so either submit via the [NBRC website](#), include in records that you send to me directly, or capture in BirdTrack, eBird or iRecord. *Whichever you choose, please submit your records to one of these sources to avoid duplication – they are reciprocally shared between the bird committee and the record centre.*

Farming for the Future

To support the [Farming for the Future](#) wetland scrapes habitat improvement project, there is an ongoing opportunity to assist with surveying sites in the Nene Valley. With current lockdown regulations, site visits are currently suspended, but this project will continue once things are hopefully back to normal and once restrictions ease there will be further opportunities to get involved. Get in touch if you want to help.

Last, but not least, with support from the wider bird committee I have produced a standardised process to support the submission of robust records of scarcer species (which include species of critical conservation concern such as Willow Tit, Turtle Dove). These require a description to be accepted as accurate, and for the record to be included in the Northants Birds Annual Report. The birders who were lucky enough to report one of these species have been very supportive, with some highly competent and experienced birders being happy to submit descriptions we are off to a good start. As part of this, I will be sharing the latest [Northants Bird Report Work in Progress \('WIP'\) File](#), which shows the status of recent records of scarce and rare birds. The committee will meet periodically to sign off the latest version and this will be kept up to date and shared to improve transparency of the process. Keep in touch and happy birding!

Jon Cook, County Bird Recorder

Blog: <https://joncookbirding.wordpress.com/blog/>

Email: joncooknorthantsbirds@gmail.com

Tweet: <http://Twitter.com/BirdNorthants>

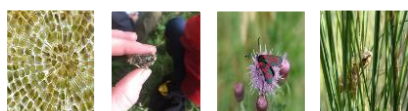
Yarwell Quarry 2019 – Algae Report

Last year, our annual Bioblitz was held at Yarwell Quarry in 28/04/2019 a private site, that for the survey, the landowner kindly gave permission for us to access. This is a former limestone quarry and it is very unusual as it has still a large extent of bare ground due to the recent motor sports activities. The substrate is almost pure sand and supports a diverse calcareous flora with plants that thrive in well-drained soil. One plant, in particular, which only thrive in bare sandy ground habitats, is Jersey Cudweed (*Gnaphalium luteoalbum*). It is very rare in the UK and is considered native in East Anglia. Yarwell Quarry is the only site where it occurs in Northamptonshire. Although the area of bare sand is very extensive, it doesn't cover the whole of the site. Apart from a few patches of birch woodland, there are two areas of large standing water and a few ponds to the North and South. Ephemeral pools also form along the old tracks and are common around the site. Unfortunately, the invasive New Zealand pygmyweed *crassula helmsii* is also very extensive across the site and forms dense mat in the shallow water. Despite this and thanks to its outstanding early successional habitats, this site is ideal for populations of stonewort and other algae to develop and thrive.



East Lake, Yarwell Quarry ©Nathalie Hueber

Stoneworts are highly specialised, complex, macroscopic, green, freshwater algae. They don't look like what you might imagine an algae to look like. They are more akin to vascular plants with stems, rhizoids, which look like roots, and branchlets which could be confused for slender leaves. Historically, they have been studied and recorded by botanists because they resemble horsetails (*Equisetum* species). They are exclusively aquatic however and in alkaline water they often become encrusted with lime due to the formation of calcium carbonate. That is how



Charophytes get their common name of “stoneworts”.

Most stoneworts are unable to tolerate significant levels of phosphates and nitrates from nutrient pollution and as a result they are exceptionally good indicators of water quality. In recent years, stoneworts have undergone a catastrophic decline as a result from both the eutrophication of water bodies and from the loss of traditional management practices that kept water bodies open rather than overgrown. Stoneworts thrive in calcareous, low nutrient gravel pits and ponds and, as they are amongst the first to colonise new sites, they also thrive in temporary pools, quarry pits and newly cleared ditches and ponds. Some stoneworts also tolerate brackish conditions.

