

Winter 2015



Photo by
Helen S Miller

Thames Valley

Environmental Records Centre



Sharing environmental information in Berkshire & Oxfordshire

Welcome

As the weather turns truly wintery, now is the season to snuggle in the warm, sort out your survey results from the summer, and plan for the spring!

Perhaps you'll feel like trying out our online recording website or you might already be using I-Record (based on the same software as our site) or LivingRecord.

You could book onto a TVERC or ANSHO training course for species which aren't your speciality (yet!) or volunteer for us at TVERC (more info on our updated website pages <http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/volunteer>).

How about thinking of some practical conservation work needed for your local greenspace and putting a bid into TOE2 or Network Rail? And you might want to get in touch with Nature-Nurture

and share the joys of wildlife recording on your local patch with young people.

So thanks for all your recording effort in 2015—we now have 1.7 million species records our database.

And remember to put the date of our Spring Recorders Conference (27th Feb) in your 2016 calendar—hope to see you there!

Camilla Burrow
TVERC Director

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Data Search Requests go Online!

Since TVERC started we've received data search requests on forms via email mainly, or by post. It is though, as they say, a new age and so TVERC has now replaced these forms with an online data search request form. We are using the excellent Wufoo forms, named because the founder likes the Wu-Tang Clan and the Foo Fighters. There's one for commercial searches and one for non-commercial searches. Links are on our data search page of the website <http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/data-searches>

This is the first part of a drive to streamline our data search process. We import the information from these forms into a database, designed by the South East Local Records Centres tech advisor Andy Foy. Besides storing the information, this automates many of the repetitive processes of dealing with data requests. We'll be developing this further to automate many of the tasks of extracting and supplying data.

Then again to quote James Randi "The New Age? It's just the old age stuck in a microwave oven for fifteen seconds."

Graham Hawker, Data Services Officer

Data search request

Please use our online form to submit a request. **Please note we do not supply formal quotes to be included in quotes for project tendering - see commercial data searches below.**

For **commercial requests** use **this form**. Commercial requests are any search that requires payment. See our [charging policy](#).

For **non-commercial requests** use **this form**

TVERC and BLNP Autumn Recorders Day 2015—Urban Wildlife

TVERC and the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership held an enjoyable and thought-provoking event for Berkshire and Oxfordshire recorders on 10th October 2015. The event was held in



Photo by Lucy Lush

Thames Valley business park in Reading. The venue and the extremely helpful Cliff Hilton (Sustainability, Environment, Health & Safety Senior Manager) was kindly supplied by Oracle

Corporation UK Ltd. Despite being in a business park we were within walking distance of Thames Valley Park Nature Reserve which we utilised for some of our workshops in the afternoon and so wildlife was not far from the nearly 50 people who attended.

The theme was '**Urban Wildlife**' and we started with Professor Jeff Ollerton, from the University of Northampton talking about *The role of urban environments for supporting pollinator biodiversity*. Jeff spoke about how he and his team have been tracking bees throughout Northampton with surprising results, showing even small areas of planting surrounded by traffic, can support a wide range of pollinator species. Next we had Dr Phil Baker from the University of Reading with "*Lessons learnt from studying urban mammals*" who discussed the results of studies he has undertaken on urban foxes and hedgehogs, and inspired TVERC to invest in a hedgehog tunnel, which can be loaned out to recorders, to see if we have our own at the bottom of our gardens.

The following talk, was by Karen Harper from the London Invasive Species Initiative (LISI) telling us about the issues involved in the control and eradication of invasives in a place like London with it's airports and trade routes.

Just before lunch we had the Berkshire LNP AGM and update where we heard the partnership have funding for a new projects officer which when the position is filled will give them a new lease of life.

After a very tasty lunch people had the opportunity to attend one of four workshops. The 'How to use sightings website' workshop lead by Rachael Clemson and Camilla Burrow was enthusiastically received. Stephen Ellwood gave another of his master classes on camera trapping this time. There was a Bird Walk lead by Caroline Coleman and Katherine Holmes where 24 species were spotted and subsequently entered into the sightings website. The reptile walk lead by Ellen Lee was decidedly more of an amphibian walk with toads and frogs discovered but unfortunately no reptiles.

And at the end of the day we were given some quick recorder updates.

