



Thames Valley Environmental
Records Centre
Newsletter
2020-2021





August 2021

Welcome to the TVERC newsletter

Welcome to our Summer 2021 newsletter. It has been awhile since we published our last biannual newsletter and over the intervening time, we hope you have enjoyed reading our regular news updates. At TVERC we are having a busy survey season and have enjoyed getting out into the field after many of the restrictions of the last year or so. In one of the larger survey projects our team has been following in the footsteps of ancient travellers, drovers and armies along the Ridgeway National Trail. They have been assessing and recording the habitats and botanical species to be found along much of its length. You can find out more further into the newsletter.

It is great to share with you some of the recording activities being undertaken in our counties and also promote the opportunity to help with some others. It really is important to collect and share as much data as possible. The more evidence we have about what is where the better chance we have of making sure good informed decisions can be made.

The future Environment Bill is making its way through parliament and its' flagship measure is the statutory requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be developed by local councils. The strategy will agree local priorities for natures recovery; map the most valuable existing habitats and catalogue specific proposals to improve habitats for nature. Once work on this begins our collective local knowledge and data will be critical to ensure what is important locally is reflected in the strategies.

I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter.

Steve Wilkes, TVERC Director



Great White Heron ©Martin Gascoigne-Pees

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We are always interested to hear about projects you have been involved in and if you would like to contribute an article, news item or event notice for our newsletter please contact us at tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk



Native Crayfish© Ellen Lee

The Native Crayfish Reappears in Berkshire!

Ellen Lee, TVERC

I have a very soft spot for the native crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*). Even its name is fun to pronounce, and when you delve a little deeper, it's a truly alien creature! I got to know all about it because, for a number of years, TVERC was commissioned by the Environment Agency to carry out surveys in Oxfordshire to identify water courses supporting them. I was lucky enough to be the person who was trained up to carry out the surveys which (if it wasn't for having to write a report at the end) were very much like returning to my childhood, paddling along streams!

Crayfish are basically freshwater lobsters. They come with one set of large claws for grabbing and four more pairs of legs sporting small claws, for hanging onto things. These are attached to the main body section and further down they have a number of smaller segments which bear small appendages called swimmerettes. The body ends in a tail which is used to propel them backwards quickly when danger threatens and is really confusing when you are a novice crayfish surveyor as they disappear backwards rather than forwards when you try and pick them up! Their "mouth" is underneath their head and has a strange external jaw in front of it which helps to feed pretty much everything and anything into the mouth. They have three bones attached to the lining of their stomach which clash together under muscular control to crush food up, a kind of inbuilt grinding mill. They aren't fussy eaters and will have a go at eating anything that fits in their mouth. For this reason, they are a vital part of the eco-

system of calcareous streams, helping to keep the stream clear of detritus in addition to eating small shrimps, molluscs, fish fry and even, sorry to say, their own young.

In days gone by, the native crayfish did very well out of us humans. We created all sorts of places for them to hide from their predators during the day; stone bridges, walls, mill leats etc. Perfect for a crepuscular edge-feeding generalist! However, recently the relationship has been a much less happy one. In the first half of the 20th century, degradation of stream habitat and increasing use of insecticides meant that populations of native crayfish started to struggle and so did the traditional small-scale native fisheries. The response was to introduce and start farming the American or signal crayfish. These are bigger, more aggressive, and most importantly are excellent escape artists that can even walk long distances over land, as long as their gills are kept wet. So before long they had escaped and were getting into our rivers and streams. If this wasn't bad enough, they also carry an endemic fungal plague. This has co-evolved with them and causes them no health issues. Unfortunately, it's fatal to our native crayfish for whom it's a new disease. As soon as signal crayfish get upstream of a native population, the spores of the fungal plague wash downstream and will wipe out the natives completely. This is why you need a Natural England licence in order to search for native crayfish because it's vital to understand and practise good biosecurity to survey for them safely.