So, Yarwell Quarry looked like the perfect site to find stoneworts and other interesting algae. Indeed it didn't disappoint us! Although we only found two species of stoneworts in our first visit in April, we found 7 species of stoneworts (including varieties) in total throughout the year and many other algae:

CYANOPHYTA (Blue-Green Algae): 7 species
EUGLENOPHYTA: 4 species
CHLOROPHYTA (Green algae): 10 species
EUSTIGMATOPHYTA: 1 species
CHLOROPHYTA (Desmids): 20 species
CHAROPHYTA (Charales, Stoneworts): 7 species (including varieties)
BACILLARIOPHYTA (Diatoms): 33 species



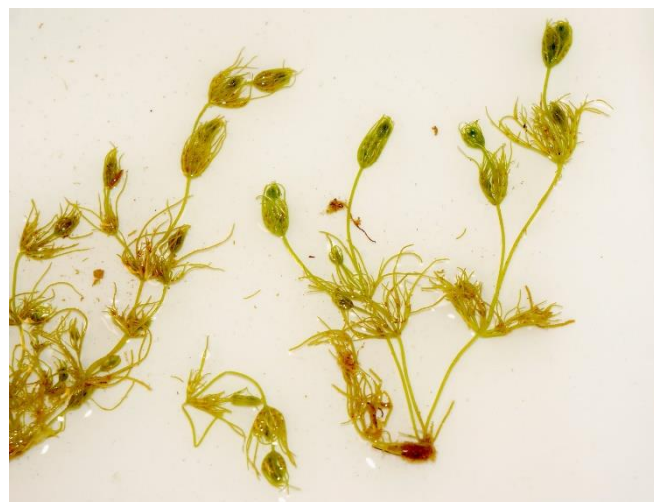
Standing water across the site can be divided into four main areas: two small ponds North and South of the site and two larger lakes East and West of the site (see map above). There are lots of smaller ephemeral or permanent small pools in between those areas including one in the wooded area. New Zealand pygmyweed is found in all of those areas but it is particularly prominent in and around the west lake.

The extent of this lake was greatly diminished in summer time for our second Bioblitz event on 26/06/2019. The site has been visited twice more on 12/07/2019 and on 17/10/2019 for water sampling testing.

The water quality testing revealed that the water is broadly ‘circumneutral’ (nearly neutral; a pH between 6.5 and 7.5) but perhaps the east lake slightly on the acid side. Nitrate in all areas is low, as is phosphate in the west lake and the north pond. The east lake had higher than expected phosphate at about 1.8 mg/l suggesting some contamination. It would be good to have a hydrological survey done at the site in the future along with a professional water quality survey/analysis especially for the east lake.

West Lake

Apart for the central part, the water margins of the west lake are very shallow and dry up in the summer. New Zealand pygmyweed was very prominent in the shallow areas especially in the south. Nonetheless, *Chara vulgaris* (including *Chara vulgaris* var. *longibracteata*) seems to thrive here along with *Chara virgata* in summer time. Although some fine leaved pondweed were also found here (such as *Potamogeton pectinatus*, *P. berchtoldii* and *P. pusillus*), they were not very abundant.



***Chara vulgaris* var. *longibracteata*, Yarwell Quarry ©Nathalie Hueber**

The west lake was the best for planktonic algae, including some very nice desmid genera. There was one exceedingly rare one- *Cosmarium pseudoinsigne*; the only other UK record known to Chris Carter (Northamptonshire County Recorder for Algae) was from a quarry at Baston in Lincs, a similar place that had the vulnerable stonewort *Tolypella prolifera*.



There were some *chytrid* fungi on *Spirogyra*- one for the fungal records!



***Cosmarium pseudoinsigne*, Yarwell Quarry**
©Chris Carter

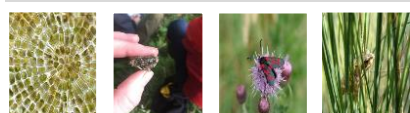
East Lake

Although very close to the west lake, the east lake looks very different. New Zealand pygmyweed wasn't prominent here but *Potamogeton pusillus* was abundant along with *Potamogeton pectinatus*. *Zanichella palustris* was also found in this lake in small amount. This was the most diverse lake for the stoneworts. Alongside *Chara virgata*, we found abundant *Chara vulgaris* (including *Chara vulgaris* var. *papillata*) and a small amount of *Chara aspera* and *Chara contraria* (including *Chara contraria* var. *hispidula*).

