



Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre



Hedgehog (Erinaceus europaeus) Photo credit: Richard Coppins

Annual Report 2021-22

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Introduction

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

The NBRC are members of the national Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC), the National Biodiversity Network (NBN), the National Forum for Biological Recording (NFBR), GeoConservationUK, and the county's Biodiversity Partnership and Local Nature Partnership (LNP).

Our Steering Group is comprised of representatives from a range of interested parties representing service level partners, biological recorders and environmental researchers. The group is chaired by Josh Hellon, Monitoring and Research Manager at the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, and meets three times a year to oversee and support NBRC strategic direction.

NBRC is hosted by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire (Wildlife Trust BCN) in their Northampton Office, with the staff given the option to work remotely from home.

Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre

Lings House,

Lings Way,

Billing Lings,

Northampton.

NN3 8BE

Tel: 01604 400448

E-mail: nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk

Our website <http://www.northantsbrc.org.uk/> includes our current organisational policies.



NBRC Aims & Objectives

Our Vision

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

Our Mission Statement

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

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

in order to

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

Our Values

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

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

Our Objectives

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

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

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

Partnerships & Collaboration

The NBRC steering group meets three times annually to support and guide NBRC operations and strategic direction. The group comprises of representatives from the following partner organisations & groups:

Anglian Water	Northamptonshire Natural History Society
Canal & River Trust	Natural England
Environment Agency	University of Northampton
Moulton College	West Northamptonshire County Council
North Northamptonshire County Council	Wildlife Trust of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire
Northamptonshire County Recorders	

NBRC Staff

In 2021-22, NBRC was managed by Rosalind Johnston full time up until March 2022. We'd like to thank Rosalind for all the hard work she has put into the NBRC over the years and wish her luck in her next role. There are three data officers working at NBRC *Nathalie Hueber (0.6 FTE)* *James Skinner (0.6 FTE)* and *Rachel Tate (0.6 FTE)*

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

Key Achievements 2021-2022

Sites

NBRC sites datasets are updated and managed by our partners the Wildlife Trust BCN with assistance and support of NBRC staff. Staff assisted with 9 Local Wildlife Sites surveys over the summer and attended the 2021 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) selection panel meeting in Feb 2022. In 2021 33 Local Wildlife Sites went through the selection panel and had their citation either created or updated; this includes some Protected Wildflower Verge sites. We continue to improve our LWS database through data cleansing. As of 2022, we have now completed 674 LWS new citations out of 720 held.

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

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

<i>Non-Statutory Sites</i>	Number of Sites	<i>Statutory Sites</i>	Number of sites
Local Wildlife Site	720	Site of Special Scientific Interest	57
Potential Wildlife Site	1105	National Nature Reserve	2
Local Geological Sites	55	Local Nature Reserve	18
Protected Wildflower Verge	30		
Pocket Park	81		
Wildlife Trust Reserves	36		

Habitats

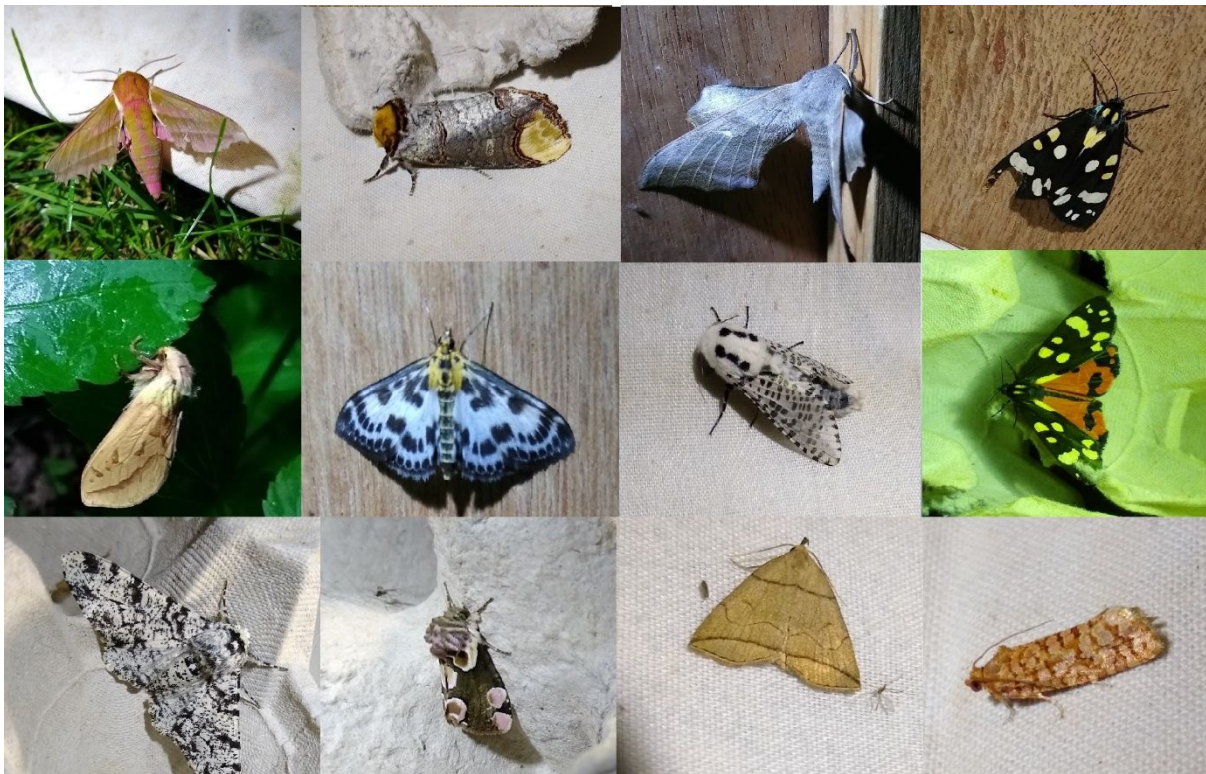
Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats have been mapped in all Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) sites in Northamptonshire and are updated as new information becomes available. This data is provided, updated, and managed by our partners the Wildlife Trust BCN.