Signal Crayfish ©Ellen Lee

Native crayfish populations have plummeted over both Oxfordshire and Berkshire since the mid 1980s. Oxfordshire still has a few decent populations left, at the top of some of the smaller Thames tributaries. However, in Berkshire they were assumed extinct. That is until ecologists surveyed around the Barkham road bridge last summer. It was the first time since 1999 that a native crayfish had been found on the brook or anywhere else in Berkshire, a real red-letter day!

Hiding places are vital to crayfish. During the warmer weather, when they are fully active, they hide from predators during the day. In the winter they more or less hibernate in burrows they dig themselves in

the stream banks, and in man-made stone structure like old bridges. However, they also use tree roots, repurposing holes in the bank created by them and lurking under root plates of alder and willow (for example) which project into the river. All this means that the streamside trees are vital to their existence providing both food and shelter.

Only a single animal was found at Barkham Bridge. However, long days of searching streams and finding very little has taught me that they don't give themselves away easily. So I'm confident that there are more there, hiding among the stones and tree roots in the Barkham Brook, and who knows where else.



Native Crayfish © Ellen Lee

Volunteer Wildlife Recording in the Lower Windrush Valley

Lucy Kennerly, Lower Windrush Valley Projects Manager

The gravel pit lakes and surrounding meadows in the Lower Windrush Valley are a haven for birds and for many years there has been a good level of volunteer bird recording in the area, both from bird hides and as part of organised surveys such as the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS).

This year the Lower Windrush Valley Project (LWVP) received a grant from the Nineveh Charitable Trust to expand volunteer recording across the project area and have now launched the Lower Windrush Valley Reptile Survey Group. Initially 11 volunteers have been recruited to survey 7 sites across the valley between April and October. These include Rushy Common nature reserve, three allotment sites and three churchyards. Allotments and churchyards often have a diversity of habitats which is ideal for reptiles. Bare earth, stone walls and brash piles provide plenty of basking spots; long grass provides areas to forage; and grass cuttings provide somewhere to hibernate and lay eggs. Volunteers joined an online training session with Oxfordshire Amphibian Reptile Group (OxARG) at the beginning of April, artificial refugia were then laid down and volunteers familiarised with their sites before surveys started at the end of April.

The records collected this year will be used to select sites for future years and identify locations for habitat creation. In July, a further group of volunteers will be trained to survey riverflies as part of the Riverfly Monitoring Initiative. The group will then regularly monitor the River Windrush and other sites across the Lower Windrush Valley, helping to build a picture of water quality.

The LWVP work across the Lower Windrush Valley protects and enhances biodiversity and landscape and improve opportunities for people to access and enjoy the countryside.

Find LWVP on:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LowerWindrushValleyProject/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LowerWindrushVP>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lowerwindrushvalleyproject/>

Or visit their website:

oxfordshire.gov.uk/lowerwindrushvalleyproject





©Caroline Coleman

LERCs: it's not always about data

Eleni Foui, GiGL Partnership Officer (Planning)

Even though LERCs are mostly associated with biodiversity data, they often provide services that are not strictly related to the data they hold and manage. Below are just a few examples of the wealth of non-data resources available through the records centre community.

South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) have collated a list of online [Home Based Wildlife Resources](#) to support people that want to continue to monitor, and learn more about, biodiversity during lockdown restrictions. They provide a list of links to interesting online events, including those held by other records centres and natural history societies, as well as a huge range of YouTube courses to learn about different species groups. There are links to relevant newsletters and interesting podcast series.

Other LERCs, such as Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS), participate in European projects which promote the exchange of knowledge, skills, tools and approaches between partners. For example, the BID-REX project From [Biodiversity Data to Decisions](#) aims to build regional development policies to enhance natural value by "creating/reinforcing the link between relevant biodiversity data and conservation decision-making processes". [Several resources](#) have been produced, including examples of regional level action plans and technical documents.

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Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) are not-for-profit organisations that collect, collate and manage information on the natural environment for a defined geographic area.

