

Glamorgan Recorders' Forum 2007

Best Western Heronston Hotel, Bridgend

Saturday 17 February 2007

The Event Chairman, Peter Williams, introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the fifth annual Recorders' Forum. He reminded us of the value of good records and their increasing importance for government and developers.

SEWBRc Update (David Slade, SEWBRc)

- General Welsh Local Record Centre (LRC) progress: both Cofnod (north Wales) and the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (BIC) are due to reach the running phase this year; Wales will then have total LRC coverage.
- SEWBRc's recent milestones: tenth Service Level Agreement (SLA) partner engaged, 20+ signed Data Exchange Agreements now in place.
- Analysis of SEWBRc's Data Holdings: Distribution maps and charts displayed an increase in record holdings since last year (20,000 (12'000 in VC41) new records) & identified geographical gaps in holdings.

A full electronic version or hard copy of this presentation may be obtained from SEWBRc on request.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans in Glamorgan:

▪ **Laura Palmer, Cardiff**

Development Control has consumed a large proportion of LBAP time. However, they have produced Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (BSPG), which led to the designation of 20 new Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) – mainly for waxcaps. The guidelines for SINC selection will need reviewing as species counts for waxcap are so high on many sites. The BSPG is a big policy document, but there are plans to provide a user-friendly local wildlife booklet to act as the public face of it. Three new generic Action Plans are being developed (Awareness Raising, Corridors & Wildlife Crime). These will be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Realistic, Time-related) and take a habitat approach rather than having a species-focus. Dormouse surveys have found a live individual, confirming the species' presence on the Caerphilly ridge. Recorders are therefore encouraged to concentrate their efforts in the NW of Cardiff.

▪ **Mel Sutherland, Caerphilly**

Volunteers are currently undertaking dormouse surveys, looking for opened hazelnuts in allocated 1km squares. The 2006 Great Crested Newt survey identified 12 ponds with confirmed breeding populations. The Gwent Amphibian & Reptile Group (GARG) will be putting on a training day in March for volunteers who wish to obtain a survey licence. The Species Challenge Fund had funded the Halt Pond Project – de-silting the main pond, and creating satellites and amphibian hibernacula. The work is now planned for July. A RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch event was held at Parc Cwm Darran. Go Wild will be held in Wales Biodiversity Week on the 9 June 2007 in Caerphilly.

A full electronic version or hard copy of this presentation may be obtained from SEWBRc on request.

▪ **Sarah Mellor, Bridgend**

The arable weeds recording day with Julian Woodman on Tir Gofal farms found the nationally rare Shepherd's needle (*Scandix pecten-veneris*) and other locally distributed species such as Dwarf Spurge (*Euphorbia exigua*). The LBAP is up for review this year and the first step is to compile, digitise and map existing knowledge of habitats in Bridgend, eg. ancient woodland. The McArthur Glen Roadshow was run in partnership event with Cardiff, Caerphilly and the Vale of Glamorgan LAs, and engaged at least 500 shoppers. Some volunteer groups have expanded in numbers, with members of the Development Control teams being encouraged out by pub lunches and timing events with rugby internationals! A partnership between CCW Ocean Quest and a Cardiff University PhD student, working in the silty offshore environment of Sker Point, looking at scour communities. Some amazing images have been produced, despite the challenging conditions. Suggested that Rob Jones might be approached to do a fuller presentation on the project findings at next years Forum. Surveys of 23 Rhos pasture sites last year only recorded adult Marsh Fritillaries at a single site in BCBC, which has now been bought by developers. Finally, work on the Kenfig visitor building is due to be completed in April; it will have a green roof, ground source heat pump, grey water harvesting, passive ventilation and solar panels.

A full electronic version of this presentation may be obtained from SEWBRReC on request.