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

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

Species

The NBRC database currently now holds 1,379,592 million species records (of these over 1 million are verified), covering 12,195 species in 57 taxonomic groups. James manages this data and ensures quality through **validation** (checks on the “completeness” and accuracy of the record) and **verification** (expert assessment of the accuracy of identification for confidence in the observation) where supported by a national or county recorder, on all received records before incorporation into the NBRC Recorder6 database*. In rare cases where verification is not possible, the records are omitted until they can be assured or entered as unverified (to be considered during decision making) until this can be corrected. This quality assurance process is imperative to deliver reliable robust information for confident data led ecological decision-making. * Historical records may not have all undertaken the full quality procedure as we now have in place for database incorporation.



In 2021-22 116,188 records were added, including:

- Over 100,000 bird records from the 2019 and 2020 bird datasets
- Over 3,000 records from the 2021 Local Wildlife Sites surveys
- 1228 records from the Weevil & Bark Beetle Recording Scheme.
- 1728 records for Bryophytes from 2020 and 2021
- 46 datasets were received, 70% of received data has been validated ready for verification.

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

Table 3 Species information updates in NBRC database (updated April 2022)

County Dataset	Current date records to in R6	Last time updated in Recorder 6	Planned Update
Bryophytes	December 2021	Spring 2022	Current & aim for annual update
Butterflies	December 2020	Spring 2021	Spring 2023
Diptera	November 2017	Autumn/Winter 2018	Priority. In progress
Moths	December 2019	Spring 2021	Summer/Autumn 2023
Water Bugs	December 2016	Spring 2017	Priority. Summer/Autumn 2023
Plants	October 2015	March 2021	Ongoing. 2022/2023
Dragonflies	November 2003	March 2004	Uncertain
Birds	December 2022	March 2022	Ongoing. 2022/2023
Hymenoptera	May 2020	Spring 2022	Ongoing. 2022/2023
Amphibians & Reptiles	1905 - 2021	Spring 2022	Uncertain
Fungi	Currently no county recorder for this group		Uncertain
Lichens	National Scheme was contacted for database access. Need to re-establish communication		When received
Mammals	There is a county recorder for this group, but there is currently no exchange of records		Working with PTES, Northamptonshire Badger Group, Wildlife BCN
Coleoptera	There is a county recorder for this group, but no specific exchange of records has taken place		Uncertain
Trichoptera	Currently no county recorder for this group. National dataset received		In progress
Spiders	There is a county recorder for this group, but no specific exchange of records has taken place		Uncertain
Hemiptera	Currently no county recorder for this group		Uncertain
Orthoptera	Currently no county recorder for this group		Uncertain

Biological Recording & Engagement

Website, Newsletter & Social Media

NBRC's website, launched through Natural England funding in 2016, aims to encourage online biological recording. To support recording in 2017 new sections of our website were added as part of the WILDside project, including our species 'look out for surveys'. The team reviewed NBRC's Privacy Policy and Terms of Use in 2021, and ensured our online systems continue to meet GDPR regulations.

The website is hosted by Clook.net on a shared web server provider. The species records (and recorder details) input onto our website are stored securely on a virtual warehouse that is owned and managed by the Biological Records Centre (BRC). The website is managed by NBRC staff with ad-hoc consultant support.

Additional content in the form of a blog section was added to the website in May 2021. This has enabled all staff to add short pieces of news updates and information. This section can also be used to promote activities run by local recording groups in Northamptonshire.

Our ongoing 'Gaps on the maps' was updated for 2022 showing that we have received species records for over 200 of our previously 'unrecorded' 1km squares since the start of this project. Updated and promoted 'Look out for...' species focussed surveys for 2022 were; Swifts, Bee-flies and Badgers.

There has been a total of 6,614 records submitted to the website since the online recording facility went live and 1,782 of these records were submitted to the website between 01/01/2021 and 31/12/2021.