LERCs support and collaborate with a network of experts to ensure information is robust, and make information products and services accessible to a range of audiences including decision-makers, the public, and researchers.

www.alerc.org.uk

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©Martin Gascoigne-Pees

GiGL, through the [*Biodiversity Evidence – Better Outcomes from Planning*](#) project, collated information from 23 London Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in relation to how biodiversity is taken into account in the planning process. The aim of the project was to support planning authorities to achieve better outcomes for biodiversity. GiGL organised a [*training*](#) event for LPA staff, with sessions on legislation and London focused policies, biodiversity data in the planning process, common triggers for further ecological investigation, ecology reports and wildlife crime. We also produced a [*suite of resources for planners and in-house ecologists*](#). These were tailored by the inputs of the project's participants but will be added to and kept up to date.

GiGL has also collated a list of [*planning documents*](#) for each London LPA and their [*contact details*](#). The list includes Local Plans, associated policy maps and Biodiversity Action

Plans. We believe that this compilation is a very useful, time-saving resource as sometimes these documents are hard to find.

Here at TVERC we have recently supported CEH in a project to provide biodiversity enhancements to residential areas in Bracknell Forest. The [*biodiversity toolkit*](#) provides management practices and information in one place.

If you know of any other non-data resources that LERCs provide, please get in touch.

Article first published in the GiGL newsletter, www.gigl.org.uk/not-always-about-data

TVERC: Transforming Data into Knowledge

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 to support decision-makers:

Oxfordshire Treescapes

We are currently in a climate crisis, and although tree planting is not the only solution, it is still a viable option for offsetting carbon emissions. However, care must be taken to not plant trees on unsuitable land, as tree planting on grassland will lead to a loss in biodiversity, not a gain.

TVERC have been working with Jamie Hartzell, a social entrepreneur turning his talents to helping to address the climate crisis, and Victoria McNamara, an expert on agricultural land use, to select parcels of land that have the potential for tree planting without compromising their current land-use or biodiversity.

Following the initial selection, TVERC determined the likely impact of the proposed treescapes and prioritise those likely to offer a significant improvement in ecosystem services. Jamie and Victoria will then focus on working with landowners, particularly those who own agricultural land, to encourage tree planting and using these treescapes to advise them on the optimum tree-planting strategy for their land.

Great Crested Newts Ponds

Bracknell Forest Council commissioned TVERC to provide an up-to-date map of ponds for the region. The project will allow the Council to begin the process of planning for a change in the way Natural England issue European Protected Species licenses, when such species are affected by development. Natural England are proposing to move towards a landscape approach to favourable conservation status for Great Crested Newts, whereby there is a coordinated approach to protecting and enhancing habitats for Great Crested Newts rather than a case-by-case approach to mitigating and compensating for the impacts of development on individual newts.

TVERC have mapped ponds in Bracknell Forest from OS MasterMap polygons and aerial photography interpretation. Mapping of these ponds will vastly improve baseline information.



The Ridgeway: Baseline Biodiversity Assessment

Caitlin Coombs, TVERC Berkshire Biodiversity Officer

With a bit of extra attention, some sections of The Ridgeway National Trail have potential to be enhanced for their biodiversity interest. Targeted conservation management could really increase the number of wildflowers and insects along the Trail! Our field surveyors have been busy walking from Streatley to Avebury (yes—44 miles!) to pin down these areas.

The [Ridgeway National Trail](#) passes through a surprisingly remote part of southern central England. From its start in the World Heritage Site of Avebury, it follows a ridge of chalk hills in a north-easterly direction for 87 miles to reach Ivinghoe Beacon. Popularly known as 'Britain's oldest road', The Ridgeway still follows the same route used since prehistoric times by travellers, herdsman and soldiers.

It is thought that many of the habitats directly adjacent to The Ridgeway have remained relatively undisturbed for many years and may retain areas of Lowland Calcareous Grassland that form biodiversity hotspot pockets along the route.

TVERC is working with [National Trails](#) and [North Wessex Downs AONB](#) to undertake a baseline biodiversity assessment of the Ridgeway; from Avebury in Wiltshire to Streatley in Berkshire. Our botanists Yolanda Vazquez, Julie Kerans and Caitlin Coombs are currently walking the stretch and identifying and mapping existing habitats along the route, their extent and botanical species composition. Sweaty!