▪ **Mark Winder, Swansea**

The draft LBAP document has gone out for public consultation. The draft is currently in use, but is in need of a review. They have decided that the habitat route is much easier to manage than the species route, particularly when dealing with invertebrates. Ian Morgan has been commissioned to review all the LBAP habitats with a view to creating a GIS layer. A green spaces map is being designed, which will even include corners of improved and amenity grassland, enabling them to look at green corridors. The UDP requires green corridors to be created, eg. scrubby bits at the back of a new plot. A dormouse survey is planned with the aim of updating Swansea's records, as they are now known to be found in marginal habitats.

▪ **Sarah Connelly, Merthyr Tydfil**

Sinead Lynch has been appointed as the new Biodiversity Officer on a fixed term contract until 2009. Great Crested Newt training will begin in spring – they aim to investigate the western flank of Merthyr. An MSc student is targeting survey efforts in areas without records. Glamorgan Bird Club helped with securing funding from the Species Challenge Fund to support a Nightjar project. A lesser horseshoe bat (1st Merthyr record) was found last week, and a bat survey in partnership with the Valleys Bat Group will be focussing on old railway tunnels. An area in Cyfarthfa Park is being developed as a wildlife haven. Merthyr CBC are accessing Heads of the Valleys funding to install a fish pass at Merthyr town weir. A small grant scheme for hedgerow management has been very successful, but they have overwhelming interest from landowners and have had to turn away people from outside the district.

▪ **Rob Nottage, Vale of Glamorgan**

High Brown Fritillaries are showing a population increase as a result of winter management focussing on clearing scrub to allow violets to flourish. The last work party date for this year is 25th February. A nightjar was seen in this area last year. A pair of Choughs has bred in the Vale, successfully raising 4 offspring. Nest boxes have been put out for Tree Sparrows, but there is a need to ensure winter food is available for them. One farmer has agreed to sow a winter wild bird seed crop on his fields. Yellowhammers, Linnets and other arable farmland birds are responding well to action for tree sparrows. It is hoped that mink control will be possible this year in order to help protect the water voles. Richard May, the Biodiversity Improvement Assistant is producing leaflets to raise awareness. Matt Hamilton will be moving back to Avon.

▪ Peter Williams, Glamorgan Biodiversity Action Group (GlamBAG) Update

The last meeting was held jointly with the Greater Gwent Biodiversity Action Group (GGBAG), and it is hoped that there will be more joint meetings in future. It was suggested that 'Recording' could be a theme for the next joint meeting. "Think Wildlife!" – a quick reference guide for planning officers, has been produced and funding has been secured to appoint someone to offer training programmes detailing how to use the document. The first part of the meeting focuses on biodiversity, particularly BARS (Biodiversity Action Reporting) and SPG (Supplementary Planning Guidance). The birds sub-group met this week to discuss regional events including the Nightjar survey and an extension of the Tree Sparrow project; the hope is to secure 3 years of CCW funding. They are looking at SMART targets and learning from best practice.

There was a request/suggestion that there should be a Recorder representative that could attend GlamBAG. Unresolved.

Recording Updates:

▪ Bats in Glamorgan (Richard Dodd (RD), Bat Conservation Trust)

Now in the third and final year of the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP), which looks at 11 of the 17 UK bat species.

- Hibernation Survey (winter)
- Field Surveys with bat detectors (July) for Noctule, Serotine, Common & Soprano Pipistrelle
- Colony Counts (June) for Lesser horseshoe, Natterer's, Common & Soprano Pipistrelle, Serotine and Brown Long-eared bats
- Waterway Survey (August) for Daubenton's bat.
- Sunrise & Sunset surveys (July-August) to find new roosts

New Surveys:

- Bats & Roadside Mammals Survey - using time expansion detector attached to car. In addition to bats have recorded owls, foxes, domestic cats & hedgehogs
- Woodland Survey - uses Duet bat detector to detect Barbastelles from transect
- Bechstein's survey coming soon

Significant Trends 1997 – 2005:

- Lesser Horseshoes, Daubenton's and Natterer's show an increase in numbers.
- Common Pipistrelles show an upward trend from field survey data, but a decline in colony counts.

