



Photograph by Pat Clissold

# Thames Valley

## Environmental Records Centre



*Sharing environmental information in Berkshire & Oxfordshire*

## Welcome

As the nights start drawing in it's now time to think about getting all those records that you have been collecting over spring and summer into our new online recording website. More information later in the newsletter.

There have been quite a few changes to TVERC staff over the last few months. Camilla went on maternity leave and gave birth to a beautiful boy named Benjamin, Rhys, Gareth

Thomas. Hopefully, they will make an appearance at the office soon so we can meet him and get him started early with spread sheets and GIS!

We also welcomed some new members to the TVERC team; Caroline Coleman who is covering my role as Projects Manager until September and Hannah Boylan who is our new Administration Officer. You can find out more about them in the newsletter.

The team have been busy working on various

projects this year including the Berkshire Ancient Woodland Inventory and dealing with high numbers of data search requests, which seem to be ever rising.

Next year we are hoping to run some training courses on surveying and identification of various species and habitats. So keep your eye out as spaces will be limited.

Hope you all have a lovely Christmas and happy new year.

**Lucy Lush, Acting Director**

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## TVERC Online Recording

Hurrah, after a long gestation period, which makes Camilla's pregnancy look quite short we finally have an online recording site. This can be found at [sightings.tverc.org](http://sightings.tverc.org).



### Sightings @ Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre

*Sharing environmental information in Berkshire and Oxfordshire*

[Main TVERC site](#) | [Latest records](#) | [Wildlife recording](#) | [My account](#) | [Home](#) | [Log out](#)

Once registered you can add single species records or species lists and it uses clever mapping technology to make it easy to find grid references. You can either enter the grid reference and the map goes to the location or you can search for a place, zoom in, and click the map to produce a grid reference. We would welcome any feedback so we can improve the site.

#### Submit a sighting

Date:

Recorder Name:

Identified By:

Species:

Certainty:

Stage:

Quantity:

Comments:

Location:

Or search for a place on the map:

Hubsite:

Comments:



There are a multitude of online recording sites now including iRecord and Living Record. We do collect records from these sites **so the key thing is not to enter records onto more than one site.**

# Magnificent Meadows Campaign



Photograph by Mark Connelly

Help Save Our Magnificent Meadows!

Are you interested in making a difference and helping to conserve and restore your local meadows? Do you enjoy meeting like-minded people, learning new skills and spending time in the great outdoors? If so, there is a new project on your doorstep, which needs your help!

Wildlife-rich grasslands were once widespread throughout the UK, however due to changing land management practices, this habitat has undergone a serious decline. Now only 2% of the meadows that existed in the 1930s remain. The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) contains a significant proportion of this remaining grassland, concentrated along the Cotswold scarp and river valleys.

Save our Magnificent Meadows ([www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk](http://www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk)) is a nationwide partnership project led by Plantlife, which comprises 11 organisations including the Cotswolds Conservation Board (CCB) and is primarily funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project is working with communities to protect, conserve and restore their local meadows.

The Cotswolds element of Save Our Magnificent Meadows is being delivered by the CCB, who are looking to recruit local volunteers and community groups to help carry out practical conservation tasks, species surveys, and run events. Anybody who is interested in helping out should contact Katherine Holmes (the Community Engagement Officer) on [katherine.holmes@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](mailto:katherine.holmes@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk) or 01451 862 038.

The CCB also aims to restore up to 1,125 hectares of wildflower grassland across the Cotswolds by collecting seed from high quality wildflower grasslands and sowing this seed over nearby grasslands of poorer quality. Any landowners interesting in offering up their sites as donor or receptor areas for grassland restoration should contact Eleanor Reast (the Conservation Officer) on [eleanor.reast@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](mailto:eleanor.reast@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk) or 01451 862 036.



Kirtlington Quarry

*“Do you enjoy meeting like-minded people, learning new skills and spending time in the great outdoors?”*

Sweep netting during an invertebrate survey near Crawley



## Highlights from Local Wildlife Site Surveys

This year TVERC carried out surveys of 53 existing and proposed Local Wildlife Sites in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Thanks to the help of our volunteers, specialist species group surveys were also completed on several sites including bird surveys,

butterfly surveys and general invertebrate surveys. Most of the species data has now been entered, with over 6000 records added.

