

NBRC Newsletter 08

May 2014

NBRC News

Following the birth of baby Callan last June, Nathalie Hueber returned from maternity leave at the start of April. James Skinner took a break from covering for Nathalie with a trip to complete further Wainwright Walks. He only has five left now, so Munro-bagging might be next on his holiday itinerary. Meanwhile, Rachel Tate has been making progress with NBRC's website, which you can find at www.northantsbrc.org.uk

Jackie Ulyett has now returned full-time to Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre, having done an excellent job in leading two record centres over the past 18 months. She had the opportunity to spend a day handing over to NBRC's newly appointed manager before chairing a Northamptonshire County Recorders' Group meeting for a final time.

Steve Whitbread is the new NBRC Manager. He has experience across the academic, NGO, private and public sectors, having worked variously as a researcher, consultant, local ecologist and Wildlife Trust Conservation Manager. In addition, to his experience of working with biological records and derived data, he has also been closely involved with the National Forum for Biological Recording over the last ten years.

Alongside developing NBRC's business elements, he's particularly looking forward to furthering its relationships with local recorders, verifiers and the users of biodiversity information; building on the foundations established by Jackie and past and present NBRC staff over the years.

Data enquiries continue to come in thick and fast, continuing the year on year growth, with 118 in the first third of 2014 alone.

Work with the Local Wildlife Sites database - ensuring that all the site citation information is accurate, up to date and in one place is also ongoing. Progress is slow but steady and we're now looking forward to completing it in 2015.

We have also been very busy cleaning up our Recorder database checking and removing duplicate and inaccurate records and importing new datasets. Both the Macro and Micro moth datasets have been imported into Recorder 6 and we are hoping to upload the Micro moth dataset to the NBN Gateway soon.

2014 Bioblitz at Halse Copse

To better accommodate some taxon groups (of course there's no one period in the year that is ideal for everything) this year's Bioblitz will be held on the weekend of May 17th (6pm-12pm) & 18th (9am-6pm) at Halse Copse, near Helmdon, north of Brackley.

A pre-blitz risk assessment visit suggests that Wellington boots will be advisable. The site comprises some excellent meadows and two coppice areas with interconnecting hedges, ditches and a huge range of microhabitats. A treat should be in store for all who are able to visit.

We currently hold 384 individual records for 170 different species from within the planned survey boundaries. The table below indicates the number of different species within selected taxon groups.

Group	Total
Conifer	1
Fern	3
Flowering plant	130
Insect – butterfly (Lepidoptera)	8
Insect – dragonfly (Odonata)	2
Insect – Hymenoptera	1
Insect – Orthoptera	1
Insect – beetle (Coleoptera)	2
Insect – moth (Lepidoptera)	2
Insect – true bug (Hemiptera)	3
Amphibian	1
Bird	15
Mammal	1

The fact that the proposed route of the High Speed 2 rail link passes through the more southerly copse, offers added interest; making all information about the site doubly useful. It will be interesting to see what the county's recorders turn up during an intensive weekend examination, compared with the various scrutinies undertaken in connection with the HS2 Environmental Impact Assessment.

It'll also be interesting to see how this year's blitz compares with the 2013 visit to Fawsley Park, for which records are still arriving! And speaking of bioblitzes past...

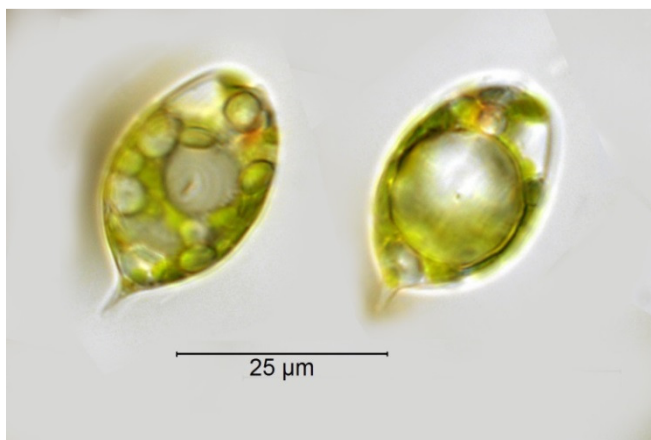
Update to the Cranford Sandy Spinney Quarry May 2012 Bioblitz: a new UK species record!

Chris & Rachel Carter

One of the algal pictures from a ditch at the quarry caught the eye of the European expert on that group, Konrad Wolowski, who is based in Poland.

The first point was that Chris had made an incorrect identification, but the second point was that the correct identification, *Phacus obolus*, was a species that had not previously been recorded from the British Isles.

The Euglenophyta are a diverse group of motile single-celled algae that bridge the plant/animal divide. 166 species (10 genera) are described in The Freshwater Algal Flora of the British Isles but there are more in European Floras and about 650 are known worldwide. Most appear to be 'cosmopolitan' so there are more to be listed for the British Isles if they can be found, photographed and identified: but this is not easy. Most of the group (*Euglena*, *Phacus* and *Lepocinclis*) have one obvious flagellum, a red 'eye-spot', curious food-storage bodies of characteristic shape and a flexible cell wall made up of helically wound, overlapping ribbons: this allows the 'squirming' motion described in biology text books.



Phacus obolus a species new to the UK in close-up

The picture shows the cell at two focus levels: the red 'eye' is quite visible as is the large round food-storage body; the flagellum cannot really be seen but would have emerged from the top of the organism on this image.