Our thanks go to the Oracle Corporation Ltd for the venue and Cliff and to all of the speakers and participants for a stimulating and inspiring day. Look out later in this newsletter for info on the Spring Recorders Day 2016

Hannah Boylan, Admin Officer



Photo by Lucy Lush

Ancient Woodland Inventory Review

Ancient Woodland is defined as land with continuous woodland cover since at least 1600. This includes ancient semi-natural woodland (ANSW) and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

Ancient woodlands are an extremely valuable part of our landscape which many wildlife species rely on. They can be a source of carbon-neutral wood fuel, they provide carbon sequestration, flood alleviation and soil preservation. They also provide community benefits such as forest schools & green gyms and are a lasting legacy for future generations.

In the 1990s the Nature Conservancy Council compiled Ancient Woodland Inventories (AWI) for each county including ancient woodlands over two hectares.



This inventory is currently being reviewed due to inaccuracies in the data which could undermine the protection of ancient woodlands in the planning process. It has also become apparent that in less wooded areas, even sites less than two hectares in size make a major contribution to the local ecology. With new information and advances in technology these inaccuracies and omissions can now be addressed.

The project involves :

1. Mapping woodland to Mastermap boundaries
2. Cross-referencing current woodland (aerial photos) with woodland on historic maps (epoch 1 and tithe maps)
3. Field surveys on sites where it is unclear from the mapping exercise whether the site is ancient or not
4. Archive research where additional historic evidence is available and a more detailed study of tithe maps and apportionment data

TVERC has now finished the revision of the AWI in Oxfordshire and we are currently working on West Berkshire, with the two unitary authorities of Bracknell and Wokingham already completed.

Hannah Boylan, Admin Officer

“Ancient woodlands are an extremely valuable part of our landscape which many wildlife species rely on.”

The British Dragonfly Society call for more records

More records are needed to understand better how dragonflies are faring across Berkshire and Oxfordshire. To help, the British Dragonfly Society has launched a new iRecord Dragonfly App. It includes images, habitat information and distribution maps and it is compatible with Android and iOS or can be used on a laptop. The website for the app is here: <http://www.brc.ac.uk/app/irecord-dragonflies>. Local information about Oxfordshire dragonflies is also available from Stephen Burch's birding & dragonfly website (<http://www.stephenburch.com/dragonflies/OxonDragons.htm>) including latest sightings (in season), a site guide and an illustrated county list. Alternatively, submit your records to the local contact for Oxfordshire (Stephen Burch; stephen_burchemail@yahoo.co.uk) or Berkshire (Mike Turton; berksdragonflies@gmail.com).

Stephen Burch and Mike Turton

TVERC Training Programme 2016

TVERC is running a further 7 training courses in 2016 to help train volunteers to improve identification skills and knowledge of a range of priority habitats and species.

These one day introductory training courses are run by expert ecologists and aimed at **beginners**. Courses will cover basic ecology, relevant legislation, identification features and survey techniques.

Topics covered are:

- ◆ WINTER TREE ID
- ◆ BUMBLEBEE ID & FIELD TECHNIQUES
- ◆ INTRO TO BIRD SURVEY TECHNIQUES
- ◆ WOODLAND PLANT ID
- ◆ GRASS ID
- ◆ OTTER ECOLOGY & SURVEYING
- ◆ WATER VOLE ECOLOGY & SURVEYING

Each course costs £60

Professionals will be charged £120

Students £30*

*There are limited student places available on each course & given on a first come first served basis. (Scanned copy of student ID will be required at time of booking).

No refund will be made on cancellations made less than one month before the course. Courses may be cancelled if insufficient numbers book on the course and refunds made.

PLACES ARE LIMITED SO BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL—Contact hannah.boylan@oxfordshire.gov.uk



Small Mammal Training
Day 2015
Photo by Lucy Lush

“Volunteering at TVERC has strengthened my CV and made me more confident to apply for jobs I thought I wouldn’t have a chance at.”



Rebecca Pringle

Volunteering for TVERC

Volunteers contribute enormously to TVERC and we are always grateful for the valuable support they provide. During the last year, nearly twenty volunteers have worked with us in the office and others have assisted with field surveys. As a ‘not-for-profit’ organisation, TVERC has been able to handle more datasets, carry out specific projects and complete surveys that simply wouldn’t have been possible without volunteer time.