These included Willow meadows which is a species-rich wetland beside the Shill Brook at the western edge of Carterton. Surveys

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carried out in May and July this year found a good range of wildflowers including meadowsweet, black knapweed, common marsh-bedstraw,



**Species-rich wet grassland including abundant black knapweed and meadowsweet at Willow meadows, Carterton.**

greater bird's-foot trefoil and tufted vetch. They also have purple moor-grass which is a less common species in Oxfordshire. The site provides habitat for birds including reed bunting, with 26 bird species recorded during the site visit in May.

We surveyed Wigwell in Charlbury on a rainy day in August. The site is known for its population of meadow clary but the grassland is species-rich also including field scabious, lady's bedstraw, meadow vetchling, salad burnet, bird's-foot-trefoil, common restharrow and burnet saxifrage.

A joint survey of North Leigh Common with the Wychwood Flora Group updated our records for the areas of acid grassland



**Species-rich grassland at Wigwell with field scabious, red bartsia and ladies bedstraw**

that have been restored on the site and found the Oxfordshire Rare Plant Register species trailing St. John's-wort. Acid grassland is a rare habitat in Oxfordshire and this area included a range of typical species such as heather, common centaury, heath bedstraw, tormentil and heath speedwell.

Over in Berkshire we surveyed a range of number of woodland sites from woodlands to wetlands and grasslands. Sites of importance to local wildlife come in all sorts of guises:

- Long established habitats such as the ancient woodlands we visited in Bracknell to young sites (in the grand scheme of ecology) such as Thames Valley Park that over recent decades has been restored from industrial landuse into a high wildlife value nature reserve.
- Small sites such as the Road Side Nature Reserves we surveyed in West Berkshire to large floodplains and parks in Reading and Wokingham.
- Highly species diverse single habitats such as chalk grassland to diversity of habitats in former parkland in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

No matter what guise the LWS comes in it is always of high local importance to the wildlife and often the human population too, be that local residents, college students, business park employees or visitors to Berkshire!

**Established natural habitat— Ancient Woodlands in March**



**Trailing St. John's-wort, North Leigh Common**

*“Most of the species data has now been entered, with over 6000 records added.”*

**Created habitat— Thames Valley Park**



# Berkshire Recorders and Local Nature Partnership Conference: Life along Berkshires Rivers



Following the success of last years joint conference with the Berkshire LNP we decided to once again join forces with the LNP and The Oracle. In the morning the LNP launched

recorded in Berkshire in the last year and the news that TVERC online recording is now live the afternoon saw a series of talks centred around Berkshire's rivers. Todd Sullivan from Thames Valley Park kicked off the afternoon demonstrating the importance and value of the nature reserve in the park to wildlife and employees. Lesley Atkinson then gave an overview of a successful project engaging with a wide diversity of people, along the River Lambourn in Newbury (see TVERC Newsletter Summer 2014). Every conference should have a charismatic charterer – this year it was Ratty the water vole brought to us by Julia Lofthouse at BBOWT with an over view of his ecology and status in Berkshire. The day ended with Thames Water providing an array of interesting information of the importance of water and its associated ecology to the region.

Thank you to all those involved, both on the organisation front and the delegates, for making the event a success and once again bringing together people interested in natural history from across Berkshire. Special thanks go to Annie English at the LNP for doing the conference administration and Cliff Hilton at The Oracle for hosting the day.

'The Natural environment in Berkshire: Biodiversity Strategy 2014 – 2020' followed by a talk on Climate Change and Nature. As ever the workshop sessions provided much discussion, this year focusing on 'Working Towards a Shared Vision', with groups considering how we can increase habitat connectivity by encouraging targeted habitat creation in the Berkshire's Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and how to create ways to record the flow of benefits and services that nature provides.

Over lunch, delegates had opportunity to network and view the displays put up by various local natural history groups in Berkshire.