Interestingly, the east lake had an unusual diatom: *Mastogloia*. Chris Carter has only seen this in a sample from the stonewort-rich Orton Pits at Peterborough. The sample has been supplied to a specialist since this genus is currently being revised and this may help. It is possibly associated with saline influence and suggests other interesting stoneworts could turn up.

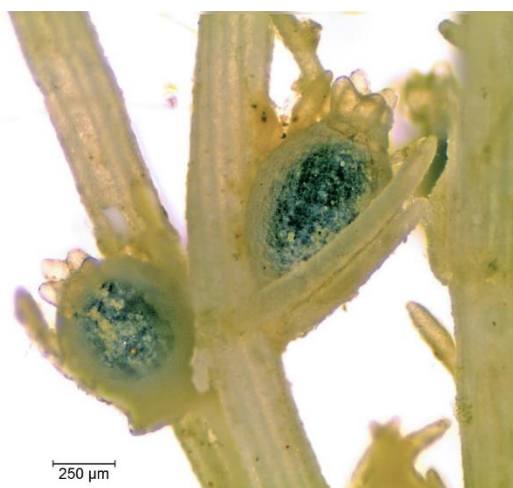


***Halipus confinis*, a water beetle, found feeding on *Chara vulgaris*, Yarwell Quarry** ©Nathalie Hueber



North Pond

This was the pond closest to Old Sulehay Forest, and it was very different to the other standing water areas on the site. Some parts of the pond were inaccessible due to the abundance of common reed (*Phragmites australis*). Where the pond was more open, Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) was abundant alongside Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*). Thankfully, New Zealand pygmyweed wasn't very prominent here in the shallow water. This is the area where the most *Chara aspera* was found alongside *Chara vulgaris* var. *longibracteata* and *Chara virgata*. Both Blunt-flowered Rush and *Chara aspera* tolerates calcareous water which may indicate that the water here is directly influenced by the remaining of the Lincolnshire limestone from Old Sulehay Forest.



(top) *Chara aspera* oogonia pair (bottom) *Chara aspera* antheridia pair, Yarwell Quarry ©Chris Carter

Chara aspera is found in both freshwater and brackish water. Fructification is rare in the freshwater form especially in the UK. Interestingly, we found some *Chara aspera*, which was fertile. This species is dioecious and, as shown in the picture above, we found both female plants with oogonia (the female

gametangia) and male plants with antheridia (the male gametangia). This is very unusual to see those so we were very happy to have found some fertile specimen.

South Pond

The south pond was the only pond with a good population of Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*). It was the least interesting area of standing water on the site. Nonetheless, *Chara vulgaris* var. *longibracteata* was abundant there alongside New Zealand pygmyweed.

In conclusion, despite the presence of New Zealand pygmyweed, Yarwell Quarry is an outstanding site for stoneworts and other algae both for their diversity and their abundance. It would be interesting to further study the population of the fertile *Chara aspera* and also, the hydrology of the site to ascertain why certain varieties prefer growing in different parts of the site. For example, *Chara vulgaris* var. *longibracteata* is mainly found on the west part of the site (including the north and south pond), whilst *Chara vulgaris* var. *papillata* is mainly found in the east lake. We also noticed that all of the stoneworts disappeared from the west lake in October, whilst remaining elsewhere on the site.



***Geminella interrupta* Turpin Collected by Rachel Tate, Yarwell Quarry ©Chris Carter**

The site is indeed quite remarkable in several respects, with the ecological quality obviously high in places with low organic pollution. The algae generally indicate good conditions. Some of the species of diatom strongly point to a saline influence at some point in their life cycle: this could be geological or the influence of materials left over from the quarry. One green alga (*Pediastrum*) had pink cell walls-sometimes associated with metal contamination, e.g. manganese. It is good that the main lakes are free of shade and tree cover as leaf litter is not welcome. Also, it is good that there is no intensive farming nearby. Future surveys may find stoneworts such as *Nitella* and *Tolypella* (as at Peterborough) and even

more diatoms and desmids. It is recommended that the management of the site should keep it as open as possible.

Therefore, we would recommend that Yarwell Quarry be added to the list of Important Stonewort Areas in the UK.