In return, we hope our volunteers have enjoyed their experiences and learnt new things. Two of our recent volunteers, Rebecca Pringle and James Gillespie told us about their experiences of volunteering with TVERC.

Rebecca Pringle

I have been volunteering at TVERC since June this year. I actually changed my job to volunteer here as I thought it

was very important to get back to being actively involved in conservation. I met some of the team at the Recorders’ Day in February at the Natural History Museum and they seemed like a great bunch of people.

Since starting, I have created and reformatted citations for the Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire. This has made it easier for the team to do data searches in Berkshire. I have formatted data to be input into Recorder and I am currently creating a GIS layer for habitat information which is sent in along with species survey data to TVERC from various sources.

I had previously only briefly used GIS systems so I have learnt a lot on how to navigate around MapInfo. Volunteering at TVERC has strengthened my CV and made me more confident to apply for jobs I thought I wouldn’t have a chance at.

James Gillespie

My first tasks at TVERC ranged from validating species data to maintaining, updating and creating new layers in MapInfo for their Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). This involved everything from inputting species data from phase one ecological survey reports into their database to preparing maps for LWS surveys.



James Gillespie

Once I had become comfortable with the systems used at TVERC I was able to assist with the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) for West Berkshire. The AWI involved using current aerial photography and many historic maps of West Berkshire to

confirm that an area had been continuously wooded since the 1600s.

I learnt a great deal during my time at TVERC. Validating species data improved my knowledge of UK flora and fauna. Working on the LWS I was able to improve my GIS skills through using MapInfo for many tasks, like layer creating, polygon manipulation and thematic mapping, along with learning how biodiversity data is collected, managed and used. Working on the AWI really helped to

improve my map and photo interpretation skills, through identifying and defining ancient woodland.

Having the opportunity to work in a professional environment with the range of expertise TVERC has benefited me in many ways. From improving my biodiversity and geodiversity knowledge to increasing my confidence with GIS software. One unexpected benefit was developing my photo and map interpretation skills while working on the AWI. This is something that is now a large part of my current job as a Remote Sensing Surveyor with Ordnance Survey.

You may recognise our new **Volunteer Coordinator**

because Caroline was also the temporary Project Manager while Camilla was away. This is a new role that requires Caroline to coordinate and develop

our volunteer programme, recruit, train and support volunteers and to liaise with existing recording groups to facilitate data sharing with TVERC. So if you haven't met her yet,



Caroline Coleman

and you are involved with volunteering and recording for us, you are more than likely to soon!

Meet our new Biodiversity Data assistant

Yolanda Vazquez will be joining TVERC as a Biodiversity Data Assistant in January 2016. Prior to joining TVERC Yolanda attended several of the TVERC run training courses on species and habitat survey and identification techniques, and volunteered in the office inputting and validating ecological data.

Most recently Yolanda worked as a Commons Registration and Rights of Way Assistant for Oxfordshire County Council, where she enhanced her administration skills and was able to further develop her experience with GIS software.

Yolanda has a Masters degree in Biodiversity, Conservation and Ecotourism and has worked in the environmental sector for 6 years. She has worked on a variety of projects both overseas and in the UK. She has been involved in environmental research projects in



Yolanda Vazquez

South East Asia ranging from monitoring macaque behaviour to carrying out coral reef surveys as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

As part of a training placement with Birdlife International in Spain, Yolanda gained a wide range of wetland habitat practical conservation experience, as well as being heavily involved with visitor engagement at the site. It also provided a great opportunity to develop her bird identification skills in the wonderful wetland Nature Reserve in the Delta del Ebro in Tarragona.

More locally, Yolanda has worked as a Conservation Assistant for a small charity called Action for the River Kennet.

Yolanda is very excited to be joining the TVERC team and is looking forward to getting stuck in to her new role in 2016.

“TVERC download data from I-Record and LivingRecord so you don't need to send us those records again.”

“If you use a different online recording website or app, please download the data in a .csv file and email it to us.”

“Please don't enter records into more than one online recording tool or submit them to us in more than one format, as that could result in us having multiple copies of the same record.”

Online Recording sightings.tverc.org

Our online recording site has been up and running since September 2015 and we have received over 2350 records from the site. James Acworth wins the virtual prize for best photos (see below) - thanks James!

