



Thames Valley

Environmental Records Centre



Sharing environmental information in Berkshire and Oxfordshire

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter

TVERC have had a busy summer moving out of our office in Eynsham and settling into Speedwell House in Oxford city centre. Speedwell House is a temporary office as there are plans to move all staff out, but we are unsure exactly when that will be. So as a team we've spent more time working in different locations on our laptops, whilst ensuring we still see each other often enough to be a team!

We've had some staff changes too, with Rachael Clemson our Data Assistant leaving us for Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre and Caroline Coleman our Volunteer Coordinator leaving us for BBOWT. However we're pleased that Katherine Lister, our new Data Assistant has settled in well and that Zoe Caals has just started as our new Recording Coordinator. We also heard the great news that Katherine Holmes' baby, Rowan, was born on the 1st of September. He weighed 7lb 14 ounces and we're pleased to have another potential biological surveyor and recorder in the making!

It's been great to receive applications for the newly reinstated Recorders' Fund (administered by TOE2 on our behalf) and I hope that more recording groups will take advantage of this funding over the coming years, as well as our informal recording days, conferences and training courses.

Looking to the future, there are, as usual, changes afoot. Local government is continuing to make savings in its budgets and all local authorities are fundamentally changing the way they function. Development remains buoyant, but negotiations around the UK's exit from the EU could impact the economy. New technologies and ways of working present both opportunities and challenges. However, despite all of the uncertainty, high quality data and information will continue to be vital in the sustainable management of the natural environment. Our new business plan sets out both the challenges and opportunities for TVERC over the next five years and is available on our website here: <http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/business-planning>

Camilla Burrow, Director

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Recorders' conferences	2
Oxford Swift City	3
Volunteer field days	3
TVERC project highlights	4-5
Neighbourhood plan support	6
TOE2 and Network Rail	7
School bioblitz / TVERC training	8



TVERC Recorders' Conferences in 2017

TVERC's bi-annual updating and networking events for species recording and nature conservation have become key events for many recorders and conservationists across Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

The **2017 Spring Recorders' Conference** took place on 4th March 2017 at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Wallingford and was attended by 58 people. The event was themed around "**Wildlife Restoration**". Speakers included Lisa Lane of BBOWT, who shared her experience restoring meadows at Chimney Meadows reserve which showed that the

techniques used can be successful even on arable land. This was followed later in the day by a thought-provoking talk on water vole reintroductions by Merryl Gelling of WILDCRU. Throughout the day there were sessions for short speed updates from local recording groups – a total of 21 – covering project news, survey initiatives and interesting species recorded. The afternoon included a choice from four workshops covering swifts, hedgerows, social media and participatory mapping. The day included plenty of time for discussions, networking over lunch and refreshment breaks and to look around the many displays brought by local and national groups. It was notable that many of the recorder group presentations sought extra volunteer help with surveys or other activities.



Lucy Hyde, Oxford Swift City Project, RSPB



Lawrence Bee launching the new book *British Spiders: A Field Guide*

This partly decided the theme for our **Autumn Recorders' Conference: "Our Common Cause: Clubbing together for conservation"**.

This has just been held, on Saturday 7th October in Reading, with the venue kindly provided again by Oracle. We know we need to collaborate with each other to get the best from our recording effort and lend strength to conservation actions. This conference offered the opportunity to hear from successful projects where joint working has been a central part. It included key presentations by Martin Moore on catchment co-operation initiatives that the Loddon Fisheries and Conservation Consultative have been involved in, plus Dr Jeremy Biggs of Freshwater Habitats Trust updating us on developments in Great Crested Newt conservation. The day followed the same format as this seems to work well, providing a varied pace and ways in which everyone can participate. Thanks so much to everyone attending and contributing.

Visit our website (www.tverc.org/cms/content/recorders-conferences) for more details.

Previous experience has told us that the events are most successful when they have input from recorders – these are, and should be, recorders' conferences.

Feedback, ideas and offers of support are always welcome.



Attendees at the 2017 Spring Recorders Conference, CEH Wallingford

**DIARY
NOTE: The
2018 Spring
Conference
will be held
on 10
March
2018, CEH,
Wallingford**

Oxford Swift City takes flight!

May 2017 saw the launch of the Oxford Swift City project aimed at improving the outlook for swifts by increasing the number of nest sites across the city. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, this RSPB-led project is supported by many local partners, including ourselves here at TVERC plus Oxford University, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Oxford City Council, Environment Resources Management and the local Wildlife Trust (BBOWT).