Survey team



Sainfoin © Caitlin Coombs

This exciting project will provide an up-to date picture of the type, location and area of habitats along the Trail; and will be crucial in forming the Trail Team of areas which are in favourable condition and which are as could be targeted for conservation management.

So far, a range of biodiversity hotspot have been identified along the route, supporting a diverse plant assemblage including a range of calcareous grassland indicator species such as...

... dropwort, kidney vetch, common twayblade, knapweed broomrape, wild carrot, common milkwort, sainfoin, and fairy flax (amongst many others!)

There are some very nice stretches of chalk grassland communities which must often go overlooked by today's mountain bikers and serious hikers!

Mapping is being carried out to UKHabs classifications instead of JNCC Phase 1, as the second phase of this project will focus on monitoring habitat condition in areas identified by survey work for management and restoration efforts; therefore, it will be more suitable to map habitats to this classification system as this is what is currently being used in the DEFRA metric and Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.

Quoting the Lawton Report, we need wildlife sites to be '*more, bigger, better and more joined up*'. Due to the location of The Ridgeway, it is ideally placed to act as a significant and uninterrupted wildlife corridor across the south of England. This interesting project will improve understanding of the Trail's biodiversity value as a whole, with the potential for positive impacts on a landscape scale.



Dropwort © Caitlin Coombs



Greyfield Wood, Beenham— a call for volunteer surveyors

Neil Jackson, Greyfield Wood

Greyfield Wood is a beautiful 36 acre mixed woodland situated on the north-west edge of Beenham. Along its northern boundary, the wood borders the Bourne Brook, a tributary of the River Pang, and it is here that evidence of ancient woodland is most prevalent with ancient coppiced ash with base diameters in excess of 2m and thought to be over 400 years old. Ancient woodland indicator species including wood anemones, bluebells, wood spurge, wood sorrel and moschatel, are also found.

As ground levels rise towards the village, areas of Corsican pine and Norway spruce plantation, planted by the Forestry Commission in the 1960's and 1970's, are being gradually thinned and replaced with native species. Elsewhere mature oak, sweet chestnut, hazel, cherry and birch thrive.

Over the last 20 years the woodland has been managed by a group of local volunteers for the benefit of the local community and wildlife. A new Greyfield Wood CIC has now been established to take responsibility for woodland management in the future and, to help inform this management, the CIC would welcome volunteer surveyors visiting the woodland and sharing the results of what you find with us and TVERC.

If you are interested in helping survey the woodland in the coming months or on a longer term basis, please do get in touch with Neil or John via greyfield@beenham.myzen.co.uk.

You can also find out more details from the Greyfield Wood blog - <https://greyfieldwood.blogspot.com/>



Helping Oxfordshire's Hedgerows

Roselle Chapman, Wild Oxfordshire

Hedgerows are vital for wildlife such as small mammals, farmland birds, perennial wildflowers and many invertebrates benefit from healthy, dense mixed species hedges, with few gaps. They provide home, forage, hunting ground, shelter and routes of travel within our increasingly fragmented and intensively managed landscape.

National CPRE is calling for government commitment to increase hedgerow cover by 40% by 2050. The 1997-1999 CPRE Oxfordshire Hedgerow Survey estimated that there was approximately 7,920km of hedgerow in Oxfordshire

In Oxfordshire, 40% increase would see an additional 3,128km by 2050—or 108km a year, which sounds ambitious. However, equally distributed across the county (there are 235 parishes in Oxfordshire), it's only about 0.5km per parish per year, for the next 30 years!

To get the ball rolling, CPRE and Wild Oxfordshire are really excited to be working with the parishes of Kidlington, Watlington and the Eynsham Nature Recovery Network and surround parishes, to not only plant new hedgerows but rejuvenate exhausted ones. We won't be delivering 3,138km, but it's a start and we are hoping to create an inspiring and helpful community project template to encourage others to take action for hedgerows on their patch.