Several local recording groups have their own page on the site. Groups that have taken up this function include The Bracknell Forest Owl Box Group, the Cherwell Swift Group and the Friends of the Trap Grounds.

Have you used our online recording website?

If you're not already using online recording, perhaps you could try our website?

TVERC's online recording system allows you to enter records quickly and easily.

By letting TVERC know what you have seen, your records can inform a variety of exciting biodiversity projects in the region and help people make informed decisions about how to manage land sustainably.

On the sightings website you can:

- Update your personal records
- View recent records
- Enter single records or lists
- Record at your local patch
- Choose favourite taxa

Give it a go and help us to make your records count in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Sightings Website Highlight

James Acworth recently submitted a record on our online sighting website of an otter, swimming around in the river in broad day light at Folly Bridge in Oxford.



Large numbers of the BAP/Section 41 Earthtongue fungus *Microglossum olivaceum* have been found at Aston Rowant. There were between several hundred and a 1000 of these little brown green 'flames' poking out of the turf in the best short

silver spotted skipper breeding slope at the north western end of Flinty Warren. Smaller amounts were also found at Watlington hill.

It is a new species for Aston Rowant and will be added to the species list for Oxfordshire!

The hunt will continue on other suitable sites as the climate for the past few weeks has been just right for fruiting (rainy and still warm in November). So it might be an excellent 'earthtongue year'.

In both places the earthtongues were found sprouting from extremely short, steeply sloping, rabbit-grazed 'chalk heath' vegetation which also produces a range of other important fungi, including waxcaps and fairy clubs.

The Watlington hill ones were found on a Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire official foray, the Aston Rowant ones during an individual surveying trip.

Dr Judy Webb



Photo by Ju8dy Webb



Photo by Jo Schofield

Award for the dragon of Magdalen Wood

The Playful Woodlands project, led by the Oxfordshire Play Association, has been awarded a certificate by the Oxford Preservation Trust, recognising the contribution of this innovative and inspiring project to Oxford. Chairman of the OPT Awards Malcolm Airs described the project as “utterly magical”.

The dragon’s huge, winding body woven from living hazel is over 150 metres long, tempting children and families into Oxford City Council’s Magdalen Wood to play and explore. TOE2 funded the project with a grant provided by Grundon Waste Management, and the dragon was designed and created by Stuart Turner. As well as encouraging the local community to make better use of the woodland, the project has been used to inspire 140 Oxford Brookes Architecture students to create natural installations to encourage more engagement with the outdoors.

Oxfordshire Play Association, Oxford City Council and other partners are looking at ways to take this project forward and to work on other sites.

TOE2 GRANT PROGRAMMES

Funding for biodiversity enhancements in Thame and the Vale District

This funding has been provided by South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council for biodiversity enhancements. TOE2 is inviting applications from local not-for-profit organisations involved with projects on sites with public access and benefiting the local community.

Project call in the Thame area – Funding is available for access and/or biodiversity improvements at a publicly accessible green space in Thame. The project might include creating or improving wildlife habitats, creating or improving access and rights of way, or purchase of land.

Funding of £5,532 is available specifically for a project that fits these criteria, but applications for larger sums up to about £10,000 may also be considered.

Project call in the Vale District - We are seeking applications from local organisations seeking to carry out improvements to benefit wildlife species or habitats or create new wildlife habitats at a new or existing orchard. The project could involve the creation of a wildflower meadow within an orchard setting or the creation of a new community orchard.

Funding of £2,237 is available specifically for a project that fits these criteria, but applications for larger sums may also be considered.

Third party funding—If you are applying for a grant from the Landfill Communities Fund, TOE2 has funds available to be used as third party funding to support your application. Please contact us for further details.

General environmental grant scheme—The next deadline for applications to our environmental grant scheme is the 11 January 2016. Most grants are up to £5,000 but some exceptional projects are awarded up to £10,000. Thanks to Grundon Waste Management and Oxfordshire County Council for supporting the TOE2 grant scheme.

TOE2 invites applications for projects that;

- Promote and improve biodiversity
- Support Oxfordshire’s Low Carbon Agenda through encouraging energy efficiency and the sustainable use of renewable resources in community facilities
- Improve access to green spaces and the countryside

Fiona Danks

Please contact us if you would like to discuss your project ideas or for more information on any aspect of our work - 01865 407003 or admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk or visit our website www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk. For latest news follow us on twitter @TOE2_Oxon.