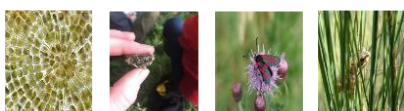
Nathalie Hueber, NBRC Data Officer

Arrival of *Oxythyrea funesta* (Poda) (Scarabaeidae) in Northants (VC32)

Our 0.12 hectare south facing garden has been developed with wildlife in mind with varied habitats including mature trees, shrubs, orchard, log piles, lawn, 3 small ponds, wildlife meadow and nectar rich mixed borders. The garden is sheltered with warm bays. We are keen recorders and it was while photographing solitary bees and a 14-spot ladybird in the garden on the 2nd June 2020 that we noticed a large insect fly in and land on a nearby Dame's-violet, (*Hesperis matronalis*). Duly photographed, we realised that it was a species of chafer, and possibly one we had observed before in Spain.

The chafer was verified as *Oxythyrea funesta* (Poda) by Tony Drane (beetle recorder for Northants) and Darren Mann (Head of Life Collections at Oxford University Museum of Natural History) and as the first record for Northamptonshire. *O. funesta* are quite distinctive due to their size and colouration; 8-12mm long, entirely shiny black with a faint metallic lustre with small white dorsal markings and covered in short hairs, which are rubbed off with time. It is common and widespread in the Palaearctic and until recently was regarded as absent in the UK. However, since the 1990s, it has become more frequent as a vagrant and it appears to be spreading from the south of the country where it has established small populations. There are also casual introductions of adults imported with cut flowers and larvae and pupae in the compost of potted plants. In 2019, *O. funesta* was found in Hertfordshire for the first time. In the UK, they are mainly encountered between May and July.

The origin of the individual on the 2nd June is unknown but we believe it must have been local as it looked very fresh. We observed two on the 9th June and interestingly it seems to be possible to identify individuals by their markings and we believe that one of them was the same chafer that visited on the 2nd June whereas the other had different patterning. On the 12th June the latter individual visited the garden again and on the 14th June two *O. funesta* were



observed feeding together, one being another new individual along with the original chafer observed on the 2nd and 9th June. The latter returned again on the 15th June 2020 and was our most recent sighting. Altogether, three individuals were seen in the garden but we did not observe any mating behaviour.



***Oxythyrea funesta* 9th June (top) 14th June (bottom) ©T&JWood**

O. funesta was observed feeding on Dame's-violet (*Hesperis matronalis*), Common Valerian (*Valeriana officianalis*) and *Phlox paniculata*. It may be of note that all three plants are highly scented with a sweet fragrance.



Another beetle of interest, a "jewel beetle", *Agrilus cyanescens* (image above), was observed in our garden on the 8th and 14th June. This is a species that is also spreading north in the UK and we understand from Tony Drane that there are a number of records for Northants that indicate it is now well-established in the county.

T&J Wood

Adopt-a-Square – taking on the ‘dots on the maps challenge’ and widening my personal species list

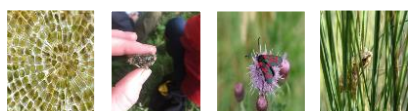
Like most people I guess, I have found that getting older has focussed my mind a little on what I might leave behind! One of those nagging things, which has started to cross my mind, is - what ‘concrete’ value the countless hours I have spent bird-watching over the last 40 years or so, and the records I have kept over that time, can make. Yes, I have of course, gained great enjoyment from this! But, could it be of even greater value?

Although I’m a ‘townie’ – Kettering-born and bred – my mum was a ‘country girl’ and always had an interest in wildlife which I think had more of an influence on me as a child than I realised at the time. I have been an RSPB member for as long as I can remember and, since retirement 5 years ago, I have joined the British Trust for Ornithology – for whom I have 2 allocated squares for their Breeding Bird Survey - and the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire. I am also a member of the Wildlife Trust for Norfolk, a county my wife & I visit regularly as we love the north Norfolk coast.

I rarely go anywhere without my binoculars and a notebook and even my time on the golf course is sometimes enlivened by spotting something! It’s not unknown for my golfing partners to comment “It’s no wonder your golf’s not very good today. Too busy looking at some bird or other”. I have managed to enlighten some of them however. One was especially amazed when I pointed out the entrance to a woodpecker’s nest on the trunk of a tree where we shouldn’t really have been looking for a golf ball, anyway. His ball, by the way, not mine!