So, how healthy are the hedgerows in your corner of Oxfordshire? If you are surveying or enhancing your parishes' hedgerows, we would love to hear from you, contact: roselle@wildoxfordshire.gov.uk

How you can help hedges:

- Take part in the '[Great British Hedgerow Survey](#)'
- Plant a new native hedge or fill in the gaps of an existing hedge this winter.
- Community Groups and schools can apply for free trees [here](#).
- For advice visit the [Wild Oxfordshire website](#).



National Plant Monitoring Scheme

Sarah Shuttleworth, National Plant Monitoring Scheme

Now in its 7th year, data from the scheme has been used to input into the UK Biodiversity Set as part of C7 Plants of the Wider Countryside indicator [UK Habitat Condition Indicator](#).

Further work is expected on the indicator and vital habitat information is being explored across the dataset. The partnership project (JNCC, UKCEH, Plantlife, BSBI and DAERA) is the only long-term monitoring scheme of plants and habitats of its kind.

Approximately 1500 volunteers are currently allocated a 1km square to survey and monitor across 5 plots twice a year every year. The robust methodology and long term monitoring of plants and habitats is already providing essential data on how plant communities are faring

under increasing pressures and drivers of change. Please head to the website (www.npms.org.uk) for more information or watch our videos on our YouTube channel [here](#).

We also have a series of Webinars about the NPMS and habitat training webinars also (www.npms.org.uk/content/training-webinars).



**National Plant
Monitoring Scheme**

Local Wildlife Sites

Despite a late start last year due to Covid-19, we carried out a total of 45 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) surveys in 2020-21. Thanks to the help of our volunteers, specialist species group surveys were completed on several sites for birds, invertebrates and rare plants. Survey reports were produced and taken to the site selection panel.

Oxfordshire Surveys

Julie Kerans, TVERC Oxfordshire Biodiversity Officer

We carried out surveys of 26 existing and proposed Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) in Oxfordshire, along with several possible extensions. This added 4900 species records to the database.

Particularly interesting sites visited over the summer include Farmoor Reservoir LWS, Radley Gravel Pits LWS and a site near Hook Norton.

We spent two days at Farmoor Reservoir LWS which is one of Oxfordshire's largest Local Wildlife Sites covering 190 ha. As well as the huge reservoir which attracts good numbers of wildfowl, it includes diverse wetland and meadow areas. Species seen included a range of wetland plants with tufted vetch, common reed, bulrush, greater and lesser pond-sedge, common club-rush, marsh woundwort, meadowsweet, great burnet, water mint, purple loosestrife, skullcap, lesser spearwort, common spike-rush and brookweed.

Another treat was recording marsh helleborine at Radley Gravel Pits LWS. This site is a series of former gravel workings and surrounding areas of grassland and woodland in the floodplain of the River Thames. Some of the pits have been in-filled whilst others have been retained as water bodies. It includes species-rich grassland to the west at Barton Fields with pyramidal orchids, wild carrot, lady's bedstraw, meadow crane's-bill, common bird's-foot-trefoil, oxeye daisy, wild marjoram, cowslip, yellow rattle, betony and small amounts of field scabious and common restharrow.

Another highlight was locating the lousewort previously recorded at site near Hook Norton in species-rich grassland on the steeper valley banks formed by the upper reaches of the River Swere. The grassland here was especially rich with both calcareous and acidic influences. It includes devil's-bit scabious, betony, salad burnet, tormentil, meadow vetchling, lady's bedstraw, dropwort, black knapweed and harebell.



Wetland areas at Farmoor Reservoir



Species-rich meadow at Farmoor Reservoir



Marsh helleborine at Radley Gravel Pits LWS



Radley Gravel Pits LWS



Steep valley banks at a site near Hook Norton

Berkshire Surveys

Caitlin Coombs, TVERC Berkshire Biodiversity Officer

19 Local Wildlife Sites across Berkshire were successfully surveyed throughout the season. Our Berkshire Biodiversity Officer, Caitlin Coombs undertook a Phase One Habitat survey on each site, whilst a skilled team of volunteer surveyors carried out systematic surveys for a range of specialist species groups including dragonflies, butterflies, water voles, leafhoppers, sawflies and aculeates.