Highlights of Local Wildlife Site Surveys 2015

This year TVERC carried out surveys of 41 existing and proposed Local Wildlife Sites in Oxfordshire. Thanks to the help of our volunteers, specialist species group surveys were completed on several sites for birds, butterflies, other invertebrates and fungi.

We've started the species data entry, with over 4400 records added so far.

Sites surveyed include Pinsley Wood, an ancient woodland in West Oxfordshire, where Herb Paris and Meadow Saffron, both on the

Oxfordshire Rare Plant Register, were found in an area of recently thinned plantation. Other less common species seen include early purple-orchid and abundant thin-spiked wood sedge which was seen along the rides. This woodland has a large number of ancient woodland indicator species; these are species that depend on the kind of stable conditions that ancient woodland can provide, 34 of these were recorded during this survey.

Meadow Farm, Blackthorn is a Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) reserve in Cherwell. The site consists of 5 fields all with ridge and furrow indicating that they have not been ploughed. The rare True Fox-Sedge is recorded here along with many species typical of unimproved grassland such as Dropwort, Saw-wort, Great Burnet, Tubular Water-dropwort and Ragged-robin

Bozedown Basin is a chalk grassland in South Oxfordshire. It has a good range species indicative of unimproved conditions including pyramidal orchid, clustered bellflower, greater knapweed, common rock-rose, horseshoe vetch, fairy flax, mouse-ear hawkweed, cowslip, large thyme, basil thyme and squinancywort.



Basil thyme and squinancywort
at Bozedown Basin

In Berkshire. 27 sites were surveyed; 4 by volunteers. A highlight was Giant's Steps in West Berks. At first glance the site seemed not especially species-rich, but when the 'plateau' area in the centre of the site was reached, we were greeted by a riot of colourful wildflowers, clouds of butterflies, and a veritable carpet of Common Spotted and Pyramidal Orchids.

We surveyed a wide range of sites located in all corners of the county. These included:

- * Several ancient woodlands, with carpets of bluebells and open grassy rides.
- * Wildflower strewn grasslands exhibiting a profusion of colour and clouds of butterflies.
- * Urban wildlife havens offering sanctuary to birds, insects, mammals and reptiles.



Marbled white butterflies in species rich calcareous grassland in West Berkshire

Several sites had undergone successful programs of restoration over the last few years, and many were evidently well used and loved by local visitors.

Julie Kerans and Katherine Holmes

Oxon and Berks Biodiversity Officers, TVERC



Herb Paris in Pinsley Wood

"Thanks to the help of our volunteers, specialist species group surveys were completed on several sites for birds, butterflies, other invertebrates and fungi."



True Fox-sedge at Meadow Farm

Mission: Wild Town

"We're on a mission to give people the chance to play, learn and enjoy nature in their local green space."

A few years ago I became worried. I was strolling around my favourite wild space in my local park and realised that save for a few dog walkers and the odd jogger, there was nobody to be seen. As a kid, I spent loads of time outdoors, collecting conkers, climbing trees and discovering bugs. Despite living in a town, we were allowed to roam. Nowadays children are spending most of their time indoors at home or school, often hooked on digital media and cosseted by overly worried parents. I set up Nature Nurture CIC back in 2011 and I'm striving to bring back the Wild to the Child.



Over the last 4 years we have gained funding from local authorities, lottery and corporates and have delivered Family Wild Days, teacher training and wild theatre in Reading's parks and woodlands. We've worked with The Land Trust, BBC Learning and The National Trust, providing consultancy, community engagement tools, workshops and training, all geared around engaging urban dwellers with their local green space.

"In our experience, once you ignite the nature spark, it can last a lifetime."

According to *Natural England's Diversity Review 2015*, in terms of engaging with the natural environment, "... the under-represented groups were found to be disabled people, black and minority ethnic people, people who live in inner city areas and young people."



This is pertinent to our town of Reading. Our events attract a diverse crowd; people from both affluent and deprived backgrounds and an amazing cultural diversity. Our partnerships with Children's Centres and 'special needs' schools means we offer nature experiences to those who may not otherwise have the opportunity.