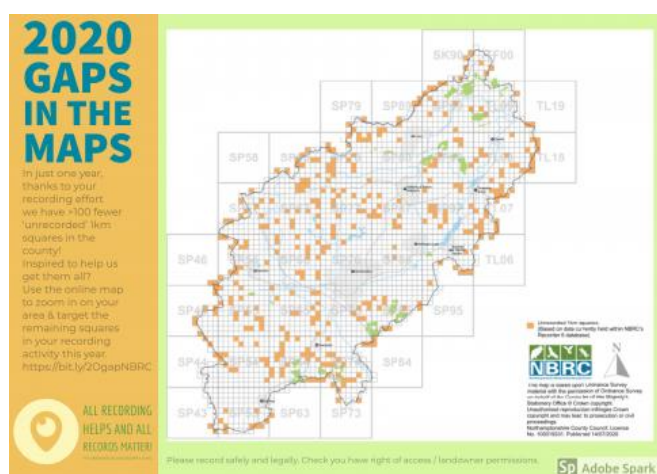
More spare time gave me the opportunity to upload all my bird sightings to the BTO’s Bird Track website, but what about the other species I have been recording?

Reading the BCN Wildlife Trust’s Winter 2020 magazine recently seemed to provide the answer by alerting me to the Northants Biodiversity Records Centre. A quick look at the website and, as luck would have it, one of the vacant 1km squares – ‘Gaps in the Map’ – includes part of the golf course where I play twice a week, ‘lockdown’ notwithstanding of course. There is also a public footpath/bridleway crossing another part of it so access to most of the square should not present any problems.



My next challenge is using my square to notice and to build up my knowledge, to make positive informed identification beyond the known 'avian' regulars. I'll start dusting off the Field Guides to Butterflies, Wild Flowers and Trees and put them to use. I hope to grow my identification confidence of species in the places I visit regularly. I have found, through recording, that I am already more aware of some of the more common ones such as hawthorn, blackthorn, elderberry which I probably wouldn't have taken much notice of before. I am already looking forward to widening my interests and exploring new parts of my home county of Northamptonshire. Let's hope 2021 will be a better year for everyone.

Alan Sheffield



Find your own 'Gap in the Map' to adopt. Record what you know and build up your knowledge find-by-find. Explore, notice nature and help monitor the trends on your walks. [Submit your records](#) and spread the word 'all recording helps and all records matter'.

Fungi Recording Walks this Autumn

In the last newsletter, we called on you to 'Get into Fungi for Autumn' sharing tips and experience from local recorders Mike Taylor and John Haughton.

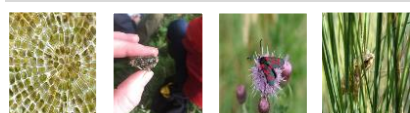
In October, the team took the opportunity to head out to Salcey Forest with Mike for an outdoor catch up (our first since March!) and to develop our skills for Fungi Recording. While some members of the team had some experience, James of taking spore samples, Nathalie from her pharmaceutical family (in France this knowledge is expected for all pharmacy professionals), but in the main, we were all developing our knowledge.



Magpie Inkcap *Coprinosporus picacea* ©Mike Taylor.

We headed out, eyes to the ground, in search of jewels on the woodland floor. Our first find, Fleecy Milkcap *Lactarius vellereus* was just off the path, a large pearly coloured mushroom with a mild, bitter, slightly acrid and hot tasting milk got us started. A little further, and we found The Miller *Clitopilus prunulus* an edible mushroom that much like its name smells of wet flour. I tried to keep up with my notes of find after find, juggling notes and a phone for grid references. The diversity was quickly apparent.

All of the senses are required for mushroom spotting and identification. Taste, smell, as well as the usual visual cues are all key to unlocking the world of Mycology. Having Mike show us, and explain the key features was invaluable as newbies. Colour is certainly a good start, though small, the bright green of Green Elfcup *Cholorciboria aeruginascens* contrasts against the wood it is found on and the deep lilac of an Amethyst Deceiver *Laccaria amethystina* is a good clue to its identity. Shape can help you find the correct group, the prickly spheres of the Puffballs, the spider web like coating of the Webcap's gills and for others further investigation is needed such as with the Brittle gills in which we learnt that the gills will break up easily into fragments, unlike in other groups. For the Milkcaps taste is a key feature that helps hone down to species level, and for most fungi smell is also important – with names such as Sulphur Knight *Tricholoma sulphureum* and Iodine Bonnet *Myceae filipes* you can guess the team's faces for some of these! Of course care is needed as some species, such as the aptly named Funeral Bell *Galerina marginata (autumnalis)* are deadly poisonous.