There are lots of ways to get involved in this exciting project whether flagging that you've put up a nest box or simply recording your swift sightings on our inventory at www.rspb.org.uk/swiftsurvey. As project partners, TVERC has created a recording group where you can log your sightings of foraging swifts: <http://sightings.tverc.org>. A brief list of instructions and screenshots is [provided here](#).

As part of the summer's activities the project held a competition to [design a 'Swift Tower'](#) – a free-standing structure that provides lots of additional boxes for swifts to nest in. Subject to approval, the winning design by Jonathan Wheeler will be constructed in Oxford University Park. To find out more about Oxford Swift City and how to get involved, please contact the Oxford Swift City Project Officer, by emailing oxfordswiftcity@rspb.org.uk.



Volunteer Field Days

Local Wildlife Site surveys are one of the core services that TVERC provides for local authorities in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. We carried out a total of 68 LWS surveys in 2015/16 and organised **volunteer surveyors** to carry out



specialist surveys for dragonflies, butterflies, general invertebrates, hymenoptera, fungi, bryophytes and birds. The survey reports from LWS are taken to site selection panels which meet once a year.

Although some surveys are carried out by individual recorders by arrangement with TVERC and the landowners, we also hold occasional **group surveys days**. These days enable us to increase the species list for a particular site and to share knowledge and experience amongst those who are present. In 2016, a

visit to Combe Fen in Oxfordshire was attended by eight staff and volunteers and resulted in a comprehensive list of species, most notably including good numbers of mosses, flowering plants and invertebrates. Caroline Coleman was particularly delighted to have a chance to practice her slug identification!

TVERC is also ran a very enjoyable **'Field skills for recorders'** day on Thursday 20th July at Wytham Woods, Oxfordshire. The aim of such days is for us to meet informally to practice survey and identification skills and, for those with greater experience (staff of volunteers) to share with others. It was a great day, this time with rather an entomological focus, and included an introduction to the **"Flower-Insect Timed Count" (FIT Count) methodology** given by Martin Harvey. We hope that events like this will provide a stepping stone for people who attend our training courses or have an interest in recording but want a bit more support to get started.

FIT counts are part of the national Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS). To take part, recorders are asked to spend ten minutes counting all the insects that land on a particular flower species, within a 50cm square. You only need to identify insects to a broad species group (e.g. honeybees; bumblebees; hoverflies etc.). Full details and supporting materials are available from the CEH website: www.ceh.ac.uk/our-science/projects/pollinator-monitoring

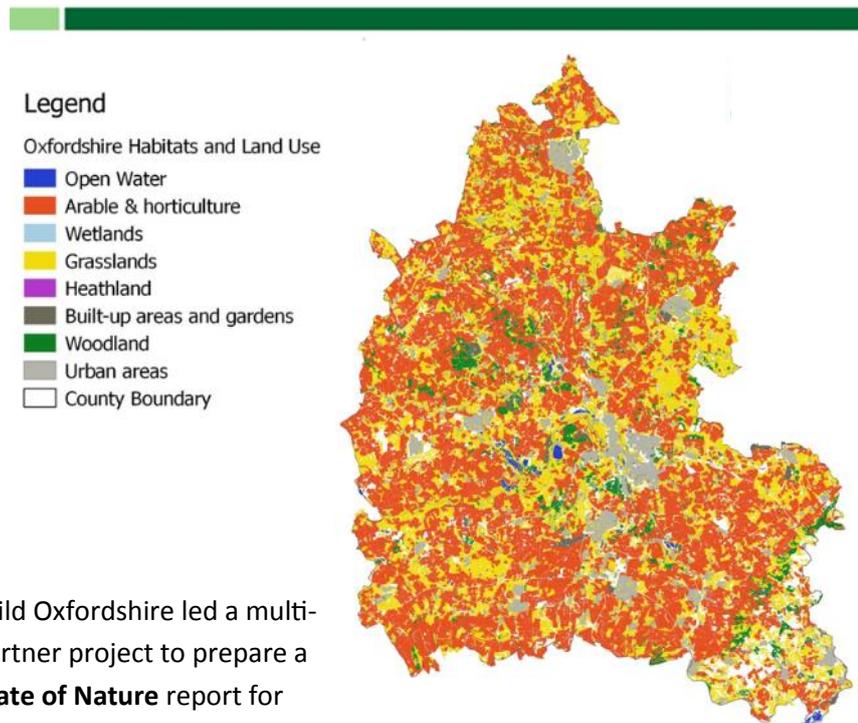
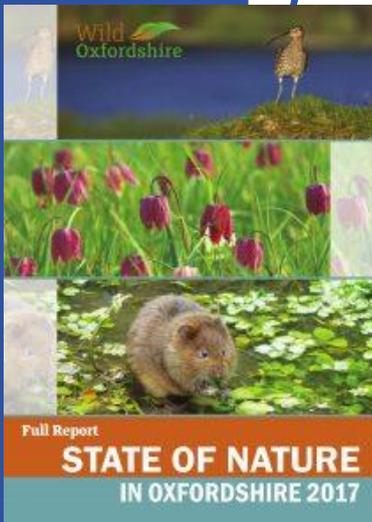
What TVERC have been up to