After an initial update on what's been

*"Every conference should have a charismatic character – this year it was Ratty the water vole brought to us by Julia at BBOWT"*

## BS42020 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development

Just over a year ago the British Standards Institution (BSI) launched [BS 42020, Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development](#). The standard will help organizations fulfill their obligation to support local biodiversity targets. It deals with

projects and products that include planning and development of new buildings, also extending to changes in land use – and how these activities impact upon biodiversity.

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Strategies to protect wild flora and fauna are in place for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, with the general objective to halt overall loss of biodiversity by 2020 in line with the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2020 and the UN Aichi biodiversity targets. In England, the streamlined National Planning Policy Framework supersedes much of the previous guidance around biodiversity, so BS 42020 will play a vital role in helping protect and enhance UK biodiversity.

Its coherent methodology for biodiversity management will provide:

- Guidance on how to produce clear and concise ecological information to accompany planning applications
- Recommendations on professional ethics, conduct, competence and judgement to give confidence that proposals for biodiversity conservation, and consequent decisions/actions taken, are sound and appropriate
- Direction on effective decision-making in biodiversity management
- A framework to demonstrate how biodiversity has been managed during the development process to minimize impact

By adopting BS 42020, authorities, developers, planners

**Available from:** BSI Shop <http://shop.bsigroup.com/en/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030258704>

Paper copies can be obtained from BSI Customer Services (Tel. 020 8996 9001 / Email: [subscriptions@bsigroup.com](mailto:subscriptions@bsigroup.com))

and local [government] ecologists will have the necessary information and methodology to make sound decisions on biodiversity issues.

The standard was developed by a committee with representatives from organizations such as the Association of Local Government Ecologists, the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, the Landscape Institute, Defra, the Environment Agency, the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Natural England, the Civil Engineering Contractors Association, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Bat Conservation Trust, and the Association of Wildlife Trusts, as well as experts from the construction industry, ecologists, ethicists and academics.

David Fatscher Head of Market Development for Sustainability at BSI says, "When we plan and construct new buildings we have a responsibility towards the biodiversity in that location. Having a standard like BS 42020 that unifies the reporting procedure for everyone involved in this area, in a clear and consistent manner, means that the government statute and policy for biodiversity can be met. It also demonstrates a real commitment to managing biodiversity and minimizing the impact of development."

## Our new Projects Manager

Caroline Coleman has recently joined TVERC team as a Projects Manager. Before joining TVERC she was a volunteer Biodiversity Conservation Trainee with BBOWT, working with the Trust's biodiversity team to deliver its annual programme of survey and monitoring work. She was involved in a range of work across the three counties, including bird surveys, rapid habitat condition assessments, butterfly transects and surveys for water vole field signs.

She has also volunteered for several years as a bird surveyor for the BTO and RSPB. When she finds time, she is learning the complexities of bird-ringing and has ringed a variety of birds from swifts to mute swans. A memorable experience for her was



**Caroline Coleman—Projects Manager**

ringing gulls on a landfill in Essex, giving her a lasting admiration for these intelligent, feisty birds.

Last year she completed a Master's degree in Ornithology. For her research dissertation she used ringing and observational data to look for changes in movement and distribution patterns of herring gulls in relation to human

changes in their environment. Separate collection of food waste means less makes its way to landfills, previously a much-used resource by gulls. Meanwhile, deterrence and extermination are also increasingly used to remove gulls from landfills, reservoirs and urban environments.

She is enjoying meeting and working with many of our recorders in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, working on a variety of projects for TVERC. She hopes to meet some of you at the Oxfordshire Recorders' Conference on 28th February 2015.

**"She hopes to meet some of you at the Oxfordshire Recorders' Conference on 28th February 2015."**

# iSpot—Helping People Learn about Wildlife Identification

iSpot ([www.ispotnature.org](http://www.ispotnature.org)) from The Open University is the website that helps people learn about wildlife identification, by enabling novices, enthusiastic naturalists and experts to meet online. Nearly 50,000 people worldwide have joined iSpot, sharing nearly 300,000 observations of wildlife and helping each other learn which species is which, and why.

