

June 2018



Thames Valley

Environmental Records Centre



Sharing environmental information in Berkshire and Oxfordshire

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Vapourer Moth caterpillar.
Photo: Yolanda Vazquez



Welcome to our Summer Newsletter

This edition of our biannual newsletter is focussed on what we've been doing with the invaluable records which you share with us. We've talked previously of the effort and time it takes us all to collect data, carefully check it, and wrangle it into our database. But there's no point in us just storing the information in our database where no-one can use it. So we've been working particularly hard on new ways to transform the data you send us into easily-understandable information. This will be particularly important over the coming years as there are vast amounts of housing and transport developments planned for Oxfordshire and Berkshire. See pages 2-5 for some examples of how we've been analysing and presenting data over the last year.

I hope you're all out and about enjoying the summer, and collecting more data to share so that together, we can continue to help conserve our wonderful natural environment in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Camilla Burrow, Director



Kirtlington Quarry in May, with Hawthorn blossom

Save the date! The TVERC Autumn Recorders' Conference will be on Saturday 29th September 2018, at Oracle, Thames Valley Park, near Reading.

Everyone is warmly welcomed. Contact us soon if you would like to book a 'slot' to make a short presentation and/or for display space. Our speed updates are getting ever more popular so book earlier. Email: tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Spring Recorders' Conference March 2018

Wildlife Data for Decision-making and Conservation

On Saturday 10th March 2018 we held our Spring Recorders' Conference at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology in Wallingford. We were delighted to have a really good turnout, with many local wildlife groups represented.

Thank you to everyone who took part, especially if you gave a talk, led a workshop, were an event helper or brought along a display. Thank you also to the Grit Howe Charitable Trust for their funding, and to CEH for their support with hosting the conference.

The day started with a presentation from Camilla Burrow and Dan Carpenter from TVERC, outlining the data that TVERC holds and also some of the analysis and resources that we have developed to aid better understanding of this information.

There were three 'speed update' sessions where we heard 5-10 minutes from various local groups and recording schemes on a wide range of topics.



Vicky Gilson and Pete Boardman giving a speed update on work by the Natural England Field Unit including that at Bernwood Forest. Later in the day they led a workshop on cranefly (Tipulid) identification.



We had a session called 'To TVERC and Beyond' with Ellen Lee (TVERC), Giles Sutton (G S Ecology) and John Wenman (Wenman Ecology) which explained the process of how data is collated by TVERC and used by local authorities and ecological consultants. This reinforced the importance of having environmental data available to make evidence-based decisions.

In the afternoon there was a choice of workshops to attend, on the themes of: field identification of spider families, creating multi-access keys, craneflies and flora guardians.

Our last presentation of the day was given by Nick Isaac from the Biological Records Centre at CEH. It was really interesting to hear how biological records are used at a national scale, and how bias is accounted for when looking at trends and distributions.



See our website for more details in our [news report on this Spring conference](#).

Many thanks again to Mark Kail for photography at the conference. All photos on this page are his.



Field Studies Centre BioLinks Training

FSC BioLinks is an exciting new biodiversity project for FSC, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, running from 2018 to 2022 inclusive. BioLinks is all about invertebrate identification! The aim is to build and strengthen the biological recording community by providing training, learning opportunities and digital tools for people involved in biological recording and those that wish to become involved. Training opportunities will be given at all levels from beginner to expert, allowing people to progress and consolidate their skills and experience. See the [project website](#) for full details. The project focuses on two regions, the West Midlands and South East (including Berkshire) and will provide training and digital tools to support invertebrate species identification.

ID training will focus on 8 species groups:

- Beetles
- Slugs and snails
- Aculeate Hymenoptera
- True flies
- True bugs
- Soil invertebrates
- Freshwater Invertebrates
- Arachnids

**Funding raised by
The National Lottery**

and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund



Keiron Brown, FSC, at the TVERC Spring Recorders' Conference 2018 enthusing about BioLinks!

Photo credit: Mark Kail

BioLinks Training Sessions at BENHS, Dinton Pastures, near Reading, for the remainder of 2018:

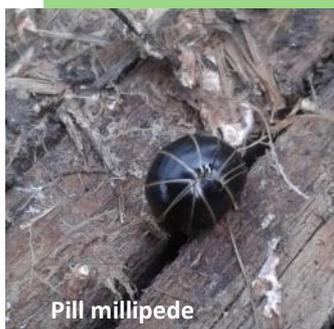
11/07/18 Field Identification of Flies with Martin Harvey

30/06/18 Field Identification of Spiders with Lawrence Bee

Book for Biolinks courses via the [FSC website](#). Tel: 01743 852125 E mail: biolinks@field-studies-council.org

Sign up for alerts. These courses book up quickly, especially at the **highly subsidised rate of £5.00 only!**