TVERC carries out a wide variety of projects, including carrying out surveys, analysing data and presenting the results in a user-friendly format. The results of these projects can be used by our funders to make sound decisions about where to direct conservation effort, how best to manage land and where to direct development to minimise impacts on the natural environment. See our online version Annual Report 2016-17 for a comprehensive list and summary

[http://www.tverc.org/cms/sites/tverc/files/documents/TVERC%20Annual%20Report 2016-17.pdf](http://www.tverc.org/cms/sites/tverc/files/documents/TVERC%20Annual%20Report%202016-17.pdf)

Examples and highlights include.....

Oxon State of Nature



Wild Oxfordshire led a multi-partner project to prepare a

State of Nature report for

Oxfordshire which was

launched in March 2017. TVERC provided additional data, analysis, mapping and checking of the draft report. The best information currently available has been used to paint a picture of the state of Oxfordshire's natural habitats and species, including long-term trends as well as more recent losses and gains. As well as the full report a 'highlights' version is available. Both reports look at five broad habitat categories that encompass the full diversity of habitats found across the county.

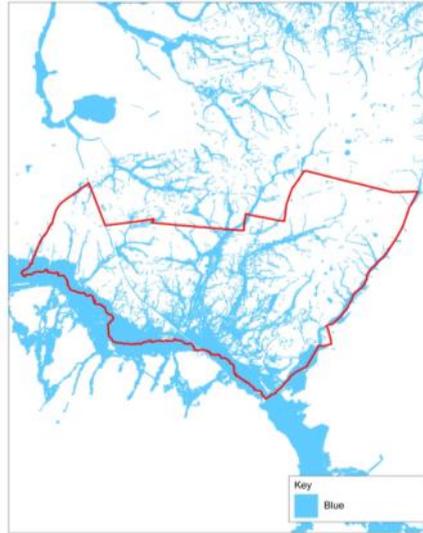
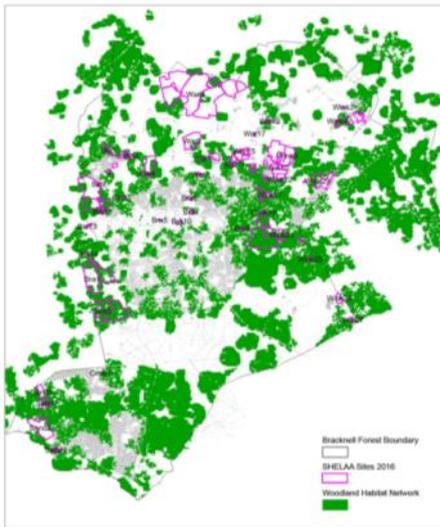
<https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/stateofnature/reports/>