Funeral Bell *Galerina marginata (autumnalis)*
© Rosalind Johnston

Going out with others really helps in spotting specimens and growing the skills to start recognising the wonderful variety of fungi that come to life, just as many start to wind up the recording season. It's a great group to explore and an under recorded taxa for the county. Considering the incredible role fungi play as decomposers and chemical processors, the records are both fascinating in themselves and hold great value for wider ecology.

Rosalind Johnston, NBRC Centre Manager

Walking in the woods is a great way to get exercise and help to maintain sanity, King's Wood has been a strange place fungi wise this year with fungi appearing sporadically for a couple of months and a lot of the more conspicuous fungi have unfortunately been trampled. This virus has well and truly stopped any chance of groups looking for fungi but I shall still be wandering about to record what might appear. A member of one such group who planned to join my on a walk, Vicki Maddocks of the Friends of King's Wood, has put together a virtual [Autumn Fungi Walk in King's Wood](#) on YouTube to give others the chance to see what has been appearing in the wood. I provided most of the fungi pictures and their names, and we are thinking of doing more videos maybe on a seasonal basis to share.

John Haughton, Friends of King's Wood

Get inspired with the 'Fungi of Salcey Forest' Flickr Group. Fancy giving it a go?

Email nbrc@northantsbrc.co.uk we will put you touch.

Farthinghoe Railway Cutting – Northants regionally important geological site check up

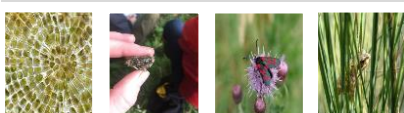


Pectin Shell ©Ian Clarke

As part of an ongoing (when Coronavirus permits!) survey of Northamptonshire's RIGS (Regionally Important Geological Sites), I was able to visit the site in Farthinghoe Railway Cutting, near Brackley in south Northamptonshire, on a wet and windy morning in January 2020. In addition to looking at the geology, I was there to learn from Rosalind and Nathalie how to measure the boundaries of sites using a portable GPS unit with some amusing slipping and sliding about on the wintery wet embankment as we trailed the tracking tool! The site is a local nature reserve, managed by the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust, and is in a cutting of the former London and North Western Railway, partly restored after being used for landfill. As well as its Local Geological Site status, it also has a wonderfully diverse range of wild flowers, insects and birds in what is quite a small area.

Like most of Northamptonshire's geology, this is not a spectacular rock display, but it is not without interest. It is a rare exposure of the Jurassic Middle Lias (Dyrham Formation) in the county. The main feature is a rib of ironstone (about 28 cm deep) and its undercut junction with the silt and clay beneath. On first sight, the ironstone looks as if it should be part of the Marlstone Rock Formation, and the boundary between the Middle Lias and the Marlstone Rock is shown on the BGS map sheet 201 a few metres away from the Farthinghoe site. However, looking at the lie of the land, it is apparent that the ironstone rib is several metres below this junction.

When the site was first assessed for RIGS in 1993, an ammonite, identified as *Amaltheus* cf. *subnodosus* was found, which indicates that the exposure is part of a subzone of the *Amaltheus margaritatus* zone, and is thus a layer of ferruginous rock below the Marlstone Rock itself. These ammonite zones are very



useful in identifying rock sequences! On my visit to the site, I was able to examine the boundary between the ironstone and the underlying clays and silts, getting very wet knees in the process! The junction is undercut where the clays and silts have washed out, and in the detritus of weathering I found a fossil cast of a small Pecten shell (Jurassic).