A training event is planned for June at Magor Marsh. Training will then be put into practice at Silent Valley. There is an online training tutorial at http://www.bats.org.uk/nbmp_tutorials/index.htm to support this. There has been a massive volunteer input across the UK – over 1000 volunteers took part in 2005, but there has been poor input across Wales. Volunteers are encouraged to take on a new or repeat site, contribute existing data or even become a NBMP regional rep.

A full electronic version or hard copy of this presentation may be obtained from SEWBRc on request.

▪ Orthopteroid Recording in Glamorgan (Greg Jones, VC41 Orthoptera Recorder)

Orthopteroids comprise eight insect orders:

- Orthoptera – Grasshoppers, Crickets & Groundhoppers (of which there are only 3 UK species)
- Blattodea – Cockroaches (3 native species)
- Mantodea – Praying Mantids (*Mantis religiosa* is a natural immigrant)
- Grylloblattodea – Ice-bugs, Ice-crawlers or Rock-Crawlers (not here yet!)
- Phasmida – Stick Insects and Leaf Insects (2 species in Roath Park Conservatory)
- Dermaptera – Earwigs (5 species on the British list)
- Embioptera – Web-spinners (not found in Britain)
- Isoptera – Termites (no British species, but 2 species were accidentally released in Devon)

The “Orthoptera Recording Scheme for Britain & Ireland” concerns the distribution & status of naturally occurring, breeding species in the British Isles & Channel Islands. It includes exotics that have become established as breeding in the region, but excludes casual occurrences (natural migrants, wind-blown vagrants or accidental imports). Greg disagrees with this approach however, and is interested in records of all species!

A total of 48 species have been recorded in VC41, largely due to Cardiff’s history as a banana port. This tally includes historical records (literature searches, museum specimens), and modern records. Species to look out for include:

Grey Bush-cricket (*Platycleis albopunctata*), which has strong populations on Gower (Oxwich, Whiteford & Port Eynon), and another at Margam Burrows. There are historical records from Barry, backed up by a modern one (PM Pavett, Bull Cliff, 2002).

Bog Bush-cricket (*Platycleis albopunctata*) which may be confused with immature Grey Bush-crickets but differ in habitat preferences (damp lowland acid heath). Very rare in Wales, with only a handful of sites (including Gower & Bryn-y-garn Common).

Mole-cricket (*Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*) is recorded in literature at ‘Ely Common’ (Victoria Park, Canton) during landscaping work. It was also recorded from North Cornelly, 1993... imported with a house plant. Suspects it is not native to Glamorgan! Is it native to British Isles at all?

Lesne’s Earwig (*Forficula lesnei*) is not mentioned in Marshall & Hayes for VC41 despite historical records from 1944. It was thought to be scarce but is now known to be local but widespread in deciduous shrubs in Glamorgan.

Scaly-cricket (*Pseudomogoplistes vicentae*) was once thought to be restricted to Chesil Beach, Dorset, but was later found on mainland beaches in England and also in Pembrokeshire. Could it be in Glamorgan?

For more information or to submit records contact: Greg Jones, 19 Heol Maendy, North Cornelly, Bridgend, CF33 4DD; Tel: 01656 744602; Email: polydesmus47@yahoo.co.uk .

A full electronic version or hard copy of this presentation may be obtained from SEWBRc on request.

- **New Herpetofauna & Bat groups for the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend (Sarah Mellor)**

The Herp group currently has only one licensed member, but it is hoped that all five members will have one by the end of the year. They have resurveyed for & re-found many old CCW records, and wish to establish the range of Bridgend CB's newt populations. Contact: Sarah Mellor (mellos@bridgend.gov.uk).

- **Heads of the Valleys Lapwing Project (Lynne Osgathorpe, RSPB Project Officer)**

The Welsh breeding population of Lapwings have suffered more than a 50% decline over the past 25 years. The Heads of the Valleys region was a former stronghold for breeding lapwing but loss of habitat, lack of appropriate habitat management and disturbance are threats to the population. Lapwing often target post-industrial sites (such as coal spoil tips) which is problematic when these are scheduled for re-development.