Bracknell Forest Green Infrastructure audit

Opportunities on SHELAA sites for improving woodland habitat connectivity



Sandhurst Parish
GI Type: Blue



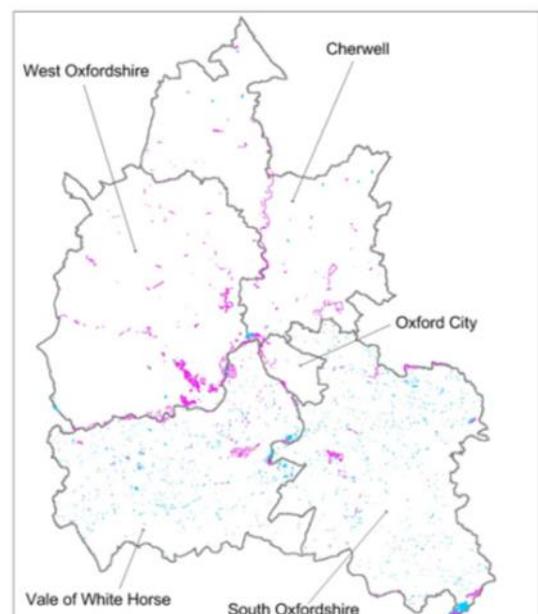
TVERC reviewed the Green Infrastructure resource in Bracknell Forest and identified deficits and opportunities for GI provision as part of the new Local Plan.

Great-crested newt ponds

South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse District Councils commissioned TVERC to provide an up-to-date map of ponds for the region. The project will allow both Councils to begin the process of planning for a potential change in the way Natural England (NE) issue European Protected Species licences, when such species are affected by development. NE are proposing to move towards a landscape approach to favourable conservation status for Great Crested Newts (GCN), whereby there is a coordinated approach to protecting and enhancing habitats for GCN, rather than a case-by-case approach to mitigating and compensating for the impacts of development on individual newts.



TVERC have mapped 2,956 ponds in South and Vale from OS MasterMap polygons and aerial photography interpretation. The map shows newly mapped ponds and other waterbodies in blue across South and Vale with existing mapped waterbodies shown in pink. The map clearly shows the increase in mapped waterbodies in South and Vale compared with the other Districts and vastly improves that baseline information. Cherwell District Council has since commissioned TVERC to complete waterbody mapping for their District.

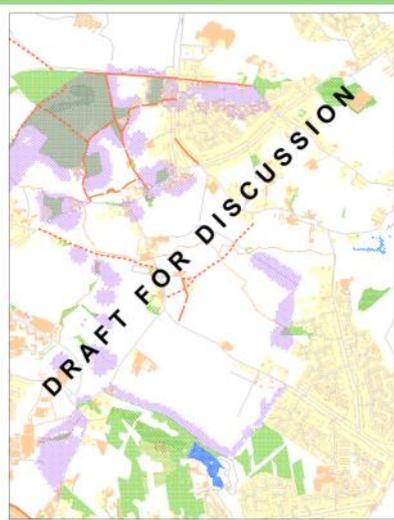
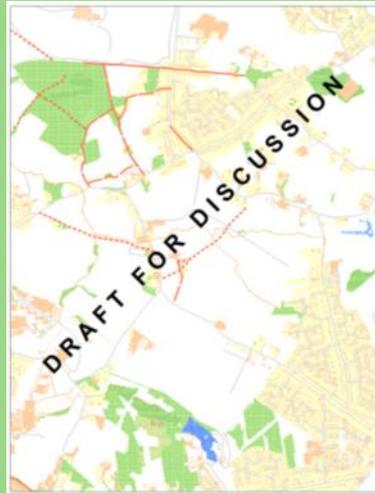


Parish Wildlife Corridors

We're reaching new audiences to help them understand the importance of conserving our natural environment and how TVERC can help them. For example, we've been working with some Neighbourhood Plan groups to help them identify green corridors within their parishes. Contact us if you would like more information.

Green corridors work best if they link public access with habitat networks. TVERC will identify and map habitat networks of connected habitat in your area.

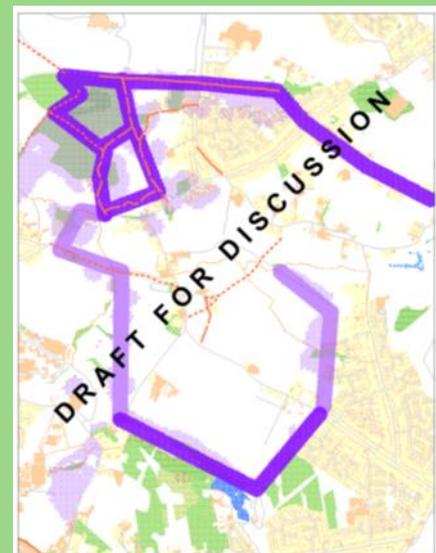
TVERC use our database of priority habitats and public Rights of Way to identify potential green corridors .



Connected habitat network

TVERC model how well connected habitats patches are for wildlife using a cost-distance approach. The result of this is a map of the connected habitat networks.