This RIGS is a small window into the Lower Jurassic, indicating variations in sea level and depositional environments—deeper water clays and silts, shallower water calcareous ironstone. The Marlstone Rock Formation, a little further up-sequence, is a more widespread deposit of calcareous ironstones and ferruginous limestones of varying shades of brown. It was used extensively in western Northamptonshire as a building stone and in some places the iron content was high enough for the stone to be quarried as iron ore e.g. at Byfield. The Marlstone Rock is sometimes very rich in fossils, especially belemnites and brachiopods. In Daventry, my local area, the building stones in the town centre are predominantly Marlstone Rock and the 9 million years younger Northampton Sand. Telling them apart is tricky, but that's another story!

Thanks to Farthinghoe's volunteer warden, Tim Pridmore who is actively keeping the rock exposure visible and clear of vegetation. It is much appreciated! I would also like to express my thanks to my fellow volunteers from the East Midlands branch of the Open University Geological Society, who are helping with the RIGS survey. We have visited a number of sites in the Northampton and Corby areas and hope to do more visits in due course. Many of the sites have not had any attention for 10-20 years, so they are often overgrown and neglected, but we have been able to see some interesting aspects of Northamptonshire's geology.

Ian Clarke, Co-ordinator for Northamptonshire Local Geological Sites

If you are interested in the LGS group and would like to find out more please get in touch with Ian and the group i.j.clarke@hotmail.com

Training Courses, Talks & Surveys

Wildlife Trust BCN Wildlife Training Workshops 2021 Programme

Due to covid-19, we have had to think of ways to best deliver our wildlife training workshops, within the current guidelines. It was an incredibly sad time when face-to-face training workshops were cancelled, due

to the pandemic. Work for the programme begins the previous year, and most workshops were already fully booked. Like most of us this year, we have had to become more familiar with online platforms in order to have meetings with our colleagues. A steep learning curve followed when we decided to use Microsoft Teams Live to run some online training workshops.

On 23 July we ran our very first online workshop; Introduction to Grasses with Brian Eversham. Over 100 people attended. The Pollination and Pollinators online workshop held a month later had people attending from Scotland, Ireland and the USA!

"No commute, and great to see the grasses under the camera, makes it much easier to understand!"

Our understanding in running online workshops grown and we are now able to give assistance to those who are having difficulty with access.

"The workshop was excellent and easy to follow online. The accompanying handouts are really helpful and I have already used them to identify existing photographs I had previously taken of bees in order to embed the learning. Ryan was a very engaging, knowledgeable and enthusiastic presenter. Juliette skilfully managed the Q&A session by combining related areas of questions. The whole event was extremely professional and enjoyable. I learned loads!"



Flies: The good, the bad and the ugly with John Showers (online and optional outdoor)

Wednesday 17 February 2021
Location: Online event, Broadcast by Wildlife Trust BCN

[More info](#)



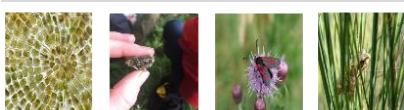
Introduction to Dormice with Henry Stanier (online and optional outdoor)

Tuesday 13 April 2021
Location: Online event, Broadcast by Wildlife Trust BCN

[More info](#)

Due to the success of the online 2020 training workshops, we are continuing online for 2021 and trialling the option of attending outdoor sessions held in a small group(s) (where government restrictions allow).

Post course, you may take your skills outside and start recording your sightings. Our supportive [Monitoring and Research Facebook Group](#) is there for ID support, and for those of you who take the next step and volunteer as part of our ecology groups you will be



receiving an invite to our upcoming Monitoring and Research Virtual Conference.

If you are interested in finding out more about our training workshops, then please visit our website:

[Online Wildlife Trust Training Events](#)

Price: £7 or £5 for BCN Wildlife Trust Members

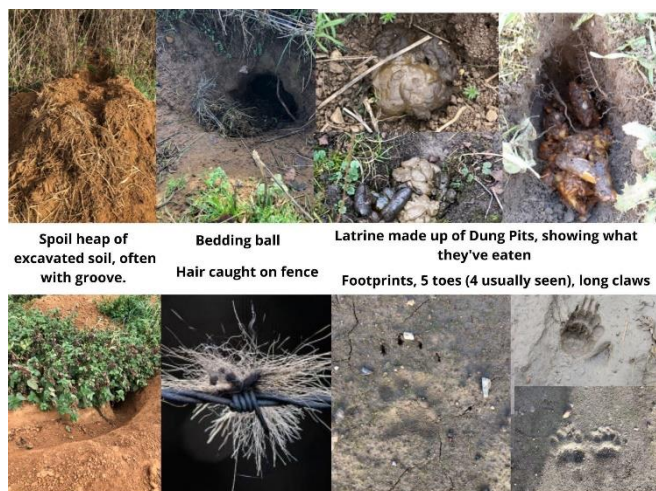
Email: trainingworkshops@wildlifebcn.org