Northamptonshire Rare Plant Register

This extremely well presented new register - available as a 50Mb pdf - includes dot maps that cover all known records for each species, showing in some cases the extreme contraction of the range within vice-county 32 over the past 150 years. You can find it here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/kup6c3kq40v6svs/VC32%20Rare%20Plant%20Register%20A.pdf>

THE RARE PLANT REGISTER
OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AND THE SOKE OF PETERBOROUGH



Pink Invaders On The River Nene (continued)

We're still keen to add to the records of where Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), is now growing along the River Nene. Knowing where such non-native invasives are located, especially those that spread so freely, is a vital first step towards enabling co-ordinated action to tackle them and to highlight the scale of the problem.



Use our online form at <http://tinyurl.com/NBRC-Himalayan-Balsam> or contact us as below.

A Very Surprising Happening

Tony Smith

The Northamptonshire Natural History Society meets in Castilian Terrace, Northampton, a cul-de-sac off Castilian Street, a short one-way link to two roads in the Town Centre. Constant traffic and shoppers make it a hostile urban environment. There is no 'greenery'.



On the First of October, walking along St Giles Street, I was irritated to see the latest piece of street furniture -- a grimy metallic bin, set flush into the brick wall, with the words 'Cigarettes only please'.

I visit Coleman's Stationery Shop regularly to make photocopies of my moth catch records for those who kindly allow me onto their land.

On this occasion, I was told that the day before, at lunchtime, one of the girls had seen a large dark butterfly or moth on their wall in Castilian Street.

Unable to hazard a name for it, I was taken outside and, unbelievably, the moth was still there, and on a second bin for 'fag ends'!



I was provided with a Margarine tub and with no more than a slight flexing of its wings the moth was captured. Back at home in Bedfordshire it was identified as a *Convolvulus Hawk Moth* (*Agrius convolvuli*), photographed and released.

I knew it to be a migrant species, but reading about its lifestyle (in the Waring, Townsend & Lewington field guide), I learned that it is apparently nocturnal, feeding at dusk and sometimes at dawn at tubular flowers such as those of...

TOBACCO PLANTS

The proboscis is extremely long and no other moth occurring in the British Isles can feed at some of these flowers. The 'fag end' smell must have attracted the moth.



Castilian Street is where my Grandparents lived and where my Father was born in 1882. Stuart Humfrey lived a few doors away. He fitted me with my first pair of glasses in 1938. It is his legacy where the Society meets.

Do you believe in reincarnation?

Northants Butterfly Recording in 2014

2014 is the final year for records to be included in the 2015 national atlas.

There are presently very few records for the following 10km squares: **SP**53, 54, 57, 64, 65, 66, 67, 74, 97, 98, 99; **TL**07.

There are gaps in recording for Essex Skipper (W & N Northants); Brown Argus, Brimstone & Orange-tip (W); Purple hairstreak (S,W); Small Heath (S).

Records are required for the following species from across the county: Dingy and Grizzled skippers; Green; Black and White-letter hairstreaks and (away from their stronghold sites) White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary and Purple Emperor.

N.B. We'll be pleased to pass on any observations you might make whilst looking for other species.

Making a bit of a buzz



Andrena labiata Red-girdled Mining Bee

One of the UK's scarcer mining bees was recorded in Northampton during 2013 by Simon Merriman. Now known to be more widespread than when accorded nationally rare status in the first invertebrate red data book (Shirt, 1987), *Andrena labiata* is typical of species about which our understanding has changed as more information has been made available by local recorders and national schemes.

It is restricted to open, sandy sites, however, and it is just one species – reliant upon specific combinations of features and conditions - that underlines the value of recording and sharing records; highlighting the value of sites that might otherwise be overlooked, isolated or lost.

Further NBRC News

NBRC Online

Thanks to Rachel's efforts and development work that will continue over this year, you'll find regular news updates and information about recording in Northants and the UK, links to useful resources and tools on the NBRC [website](#). It should also increasingly provide an effective means of promoting recording, the value of (and need for) high quality biodiversity information, and individual recording organisations and schemes, national and local, large or small, as NBRC seeks to be better able to act as a data centre and as a facilitator of recording-related activities across the county.



You can indeed now follow the latest news and comments via NBRC's **Twitter** account which went live in mid-April. Social media tools provide new ways of sharing ideas, information problems and advice. Twitter's simplicity makes it an excellent medium for quickly reaching various audiences.

NBRC Steering Group

The next meeting of the steering group that advises on and monitors the work of your record centre is on May 22nd. The group includes representation from the Wildlife Trust, N.C.C. and Natural England as well as the County's Recorders' Group.

If you have any suggestions, questions or issues that you'd like to raise, please pass them to the Recorders' Representative, John Showers via [NBRC](#).

NBRC Audit

A crucial next step for the record centre is an appraisal of what data it has in different forms (not all of which are in easily accessible formats at present), other wildlife records and ecological information presently held by others, which may or may not be accessible at some point in the future so that it can identify key gaps as a basis to developing initiatives and potential partnerships with which to address these.

It is also important that we don't simply produce a worthy but dry and dusty report that has no impact. We also need to find a way to ensure that its findings and recommendations are relevant to recorders, researchers, consultants, developers, local authorities, conservation organisations and the wider public. Watch this space!

Northamptonshire BRC Staff are

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