My recent consultancy work for Intelligent Health, a company headed by Dr. William Bird (Strategic Health Advisor for Natural England, author RSPB's report, *Natural Thinking*) involves engaging key players in the conservation sector to co-develop a strategy to improve health and wellbeing by connecting urban people with nature.

So what's this got to do with TVERC?

We attended TVERC AGM this year and we believe we can help bridge the gap between conservation organisations and everyday people. We can help park managers engage people in valuing and looking after their green spaces. We have devised creative ways of engaging the next generation; the future custodians of nature and believe that partnership working is the way forward. We would love to hear from anyone who is interested in working with us or any local recorders who would like to give young people the chance to explore and record the biodiversity of their local green space.

Natalie Ganpatsingh,
Director, Nature Nurture

www.nature-nurture.co.uk

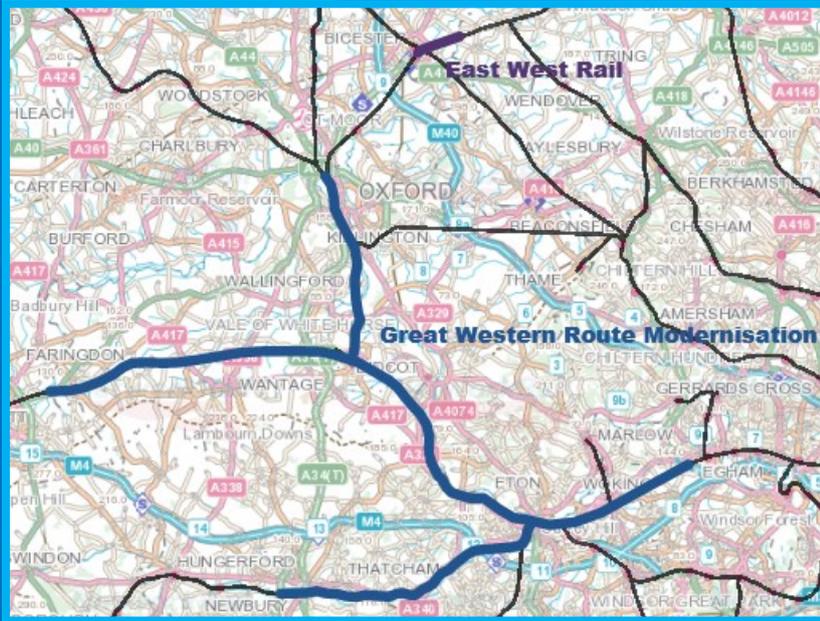
**nature
nurture**
explore. discover. create.



Photos by Natalie Ganpatsingh

Call for Biodiversity Project Ideas

Network Rail has committed to achieve “a measurable net positive contribution to biodiversity in the UK” and two pilot projects fall within Berkshire and Oxfordshire.



“Network Rail are seeking suggestions for potential biodiversity projects from those interested in partnering with them”

Great Western Route Modernisation is, at this stage, looking for a mosaic of native species-rich woodland and scrub.

All offset projects should:

- Make a contribution to a local and/or regional conservation strategy for example Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.
- Be as local to the site of loss as possible;
- Be an in-kind offset that achieves like-for-better (i.e. native species-rich scrub with native, species-rich woodland or grassland mosaic) ;
- Deliver additional conservation outcomes that would not have otherwise occurred;
- Deliver real and long-term benefits for biodiversity;
- Be undertaken in partnership and involve local communities and interest groups; and
- Be designed and delivered for the long-term, preferably in-perpetuity.

Suggestions are needed by the end of January 2016.

Those with ideas can get in touch with:
Lucie Anderton—East West (Oxfordshire).
Lucie.Anderton@networkrail.co.uk or
07920508349

Emmanuel Deschamps - Great Western (Oxon and Berks).

Emmanuel.deschamps@networkrail.co.uk

or 07711601208

While these projects are working hard to avoid and reduce losses within the project boundary, it is possible that some off-setting projects will be necessary. They are seeking suggestions for potential biodiversity projects from those interested in partnering with them.

East West Rail is looking for native species-rich scrub that is appropriate for the locality, of high environmental value and, in places, should incorporate a mosaic of native species-rich woodland and/or species-rich grassland. This project is also looking for hedgerow creation.