## What iSpot can do for you

If you've seen a plant, animal or fungus that you can't identify, or want to get confirmation of an identification, take a photo (or several if you can) and add it to iSpot. Once you've registered on the site just click "Add an observation". Give a description of where you found it and make an initial identification if you can. Usually you'll get a swift response from the community of iSpotters – over 50% of observations get an answer within an hour, nearly 90% within a day! Thanks to all who volunteer their time to make this possible: expert identifiers, experienced enthusiasts and keen novices alike.

## What you can do for iSpot

If you are experienced at identifying even a few species you're in a good position to help others who may be starting out on an interest in wildlife. If you can spare a little time to add identifications or comments to other people's observations on iSpot you can pass on your knowledge and encourage

them to further their interest. Although iSpot's main



iRecord system to develop ways of making the data more widely available to records centres.

So if you have records of wildlife that you have already identified, they should go directly to the recording schemes that you are working with. But if you're seeking help with identification, or can spare some time to help others, you're very welcome on iSpot.

*"If you've seen a plant, animal or fungus that you can't identify, or want to get confirmation of an identification, take a photo (or several if you can) and add it to iSpot."*

purpose is to help people learn how to identify wildlife, rather than as an online recording system, iSpot observations do constitute records and we are keen to make the data available where relevant. Some of this data has been passed to national recording schemes and we are working with the

If you have any questions about iSpot, or would like us to set up a 'badge' for your scheme or society, please contact Martin Harvey at The Open University ([Martin.Harvey@open.ac.uk](mailto:Martin.Harvey@open.ac.uk)).

## Our New Administration Officer

Hannah Boylan joined TVERC in November 2014. Prior to this she spent a year as a full time mother to her two boys aged 2 and 6 whilst relocating from Derbyshire to Oxfordshire. Hannah has a Countryside Management Foundation Degree and has many years of administration



**Hannah Boylan**  
Administration Officer

experience. She has been employed in the environmental sector for over 10 years, having worked for British Waterways (now The Canal and River Trust), The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and URS Corporation Consultancy in roles varying from GIS assistant to ecologist.

# Cherwell District Habitat Mapping

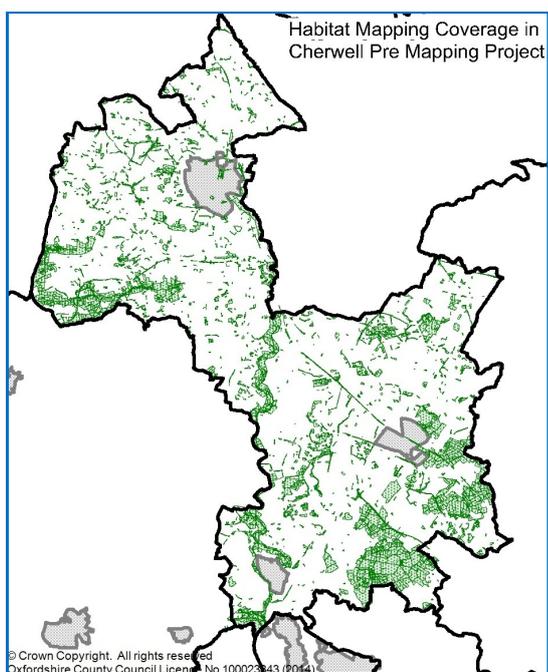
Earlier this year Cherwell District Council commissioned TVERC to complete the habitat mapping for the District using aerial photography. Throughout Oxfordshire mapping has been patchy, mainly confined to Conservation Target Areas and Designated Sites with some habitats such as floodplain grazing, marsh, traditional orchards and woodland in Cherwell District mapped more widely.