The project (coordinated by RSPB Cymru in partnership with DEIN and Blaenau Gwent CBC) aims to create a sustainable network of suitably managed sites for breeding lapwing within the Heads of the Valleys area. Local Authorities (Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr, RCT and NPT), Government agencies and farmers and landowners will all be involved. There is an absence of population estimates due to lack of data, so the Monitoring Programme will start with a baseline survey. Monitoring will include a Five Visit Survey to generate population and productivity estimates for breeding lapwing within and between years. During the 5 survey visits, the number of adults & chicks, and avian predators will be recorded. Ground predator transects will be made and land use type recorded.

The Volunteer & Farmer Alliance provides farmers with a survey of birds on their land during the breeding season. They are carried out by RSPB volunteers and are free and confidential. On completion the farmer receives an A3 map showing the birds of conservation concern, a full list of species recorded and an advisory management pack.

Operation Lapwing provide farmers and landowners with lapwing habitat management advice. There are 4 types lapwing advisory management packs: Arable, Upland, Livestock, & Mixed. There is a competition to highlight the conservation efforts made by many farmers with a chance to win £1000.

It was suggested that Lynne should be approached to return to the Forum next year to present the project findings.

Contact: Lynne Osgathorpe, Blaenau Gwent CBC, Business Resource Centre, Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate, Tredegar, NP22 3AA; Tel: 01495 355826, Mob: 07920782695; Email: lynne.osgathorpe@rspb.org.uk

A full electronic version or hard copy of this presentation may be obtained from SEWBReC on request.

Data Sharing For Conservation: the Value of Wildlife Recording to CCW (Helen Wilkinson, CCW)

Wales-wide reporting helps us to understand changes in status & trend, and to prioritise habitats and species. It also helps define favourable conservation status and favourable reference values/ranges. Records are also used to identify and notify important sites, and manage & monitor the condition of statutory sites. Data is used to inform decision makers (e.g. where should those wind turbines be placed?), to advise and inform others e.g. consultants & students, and to license others' activities & review compliance.

Good biological records also enable us to better understand & predict change (e.g. climate change), the arrival & spread of alien invasive species etc. Current records are useful for day-to-day decision making; Historic records allow mapping of change and prediction of future distributions.

CCW's Data Mobilisation Project is mobilising paper biodiversity records via LRCs and the NBN. Support is offered for Schemes and Societies. There is also a Data Sharing for Conservation Grant. New WBP/Wales Mini NBN – where partners can come together and support similar initiatives and follow similar standards.

Sensitivity and Security: types of sensitive data include Vulnerable species, Personal data (Data Protection Act), Data owned by third parties, Commercially confidential data.

Valued contributors:

- Local Record Centres
- National & Local Schemes & Societies
- The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) & the NBN Gateway - the NBN Gateway is a database of raw records with sophisticated search facilities and mapping. It can be accessed by anyone at <http://www.searchnbn.net>. It's useful particularly for conservation partners to share and exchange information with each other, and for carrying out national reporting on the status of important species (e.g Biodiversity Action Plan Species). Furthermore, it connects with global systems so data can be accessed internationally.

A full electronic version or hard copy of this presentation may be obtained from SEWBRc on request.

Discussion

- Laura Palmer (LP) voiced concerns about CCW removing personal data from reports, as she felt Cardiff CC would be unable to verify a record without knowing who the recorder was. Dave Slade (DS) explained that in the Midlands, all records are validated by being passed to the County Recorder.
- Sarah Connelly (SC) expressed concerns about informal reporting through their website. DS explained that in North Wales, the LRC (Cofnod) has an online database where anyone can register as a user. The records are then entered to a holding database which VC recorders can log-on to and check. Barry Stewart (BS) pointed out that MapMate allows sharing of data in the recording community: providing it to as many people as possible would allow better validation.
- The issue of name changes was voiced. Recorder & MapMate don't deal with synonymy very well. SEWBRc enter the species name as it was recorded, even if there has since been a name change. The system then updates the species name to its most recent version.