Juliette Butler,

Wildlife Trust Training Workshops Officer

Look out for ...Badgers! Survey

As spring starts, it is a key time of the year for our '[look out for ...badgers](#)' survey as the warmer weather brings increased movement. From setts, badger cubs will start emerging and their parents will extend their range in search for food. In fact, valentine's day holds the record annually for badger activity! All records help, watch tips on what to look out for in this [YouTube](#) video, badger setts, signs, and sightings (including road side deceased), to generate records of badgers and badger activity in the county and fill the information gap.



Badger signs ©Northamptonshire Badger Group

Any injured animals should be reported to the group directly and swiftly for them to respond. It's a mammoth task and volunteers, particularly needed in the south of the county, are encouraged to get involved! All records received to our website are blurred to 10k (as a protected species) but are available at high resolution to ourselves and the [Northamptonshire Badger Group](#) for their protection.



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
BADGER GROUP**
A full member of the Badger Trust

Actively involved in the welfare of
badgers across all Northamptonshire

www.northamptonshirebadgers.co.uk
northantsbadgergroup@gmail.com

Visit our Website or find us on Social Media for more information



Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland Plant Hunt 2021

1,811 people took part in #newyearplanthunt challenge from the 1st-4th January, now in it's 10th year, participation was far higher than ever before!

Volunteers hunted for up to three hours each, finding collectively: 710 different plant species recorded in bloom across Britain and Ireland compared to 615 last year and 627 in 2019. A total of 21,419 records were submitted: almost 50% more than last year!

The warmer winter period prior to the survey seems to have resulted in a higher proportion of late autumn stragglers, and not an early spring, as only 24% of the blooms found were 'Springtime Specialists'

Kevin Walker, BSBI Head of Science said "Our plants are responding to changing weather patterns, with more flowers being recorded during the past decade as we experience autumns and winters with warmer temperatures and fewer frosts. We can't say for sure yet what impacts these changes in flowering times will have on associated wildlife - but we can see that weather patterns are changing and our plants, both native and non-native, are responding."

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

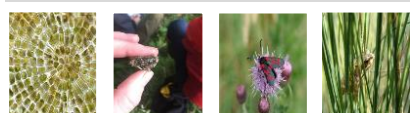
Email: nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk

Website: www.northantsbrc.org.uk

Twitter: [@ Northants BRC](#)

Facebook: [WILDside Recording Community](#)

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

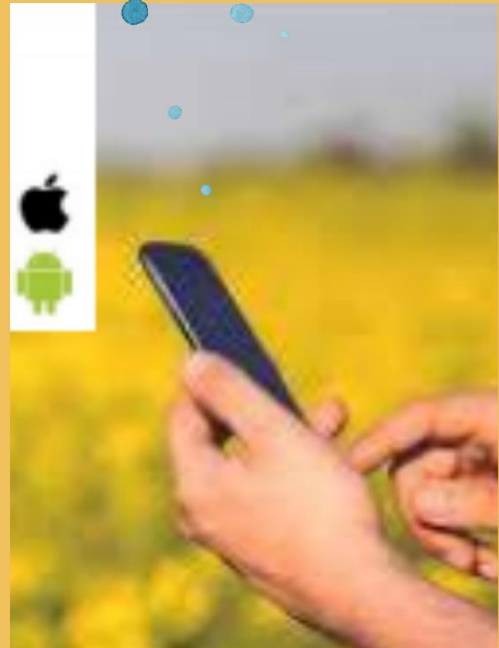


Look out for Ponds



Help us put Northants pond locations on the map! Use our new habitat survey tools and guides to survey your local area. You can use your mobile phone or good old paper forms to submit information on current known pond locations, pond condition assessment and surveys of the species used by this key habitat.

With our thanks to the
Environment Agency



<https://northantsbrc.org.uk/record/ponds>