Excitingly **BioLinks have teamed up with TVERC to run a [recorder field training day](#) at Dinton Pastures on Saturday 7th July, 10 am—2 pm. See page 6. Free but [booking](#) is essential via TVERC.**



Pill millipede



Searching for woodlice, BENHS, FSC Biolinks



Spotted Long-Horn Beetle.
Photo: Yolanda Vazquez

TVERC: Transforming Data into Knowledge

Data ↓	We collect wildlife information from a wide variety of sources in a coordinated way; enabling information-sharing between recorders and decision-makers.
Information ↓	We are a specialist team with the skills, knowledge and dedication to make complex data understandable and available to all who need it.
Knowledge	This constantly improving, high quality resource is accessible by everyone so they have the knowledge they need to carry out scientific research and make responsible decisions.

We need to ensure that sensible decisions are made which protect and enhance our natural environment; well-presented information can help persuade decision-makers that our environment is essential.

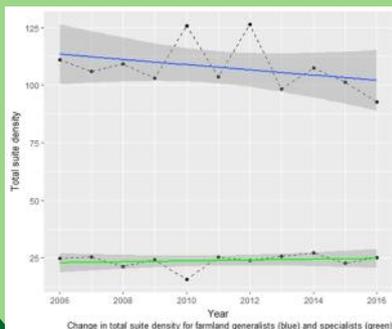
Here are just a few examples of what we've been doing with the invaluable records that you share with us.

Identifying Important Sites

Areas of land which do not qualify as Local Wildlife Sites are often still of value for wildlife and people. This has been recognised by Cherwell District Council and Oxford City Council who have both asked TVERC to carry out surveys of sites which could become District Wildlife Sites or City Local Sites respectively. In 2013, we identified 63 sites of potential importance in Cherwell, produced individual reports and took them to a selection panel for assessment against a set of criteria, developed by TVERC and Cherwell DC. In 2017, Oxford City Council commissioned TVERC to undertake some preliminary surveys of sites in Oxford to determine which are likely to have biodiversity interest. TVERC developed the selection criteria last year, and any sites identified as having the potential for biodiversity interest are being surveyed this summer.



Sites in both Cherwell and Oxford will be mapped in GIS so that developers and planners know they exist, and can see where they are. There will also be policies in the Local Plans describing how they are protected. This combination of high quality data (from surveys and the database), analysis, presentation, and policy support seems a good way to protect and enhance our natural environment by ensuring those involved in planning and development can easily understand their importance.



Birds as Indicators of Success

The Chilterns AONB are updating their management plan and were interested in biodiversity indicators to monitor the impact of the management plan. TVERC used BTO Breeding Bird Survey data to analyse trends in bird populations and produce indices of farmland and woodland birds over a 10 year period. The analysis also compared the fortunes of specialist versus generalist species.

Conserving Wildlife on National Trust land

TVERC has collated and summarised data on designated sites, priority habitats and priority species on all National Trust sites in South East England. This involved collating data from eight Local Environmental Record Centres, Natural England and the National Trust into a report for each site, plus GIS datasets. This was no mean feat, as a total of 240 NT sites were assessed, and the data from within 1km of each of these sites totalled 839,979 records for species with a conservation designation, 358 statutory designated sites, 2,950 non-statutory designated sites and 26 priority habitat types covering 20,756ha. Now that the National Trust have a complete baseline of information, they could use it to prioritise and inform conservation management actions, along with the results of ongoing monitoring programme.



Map produced by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre in 2017 ©
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Is a Bat Survey Needed for my Loft Conversion?

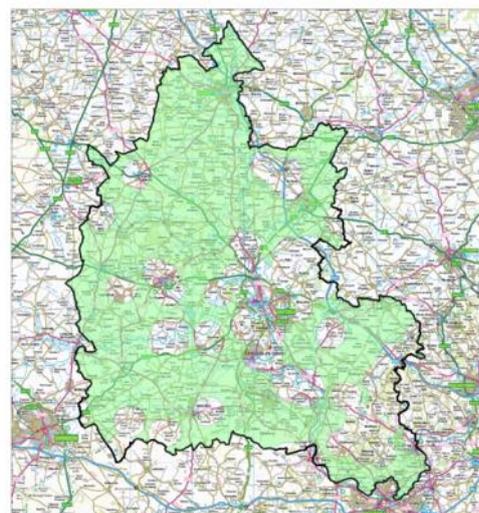
Local authority ecologists spend a significant amount of time determining whether householders putting in applications for work to roof-spaces need to submit a bat survey. Arguably, their limited time would be better spent ensuring that high quality mitigation measures were put in place where there is going to be an impact on biodiversity. So Reading Borough Council commissioned TVERC to produce a 'bat alert' map which can be published on the website to indicate to householders whether or not they need a bat survey. This model uses 'positive' and 'negative'* records of bat roosts and TVERC's habitat data to build a habitat suitability model, and is a development of the model used by Wokingham BC. We are encouraging other local authorities to commission maps of their area, and several have shown interest.