Some highlights of the season were:

- Visiting Lough Down LWS, a rich chalk grassland on a steep bank, flanked by species-rich hedgerows and chalk scrub. The site was beautiful, carpeted with the yellows of lady's bedstraw, St John's wort, agrimony and birds foot trefoil, the pinks of common centaury, wild basil and greater knapweed, and the purples of harebell, small scabious and wild marjoram. Autumn gentian, eyebright, pale toadflax, yellow-wort, and pyramidal orchid were personal favourites. We also found numerous badger setts.
- McIlroy Park LWS, a publicly accessible hilltop park in Reading with areas of Ancient Woodland, which includes a large-looking tree rotted throughout the entire core, leaving behind only the outer layers of bark where all the essential vessels for survival reside. The tree is listed on the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory.
- A disused gravel pits site south-west of Reading, which is designated as a LWS on the basis of its rich bird life. As well as the surplus of dragonflies and butterflies enjoying the standing water and the nectar-rich bankside vegetation, we were treated with first-class sightings of Canada geese, common sandpiper, lapwing, little and great crested grebe, cormorant, grey heron, and green woodpecker, amongst many others. Reptiles are also taking advantages of the mosaic of habitat types present here.
- Ancient Woodland Indicators were rich galore within a complex of woodland patches designated as LWS in Wokingham. Stinking hellebore, woodruff, wood anemone, pendulous sedge, wood spurge, yellow archangel, wood melick, wood millet, Solomon's seal, sanicle, black bryony and nettle-leaved bellflower were amongst those recorded.



Lough Down



Padworth Lane Gravel Pits



Green-winged orchid, Temple Giff Course



McIlroy Park



Chalk grassland, East Garsdon



Ancient Woodland



© Martin Gascoigne-Pees

Berkshire Local Nature Partnership Update

Sam Cartwright, Berkshire Local Nature Partnership Chair

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) around the country are once again being seen as pivotal in achieving a more nature-rich future. As strategic partnerships, LNPs are a ready-made vehicle for coordinating the very diverse sectors and interest groups (including for example farmers and land managers, local area planners and developers, community groups and member-based organisations) across a whole county to have their say in creating Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

These strategies will be one of the major requirements of the new Environment Act when it becomes law. They will act as the guide for planning, nature conservation and environmentally sustainable farming within the local area. And it will be through these local strategies that national grants and funding schemes will be made available—so they will be of crucial significance for many people.

Berkshire's LNP has begun to prepare for this, by hosting a series of online information sharing workshops at the start of 2021, for local authority senior staff and councillors. The workshops included experts speaking on Biodiversity Net Gain, investment plans for natural capital, and about the 'lived experience' of developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy from one of the pilot areas. These well-attended workshops shone a light on how inter-related these topics are, and revealed the benefit of working together at a county scale to implement them effectively.

A one page summary of these sessions is available on the Berkshire LNP website [here](#), a recording of the presentation

on natural capital investment planning can be watched on YouTube [here](#), and the full report is available from the Berkshire LNP upon request.

Berkshire LNP has also been working with six local authorities on a mapped Nature Recovery Network, which TVERC was commissioned to provide based on their experience in developing [a similar map for Oxfordshire](#). In time, the mapped network is intended to be part of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Berkshire, and both will be reviewed and revised through stakeholder consultation. The Berkshire LNP support the principle of a jointly developed and shared Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Berkshire*.

The [Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust \(BBOWT\)](#) currently chairs the Berkshire LNP, whilst TVERC supports as Secretariat. If you would like to offer your support and get involved please contact us at info@berkshirelnp.org.

*The ceremonial county of Berkshire is composed of six separate unitary authorities, and has no county council.





Recorders' Grant Scheme

To support projects that improve the quality, quantity and or coverage of voluntary species recording in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, we provide an annual Recorders' Grant Scheme since 2016. The fund is administered by the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE).