- Richard Dodd (RD) asked about SEWBRc's relationship with the National Biodiversity Network (NBN). DS confirmed that only the bat data holdings from CCW had been uploaded so far. Helen Wilkinson (HW) would like CCW data to be available via LRCs & the NBN, with annual communication at the LRC steering group. There is a potential conflict of interest here as the NBN could potentially result in loss of revenue for LRCs. A loss of LRC funding would result in a reduction of staff time in which to provide data to the NBN, so there is a need to develop a sustainable relationship between the LRCs and the NBN. There was concern about having to negotiate Data Exchange Agreements for the NBN; SEWBRc's data exchange agreements state that data will not be transferred to the NBN without permission.
- It was said that Steve Wilkinson (NBN) wanted to promote to partners the continued importance of supporting LRCs. The money paid for LRC services only covers the staff time involved in running data searches & producing reports; the funding is essential if LRCs are to continue to exist. HW proposed using the NBN to display data in SEWBRc-style reports as a sustainable mechanism.
- The NBN holds species data only (habitat data is extremely limited). It was also noted that the NBN generally has more limited datasets, often with coarser resolution. The data provider decides what level of resolution the data will be displayed at (ie. if the grid reference will be shown at full six figure resolution, or reduced to 1km or even 10km square level.) Searches can only be carried out at 10km resolution. It was proposed that LRCs could add value by having password-access to better resolution.
- Rob Nottage (RN) asked where the best resource for obtaining local data was. DS stated that the LRC should have it, and pointed out that SEWBRc has already uploaded all the data available through the NBN.
- Barry Stewart enquired about putting the BTO Breeding Bird Survey data onto SEWBRc's system. **Action: DS to contact BTO head office.**
The BTO aims to produce distribution maps at 10km level (and 2km or tetrad level to show abundance). They would like field maps produced for survey. DS agreed that it might be possible if the OS licence extends to reproducing maps in large volumes. Sarah Mellor suggested that returning the maps after use might keep the process within the terms of the license. **Action: DS to check OS map license.**
- Sarah Connelly (SC) noted that recorders are often contributing to LBAP target fulfilment without realising. She was keen that it could somehow be flagged up and reporting back. DS thought it should be possible to look at survey & monitoring actions for a finite number of species.
- It was suggested that government should be directly funding LRCs because of their essential role in the planning process. LP suggested that government will overthrow LDPs which aren't supported by LRC records. DS & PW noted that 70% of all records come from voluntary recorders, and that we need to support them.
- Mike Wilson (MW) highlighted the idea of feeding maps back to recorders as a great motivator. Recorders can then target geographical gaps.
- PW wanted to formally address "Recorders' Business" at GlamBAG.
- MW was keen to involve websites in the recording process. For example, an online message board for the recording community to post on e.g "I'm going to record Kenfig on Saturday afternoon – does anyone want to join me?" or perhaps LBAP officers, county ecologists etc could

use it to promote sites for which they currently don't hold any records – recorders could then target these spots. LP was concerned that it might need a bit of policing.

- SM suggested BioBlitz days. The Museum has already carried some out, but it would be good to involve local recorders. It was suggested that it could be incorporated into Biodiversity Week, and that the LBAP officers could take the lead in organising it. It could be extended to include the public; involving them in recording could lead to an uptake of new recorders. The day could be structured towards recording e.g. plants, birds and inverts during the day, a pub meal in the evening and then an evening of moth & bat recording.

The Chairman thanked the SEWBRc team for organising the Forum, the LBAP officers for their reports and partnership stories, the speakers for the Recorders' news (apologies to Kerry Rogers for overrunning into his slot!) and everybody for attending. Thanks also went to Helen Wilkinson for providing such a brilliant lead into the discussion.