* 'Negative' records are where a survey has been carried out but no bats were found. 'Positive' records are where bats have been found.

Not Much Accessible Natural Greenspace in Oxfordshire

TVERC analysed accessible natural green space provision in Oxfordshire using the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt) for Oxfordshire County Council. The ANGSt standards outline the minimum provision of natural green space that is accessible to residents. We don't really need to remind anyone reading this that access to nature is important for supporting good mental and physical health as well as an appreciation of nature to society. There are large numbers of residences that do not meet even one of the five ANGSt requirements. In particular the area of Statutory Local Nature Reserves is insufficient and there is no accessible site larger than 500ha within 10km of any residences in Oxfordshire.

Area of Oxfordshire not meeting the requirement for at least one 20ha site within 2km metres



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Area not meeting requirement for 20ha sites within 2km
Oxfordshire County Boundary

Scale approximately 1:2,800

Example Ways to Get Involved:

TVERC Training Programme

See our website [here](#) for full details of our 2018 training programme.

This includes several **Field Day for Recorders** building on the initial event held at Oxford University's Wytham Woods last July.

Our most recent **Field Day** was held at **St Mary's Fields, Kidlington on 23rd May** —with a focus on developing bird recording confidence and interest but also with staff and volunteers of all experience levels looking at plants and insects too. The site is a proposed Local Wildlife Site. We had a very enjoyable and productive day with lots of keen participants out identifying and recording birds, plants, insects and anything else we could find! It was a good opportunity to learn both about field techniques and also how to get involved with biological recording in order to help conservation and management of our natural environment. Thank you to everyone involved including the St Mary's Fields Volunteer Group. Here are three photos from the day, all taken by Zoe Caals.



Male longhorn moth
(Nemophora degeerella)



Malachite Beetle
(Malachius bipustulatus)

See our [website](#) and page 3 for information on our **next Field Day**.

This will be at BENHS, Dinton Pastures, Reading on 7th July, and is jointly organised with the FSC Biolinks Project. Free event but please book with us in advance.



Our June **QGIS training course** led by Dan Carpenter was even more popular than last year and fully booked. This freeware spatial mapping tool is highly recommended. Look out for future TVERC courses on this if you missed out this year.

FINAL TVERC 2018 TRAINING COURSE: Sign up now if you would like one of the remaining places on our popular one-day training workshop on [Otter Ecology](#) with **Ellen Lee, 15th September 2018**. This will be held at the wonderful RSPB Otmoor nature reserve near Beckley.

If you would like to be kept informed of future training events and are not signed up already for alerts let us



Early Marsh Orchid

We look forward to receiving records from those of you with new identification skills!

Our top tip is just to start tentatively even if you are not fully confident —and then ask us, or other recorders, if you need more support with the techniques, identification tips or recording processes.



Cowslips



Help the British Dragonfly Society!

The [British Dragonfly Society](#) are looking for volunteer recorders including their new challenge for July 2018!

'Dragon hunters' try to find as many of the Challenge's 6 special species as possible within July: Large Red Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Common Darter, Southern Hawker, Four-spotted Chaser, and Golden-ringed Dragonfly. To do this they will have to learn about the species and their habitats, then explore different types of wetlands to find them all. The aim is for a fun and educational introduction to dragonflies, key local sites and recording basics. The Challenge can also be coupled with their [key stage 1-2 educational resources](#).

The BDS [Common Clubtail Count](#) continues, looking for adults or skin casts at an allocated river bank survey area between May and July, to help understand the status of this elusive species, listed as Near Threatened on the British Red List. It is found on a limited number of slow flowing stretches of mature, lowland rivers including, locally, the Thames, Kennet and Avon.



The BDS also have a citizen science [survey investigating declines in some White-legged Damselfly](#) populations which might be found in the same areas that you are already searching for the Common Clubtail.....



Oxford Swift City project are running a "Give Swifts a Home" initiative. As well as reporting your swift sightings you can now help to give swifts a home by taking part in their community nest box scheme offering free kit to community groups. Search "Oxford Swift City" online and download an application form or email oxfordswiftcity@rspb.org.uk

Swifts in a Tower by David Lack: A fully updated edition of this lovely book is now available, with a foreword by Professor Chris Perrins. New book: First published in 1956, Swifts in a Tower still offers readers astonishing insights into the private lives of swifts, their lifestyle and wider issues. In 60 years since it was first published, swifts have been studied even more thoroughly using technology unimaginable in the 1950s. This latest edition, with a new chapter by Andrew Lack, brings the story of this remarkable bird into the twenty-first century. This republication is published with funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Oxford Swift City project.