The fund has attracted many applications from a range of projects, some targeting specific species and others seeking to record a range of species in a specific area. Some projects are specifically seeking to find ways to engage more volunteers in species surveying and monitoring; others are increasing the ways they engage with local communities be it by bringing people into direct contact with wildlife at events or by publicising their activities on social media.

This year we funded:

Volunteer expenses for year 4 of **High Park Biodiversity Survey**.

Survey equipment for **West Oxfordshire Farmland Bird Project** including mist nets and bird rings.

Rare plant surveys as part of year 3 of **Saving Oxford's Wetland Wildlife Project**

Please do not be intimidated by the application form; if you are planning a project please phone TOE on 01865 407003 for an informal chat to check that your idea meets the criteria for the TVERC Recorders' Fund. Full details, guidance notes and the application form can be downloaded from TOE's website:

www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk/main-fund



©Ed Austin

Sightings Highlights

Thank you to all of you, we added over 477,000 records to our database last year, It is difficult to choose a particular highlight as there are so many and interesting finds! These are just some that stand out:

Native Crayfish

The crayfish is one of our rarest invertebrates. Native crayfish populations have plummeted over both Oxfordshire and Berkshire since the mid 1980s. Oxfordshire still has a few decent populations left, at the top of some of the smaller Thames tributaries. However, in Berkshire they were assumed extinct. That is until ecologists surveyed around the Barkham road bridge last summer. It was the first time since 1999 that a native crayfish had been found on the brook or anywhere else in Berkshire!

House Martin Nests

As you may remember, we put a plea out last year for people to let us know where house martins are nesting in Oxford City. This was inspired by our data manager discovering we held only a single record of a house martin in the last 10 years! Thanks to many of getting in touch, we have now over 100 house martin nests recorded!

Satan's Bolete fungus

Last year's weather brought a boom of weird and wonderful fungi. A rare and (yet) another exciting find by Dr Judy Webb in Aston Rowant was a Satan's Bolete.

Nemophora fasciella moth

There are many special species at Lye Valley but another exciting discovery by Terry Newsome, was a little male *Nemophora fasciella* moth. A first record for VC23 and it seems not yet recorded in any adjacent county, so keep your eyes peeled!

Byrony mining bee

Also quite exciting, was the discovery of the first *Andrena florea*, the byrony mining bee by one of our volunteers, on one of our Local Wildlife Sites. Not only is this a rare (RDB5) species, but this is also one of the most westerly records yet to be recorded in the UK!



Native Crayfish ©Ellen Lee



Satan's Bolete fungus © Judy Webb



Nemophora fasciella © Terry Newsome



About TVERC

Enabling data-driven decisions to better enhance and protect our natural environment.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) is a 'not for profit' organisation covering Berkshire and Oxfordshire. We are run by a partnership and are one of a national network of local records centres. We are a member of the Association of Local Records Centres (ALERC) and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN). Our funding partners include all the local authorities in Oxfordshire & Berkshire plus the Environment Agency. We also work closely with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

WHAT WE DO

We provide our funding partners with annually updated species and sites information as GIS tables, and undertake surveys of local wildlife sites. We also carry out data analysis for the monitoring of local authority Local Plans. We provide information to parish councils, local people, conservation bodies, land-owners, students and commercial organisations such as ecological consultants and utilities companies via data searches, data licensing and data exchanges. We provide other services such as ecological surveys, data analysis & presentation and training

Get involved!

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!

<https://www.tverc.org/cms/content/share-your-records>

Our Records

We hold over 3.4 million records of flora and fauna in Berkshire and Oxfordshire plus information about Local Wildlife Sites and Geological Sites, NERC Act S41 Habitats of Principal Importance and Ecological Networks. We collect this data from the general public, skilled volunteer/amateur recorders, professionals working for wildlife charities and for government agencies and ecological consultants.

WHAT THE INFORMATION IS USED FOR

- By planning authorities and developers to make informed decision on the design and location of sustainable development
- To help farmers, land-owners and conservation organisations manage land in the best way to enhance biodiversity
- By nature partnerships to direct wildlife conservation work
- By teachers, students and scientists for education and scientific research.

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