The Council are working on their local plan so it is

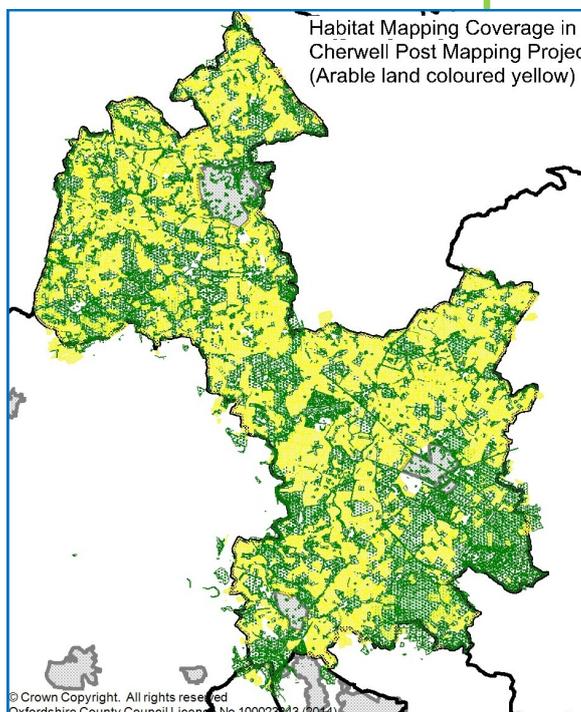
5,027 ha to 63,637 ha. Most NERC Act Section 41 habitat of principle importance increased in mapped area while ponds of high ecological value, rivers and open mosaic habitat of previously developed land were mapped for the first time.

It is not surprising that much of Cherwell District is arable and agriculturally improved grassland. However, it is also surprising what a close examination of aerial

connects to the golf course, with its lowland acid grassland and the



photographs can show. Quite a number of sites especially along the valleys in the north showed good potential and small patches of fen and potentially interesting grassland habitat are present throughout. The most interesting area was near Shutford where the valley to the west looks to have interesting grassland and fen habitat. A large area of land running north from



important to identify and map priority habitat and potential priority habitat to ensure that it is protected from development. The total amount of habitat now mapped in Cherwell has increased from

the River Swere Valley to Wigginton Heath seems to have a number of potentially interesting areas again with grassland and fen. This

adjacent Banbury Ornithological Society Reserve.

However, the mapping also revealed some small losses of potential priority habitats. Part of a Local Wildlife Site had been incorporated into a development and a potentially interesting looking rushy field at Ambrosden had already been developed.

This highlights the importance of knowing what habitats you have so that you can ensure protection against proposed future development.



*“ The most interesting area was near Shutford where a valley looks to have grassland and fen habitat similar to that found scattered through the area”*

# Oxfordshire Recorders Conference

## 'Recording the Invisible'

28th February 2015  
Oxford University  
Museum of Natural  
History, Parks Road,  
Oxford OX1 3PW

£10 for students/volunteer  
recorders, £15 for  
professionals (lunch not  
included). Tea/coffee and  
cake provided.

We are all used to  
surveying the things that  
we see around us, either  
species or habitats, but  
what do you do when you can't  
see what you are monitoring?  
This conference explores a range  
of approaches taken to record

the presence or absence of the  
difficult to detect. This is the  
annual updating and networking  
event for species recording and  
nature conservation in  
Oxfordshire. The day will include  
guest speakers, workshops and  
an open floor session for updates  
from individuals, recording  
groups and organisations on  
notable sightings, events, courses  
and new projects.

**Booking required, please contact  
Hannah Boylan, 01865 815479 or  
tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk for a  
booking form.**

**Attendees at  
last years  
conference**



# Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire

**ANHSO courses are now being advertised.  
In particular bespoke habitat related courses  
may be interesting to local recorders and  
interest groups.**

The courses are tailored to particular habitats,  
and also to the participants. A pilot course ran  
in 2014 was a success and they are now offer-  
ing such courses to interested groups. They  
could, for example provide a course in a  
woodland or a chalk grassland or on a particu-  
lar wildlife reserve or other site. If you've  
been thinking that you would like any kind of  
plant recognition or identification course for a  
particular purpose, they can probably provide  
it, so do get in touch with them; they are able  
to adapt the approach to the situation. Please  
email [educationgroup@anhso.org.uk](mailto:educationgroup@anhso.org.uk) or  
phone 01865 863660 if you would like more  
information.



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If you wish to email any member of staff please use  
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For Helen please use [helens.miller](mailto:helens.miller).

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, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Cherwell District Council, Natural  
England, The Environment Agency, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Reading Borough Council, Royal Borough  
of Windsor and Maidenhead Council, Slough Borough Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of the White Horse  
District Council, West Berkshire District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Wokingham Borough Council.