All £15 from the sale of this book on the [RSPB website](#) will go to the project.



[All photos in this issue by Kate Prudden unless otherwise credited]

Funding updates: TVERC Recorders' Grant

Our [TVERC Recorders' Grant Scheme](#) supporting projects improving the quality, quantity and/or coverage of voluntary species recording in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The fund is administered by the **Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2)**. Applications may be standalone grants to support better recording or they may be linked to a larger biodiversity application to TOE2 (www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk).

How might our TVERC Recorders' Grant support you? Submit your applications now!

As examples, in 2018 we have recently agreed to financially support the following projects:

Windmill Farm Wildlife project, Adventure plus, for surveying tools and materials: £750

This AdventureBase (a multi activity centre offering young people the opportunity to experience outdoor activities such as mountain biking, climbing, bridge building, canoeing etc.) will also provide unique opportunities for environmental education and increasing biodiversity on a 50 acre site including wheat fields with ponds, scrapes, hedgerow. The funds will help to: plant a new mixed hedgerow increasing connectivity and reducing fragmentation of the landscape; monitor wildlife and run wildlife events; and encourage volunteer participation.

West Oxfordshire Farmland Bird Project: £1936

A 16-year old applicant's comprehensive grant application was rewarded. Helping to provide bird ringing equipment to allow accurate monitoring of the impact of an on-going long-term project to increase the farmland bird population of West Oxfordshire and monitor population health. Taking place on 7 farms in the Vale and West Oxon, working with farmers. The main species focused on are Tree Sparrow (expanding the populations from Chimney Meadows and North Wiltshire), Corn Bunting, Skylark and Yellowhammer.

TVERC Loan Equipment Available for Recording

Example 1: The Lower Windrush Valley Project group borrowed pond dipping kit for a Brownies group event in May and a for a further BBOWT Oxford Festival of Nature activity in June.



Photo: Lucy Kennery, Lower Windrush Valley Project.

Example 2: Long-term loan of small mammal traps to a team involving many volunteer experts as part of a major project surveying Blenheim High Park.

See our [TVERC website](#) for information on equipment and books available for loan to local recorders.



Newts found under a log

[The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment \(TOE2\)](#)

Oxfordshire's independent environmental funder

Main grant scheme: TOE2 welcomes applications for funding; 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

TOE2 also has **Third Party Funding** available.

If you are applying for funding from an Environmental Body in Oxfordshire and require up to about £5,000 as the third party funding contribution, TOE2 would be pleased to hear from you.

Third party funding can be provided for projects which:

- Are located in Oxfordshire
- Fall within 10 miles of a landfill site and are eligible for LCF funding
- Are seeking funds from an Environmental Body that distributes LCF funding in Oxfordshire; this could be WREN, Viridor Credits or Biffaward.
- Fall within at least one of TOE2's funding areas (biodiversity, access to green spaces and energy efficiency/renewables)

The next application **deadline is 3rd September 2018.**

For further information: www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk @TOE2_Oxon Tel: 01865 407003 or email admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk



Cuckoo Flower

Graham's retirement!

Graham Hawker—our TVERC Data Services Officer is leaving work for early retirement and will be much missed, after many years with TVERC!

"After 15 years, I'm leaving TVERC. This leaves Ellen as the only remaining 'original' member but unfortunately she doesn't get a prize. I'm off into semi-retirement, with a little gardening work, getting out and about doing habitat surveys for my own interest, which is where it all began back in the 1980s. They'll be other stuff as well like spending more time with my banjos and probably doing some voluntary work for TVERC. I don't intend on leaving the whole wildlife conservation thing behind. While lots of things have changed, especially the technology, it's still the recorders and the recording that counts and I'm going to try to do more of that. "

ARE YOU MISSING OUR NEWSLETTER MAIL OUT?

Data Policy update:

PLEASE NOTE – In case you have somehow missed the barrage of related messages to date: one of the enhanced requirements of the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) is for us to have a clear note of your active consent for us to hold your personal information in order to send you this newsletter.

We recently emailed all individuals on our previous contact list asking you to sign-up if you wanted to receive our updates. We have already taken off our original circulation list anyone who had not responded. Sorry, but you must sign-up afresh even if you were previously receiving newsletters from us. Only your affirmative action will allow us to send you our newsletters from June 2018 onwards.

The data policy of Oxfordshire County Council who host TVERC is available [here via our website](#). If you receive other services from the council, it is not related to this consent.

[Please subscribe/re-subscribe here.](#)

You may of course withdraw your consent at any time.



Please submit your records to TVERC via our Sightings website. The more, quality, data that we have, the better we are able to help you and to help protect our local wildlife. Thank you! <http://sightings.tverc.org>



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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.