The Cherwell Swift Conservation Project Annual Report

The Cherwell Swift Conservation Project has published its latest annual report. In Oxford, several thriving colonies have been found following surveys this year. At Bloxham, 13 nesting pairs were found at Bloxham School. Nest boxes have been installed at Stanton St John Church and swifts have also been seen around nest boxes at Bodicote.

Caroline Coleman

Friends of Milham Ford Nature Park Photo Competition Winner!

Marilyn Cox, who maintains the website for Friends of Milham Ford Nature Park (FOMFNP) has won DEFRA's Biodiversity News 2015 Competition as can be seen here.

The photograph was taken in Milham Ford Nature Park and is being used for the front cover of issue 70, Autumn 2015 Edition of Biodiversity News.

Another photo from the nature park, taken by Judy Webb, was a runner up in the competition and can be seen on page 3 of the same edition.



Berkshire Local Nature Partnership

It's now almost a year since I took the helm of this organisation, and it has been a tough one. Soon after I was appointed our officer departed for new pastures and we were not immediately in a position to re-appoint. Restructuring at BBOWT meant that they were unable to continue hosting the organisation, and a shortage of funds prevented us from finding other options. Happily we now have enough to be able to fund a post, though we are still without a partner organisation to provide us with office space and some HR oversight. I am in dialogue with a couple of our partners to explore possibilities and sincerely hope to have some good news to report to our next meeting in January.

Nationally the LNPs are struggling to carve out a role for themselves, and the majority are also challenged by the lack of core resources. I have written to the minister and DEFRA (jointly with the other LNPs) and to my local MP about the need for Government support, but with the recent round of cuts to the environment budget, there is

little hope of this changing. We are in the invidious position of having been set up as a collective voice for protecting and enhancing the natural environment in a climate where there is very little support from the centre. It is an extremely frustrating situation to be in.

However, we are still here, and it must be better to do something than do nothing at all. If we can progress to recruitment, we can begin to deliver and to raise our profile, which will make it easier for me to work at a more strategic level to chase long-term, sustainable funding and to make a stronger case for the priceless resources of which we are guardians.

In the meantime, if I struggle to keep up with emails etc. on my ancient laptop, please bear with me and hope for better times to come.

Isobel Collyer—Chair of Executive Board
Berkshire Local Nature Partnership
www.BerkshireLNP.org

The Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire

The ANHSO Education Group brochure for 2016 is now available. The Society runs comprehensive courses on plant identification. If you would like to get to grips with botany, this could be the way to do it. For further information on all courses phone 01865 863660, email educationgroup@anhso.org.uk, or it can also be found to download on the TVERC website here: <http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/anhso-education-group-brochure-2016-now-available>

Caroline Coleman

Save the Date

On Saturday 27th February 2016

At Oxford University Museum of Natural History

TVERC Spring Recorders Day

Theme **Linear Habitats and Pollinators**,

There will be talks and workshops and also the chance for recorder groups to give speed updates. Details on how to book will be on the TVERC website very soon, watch this space...

The Thames and Chilterns Bird Atlas

Ornithological societies across our region (Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire) are collaborating in a new project to give a local spin to data collected as part of the BTO's bird atlas project between 2007 and 2011. The Thames and Chilterns bird atlas will provide distribution maps for breeding and wintering birds at the tetrad (2x2km) scale. Comparisons with the breeding distributions from around 1990 show remarkable increases or decreases in range for many species. For more information please contact: bto-rep@oos.org.uk

John Melling and Renton Righelato



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Volunteer Coordinator: Caroline Coleman

Data Services Officers: Ellen Lee and Graham Hawker

Berkshire Biodiversity Officer: Katherine Holmes

Oxfordshire Biodiversity Officer: Julie Kerans

Biodiversity Data Assistants: Rachael Clemson and Yolanda Vazquez

Administration Officer: Hannah Boylan

If you wish to email any member of staff please use

firstname.surname@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) is one of a national network of Local Records Centres. It aims to: collect, collate and make available information to help people make sound decisions about our natural environment and hold all available information about the plants, animals, wildlife habitats and important wildlife and geological sites in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre is a 'not for profit' operation run by a partnership of the following organisations: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, The Environment Agency, and the following councils: Bracknell Forest Borough, Cherwell District, Oxford City, Oxfordshire County, Reading Borough, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough Borough, South Oxfordshire District, Vale of the White Horse District, West Berkshire District, West Oxfordshire District and Wokingham Borough.