NBRC newsletters were produced in July and December 2021 with recorder articles, centre updates and wider NBN and LERC news. Newsletters are produced twice annually for Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter; historic newsletters are accessible via our [website](#). Our Social Media includes an NBRC twitter account ([@ Northants BRC](#)) with 704 followers and an active WILDside project [Facebook group](#) with 217 members listed in January 2022.

Bioblitz 2021

This year the NBRC undertook a BioBlitz at Kelmarsh Estate on May 24th and July 12th with the help of the county recorder. The estate offered a broad variety of habitats including lakes and meadows. Datasets from this Bioblitz have been collected and added to the NBRC database this includes new records for Plants, Butterflies, True Flies, Amphibians, Reptiles, Molluscs, Bats and Moths. Currently, a total of 442 new records have been added to the database. Precautions were taken during this event to make sure Covid-19 restrictions were always adhered to. This is something we will continue to consider in future BioBlitz events. We hope to continue running these events for years to come as they provide a great opportunity to develop our understanding of an area as well as being an opportunity to increase engagement in biological recording.



Male Great Spotted Woodpecker ©David James

Organisational Partnerships & Development

The NBRC works with regional Record Centres across the UK. All staff members attended the 2021 ALERC meeting and engaged in discussion of best practice, joint working and IT systems development. The NBRC works to NBN and ALERC guidelines and guidance for best practice. In addition to this the NBRC attends regional meetings with other record centres to further discuss working procedures and discuss more localised issues.

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

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

Data Services and Projects

Information Requests

The data service provided by the NBRC continues to be a highly appreciated resource for Northamptonshire. Both commercial and non-commercial data requests have risen for the past 3 years. The current pricing structure for data requests has been in place since 2020.

Table 3 Biological information service summary 2019-2022

Financial Year	Total Data Requests	Commercial Data Requests	Free of Charge Data Enquiries
2021-22	325	260	65
2020-21	303	246	57
2019-20	225	178	47

Data Agreements

In 2021-22 NBRC held Service Level Agreements with Northamptonshire Environment Agency, Anglian Water, West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire. Annually licensed data GIS layers and reports, which include habitats, species and sites requests. Additionally, a number of one-year data licenses were agreed during this financial year.

Ancient Woodland Inventory Update

This year the NBRC has been working hard on its role in a national project coordinated by Natural England and funded by the Woodland Trust. The project was started in summer 2020 and aims to update the Ancient Tree Inventory. This ancient woodland layer was produced previously mapped in the 1980s. The current project would be looking at woodlands greater than 0.25ha and would aim to use local knowledge to ensure accuracy in the final Open Data layer. The record centre has been tasked with Phase 1 & 2 stages of this project. James has been managing the delivery of this project, using epoch 1, latest aerial and master maps and checking/ updating the digitisation of presence of woodland 'i.e. possible ancient' including small woodland across these. Once complete the record centre will be handing data over to the Wildlife Trust to handle the next phases of the project.

Finance

For 2021/22 information requests have remained high and NBRC has continued to complete work for several different service level agreements for Anglian Water, North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council, Environment Agency and Natural England. NBRC also has a hosting agreement with the Wildlife Trust BCN for which NBRC provides 'in kind' services.

A surplus of £927 was generated in 2021/22 following an income of £83,812 and an expenditure of £82,885. The majority of this year's expenses has gone to staff salaries however investment has also been made in development of the services that the centre can provide. This includes the centre being used to host Habitat Opportunity Maps in partnership with Natural Capital Solutions. This new service will provide the centre an opportunity to create new income streams but will also increase expenditure as part of income from maps produced in this service will be used by Natural Capital Solutions to improve this service further.

Looking towards the 2022/23 forecast we have been conservative with our estimates due to the uncertainty from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 4 NBRC Expenditure (April 1st 2021 - March 31st 2022)

	<i>2020/2021 Actual</i>	<i>2021/2022 Actual</i>	<i>2022/2023 Budget</i>
Staff Salaries/ Training/Recruitment	£73,812	£78,618	£62,559
Subscriptions (e.g. NFBR, ALERC) & office consumables	£535	£509	£280
IT Software and hardware as well as website support	£1792	£1217	£475
Other Costs	£295	£2541	£748
TOTAL	£76,624	£82,885	£64,231

Table 5 NBRC Income (April 1 2021 - 31 March 2022)

	<i>2020/2021 Actual</i>	<i>2021/2022 Actual</i>	<i>2022/2023 Budget</i>
Information Requests	£47,046	£49,868	£36,000
SLAs	£33,935	£27,794	£29,750
Project work	£14,721	£6,150	£8500
TOTAL	£92,060	£83,812	£74,250

Future Plans

Staff have adapted well to working from home, following the Covid-19 pandemic, and continues to deliver a high standard of work to our clients. The NBRC will continue improve the hybrid working experience for our staff so they can keep provided this top-quality service.

As stated in the report the NBRC is looking to host Habitat Opportunity Maps produced by Natural Capital Solutions. From this the NBRC will be able to provide a new service which will be helpful in numerous situations including preparation of Parish or Neighbourhood Plans, assessing planning applications and providing evidence to support green infrastructure and local green space designations. The first applications for this project are due to be made during 2022/2023 and will be reviewed beyond this.