TVERC combine these habitat networks with information on Public Rights of Way to create maps of the potential green corridors in your area.



Green Network

	Green Corridors - Existing
	Green Corridors - potential



To help you identify finalised green corridors, TVERC will run a workshop with your neighbourhood plan group. This will involve drawing proposed green corridors on maps using your local knowledge and TVERC's expertise. From this TVERC will produce digitised maps of green corridors for inclusion in your local plan.



Achieving No Net Loss of Biodiversity on the Greater West Programme

NEW FUNDING!

The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2) and Network Rail are working together to offer an exciting major funding opportunity for biodiversity in Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

Network Rail Infrastructure Projects (IP) is committed to a "measurable net positive contribution towards biodiversity in the UK". No Net Loss to Biodiversity on the Greater West Programme (TGWP) is a pilot project, putting principle into practice by compensating for unavoidable habitat loss (mainly young semi-natural woodland and some scrub) during the electrification programme.

Funding is available for the creation and improvement of similar habitats to those that have been lost, including funds for up to three years aftercare, in the vicinity of the railway line, a process known as "biodiversity offsetting".

Independent environmental funder TOE2 is working with Network Rail to deliver No Net Loss (NNL) funding in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. TOE2 is a charity supporting local environmental projects, offering expertise in identifying and running projects effectively. Although TOE2 is Oxfordshire based, projects in Berkshire and Oxfordshire are being invited to apply for this funding. The programme will be delivered over a four-year period and Stage 1 applications (outline project proposals) are welcome now.

See our **TVERC news item** [here](#) for fuller details about this exciting TOE2 announcement, including what biodiversity projects are eligible, where projects can be supported, who can apply, what the time frame is and how the process will work.

Main grant scheme: TOE2 also welcomes applications for their main grant scheme; most grants are up to £5,000.

Projects are invited to apply 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

Contact TOE2

If you are interested in applying for the **TVERC Recorders' Grant**, the **main TOE2 Grant**, or the **Network Rail Grant**, please contact Lynn Parker on admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk or 01865 407003

Further information is available at www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk

Please get in touch with them to explore ideas for potential projects.



School girl's star find at Pegasus School bioblitz

This summer Dominic Woodfield, an environmental consultant of Bioscan (and member of our TVERC Steering Group) kindly agreed to stage a 'bioblitz' survey with school children at Pegasus School, Blackbird Leys as part of their science week. The site was not initially deemed particularly promising for unusual species, being a mixture of amenity grassland and a small semi-wooded area with plantation trees in the middle of Blackbird Leys, but one little girl's efforts turned up something really quite special: the Dotted Bee Fly *Bombylius discolor*. It is a rare find in Oxon – with few records held to date by TVERC. We were very happy to provide a special certificate to her to as thanks for the record and encouragement towards ongoing recording efforts and interest.

The completed school bioblitz found a little over 200 species in total, all of which TVERC are very pleased to receive.



Roesel's Bush Cricket,
Peter Rawcliffe

TVERC Training Programme Last 2017 training event:

Otter ecology and surveying, with Ellen Lee. Otmoor RSPB reserve, 4th November 2017.

Book now: <http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/tverc-training>

Please continue (or begin) to submit your records to TVERC. The more data we have, the better we are able to help protect our local wildlife. Thank you!

<http://sightings.tverc.org/record/sighting>



TVERC

c/o Oxfordshire County Council
Speedwell House
Speedwell Street
Oxford
OX1 1NE

01865 815 451

tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

www.tverc.org

Twitter: @TVERC1



Director: Camilla Burrow

Projects Manager: Dr Dan Carpenter

Biological Records Co-ordinator: Zoe Caals

Data Services Officers: Ellen Lee and Graham Hawker

Berkshire Biodiversity Officer: Katherine Holmes

Oxfordshire Biodiversity Officer: Julie Kerans

Biodiversity Projects Officer: Yolanda Vazquez

Biodiversity Data Assistant: Katherine Lister

Administration Officer: Kate Prudden

To email any member of staff please use the format:

firstname.surname@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) is the environmental records centre for Berkshire and Oxfordshire. TVERC is a not-for-profit partnership organisation between all twelve local authorities across Berkshire and Oxfordshire, the Environment Agency, and the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust.

We collect, analyse and share environmental data to help people make sound decisions about how to develop and manage land sustainably and where to direct wildlife conservation work.