

NORFOLK BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE (NBRC) UPDATE

March 2008

The past year has been an extremely busy period for the NBRC, so I thought I would take this opportunity to update you on our progress and how we see things developing for the Centre during the forthcoming year.

A new Business Plan for the NBRC

Under the guidance of the NBRC Task Group partnership, 2007 saw the successful tender of a Business Plan and Advocacy Document to take the Centre forward. After a consultation process in May and June, the autumn saw the production of the final Plan, outlining the future direction and priorities for the Centre. An Advocacy Document was also prepared, making the case for a strengthened Centre and highlighting the importance of partnership funding. Good and supportive input was received from all concerned and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved.

Since the start of September 2007, the Centre has employed a part-time assistant to support Pat Lorber and contracted data consultants Sally Rankin and Mike Weideli to transfer our existing data into Recorder 6. This has seen the NBRC almost quadruple the number of records held. This included vital flora and bird data. Currently, a Recorder 6 data base is being tested at County Hall and we are hopeful that the Centre will be fully operational on this new software by the spring.



Agrocybe rivulosa, new to Norfolk, Gressenhall 2007
(Photo: Pat Lorber)

Partnership with Suffolk Biological Records Centre goes from strength to strength

The Business Plan consultation highlighted that GIS and habitat data are a priority. In January, Martin Horlock from Suffolk Biological Record Centre started working with the NBRC one day a week to commence GIS development and habitat mapping for the Centre. Over the next six months, the initial priority will be to map habitats in the Brecks and Waveney valley. Work will be carried out in close cooperation with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, who are well advanced with GIS habitat information for all of the County Wildlife Sites in Norfolk. Both these exercises combined will provide valuable support for the BAP process and the development of more detailed econet maps for Norfolk. This is exciting progress.



White-Clawed Crayfish (Photo: Martin Pugh)



Natural Connections

The NBRC is currently involved in a joint HLF (Heritage Lottery Funding)/European Social Fund project called Natural Connections being led by Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

This money will be used to promote the NBRC and its benefits to a wider audience and hopefully encourage youngsters, in particular, to take a more proactive interest in wildlife and its protection. Some of the money has been allocated towards purchasing computer equipment, staff resources and licenses for new software which will raise the standard of enquiry responses and handling of data to the expected standard of our clients and recorders. Visit the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Natural Connections web pages at: www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections/



Spotted Flycatcher, Blickling Hall (Photo: Ray Johnson)

Biodiversity Action Planning

The new UK List of Priority Species and Habitats published in June 2007 contains 1,149 species and 65 habitats, almost doubling the number of species and significantly increasing the number of habitats. One hundred and twenty-three

previously identified species have now been excluded from the UK priority list.

In collaboration with County Recorders, the NBRC is currently reviewing the new UK list to ascertain which species occur (or have historically occurred) in Norfolk. Once completed, the NBRC will circulate the draft list widely for comments and clarifications.



Veronica verna, the Spring Speedwell, new to the BAP List (Photo: Bob Ellis)

Announcement regarding Revelation or Advanced Revelation on Vista workstations

The following announcement will be of particular relevance to County Recorders because Recorder 3 will not work on Vista:

"Revelation Software has announced that it will no longer support any versions of Revelation or Advanced Revelation on Vista workstations, whether running in standalone mode or as part of a network.

Based upon feedback from our clients, our in-house testing, and anecdotal reports from the field, there appear to be too many issues with Vista to allow Revelation or Advanced Revelation applications to run reliably", said the President of Revelation Software, Inc. "We are saddened by this; these products represent a majority of Revelation's twenty-five year history, and we truly enjoy working with them."

For further information, you may wish to visit www.revelation.com following links to News and Information/Corporate Communication/Revelation Newsletter September 2007

New equipment for the NBRC

Thanks to the efforts of Natural England and NCC, two desktop computers were upgraded and two new laptop computers and a multifunctional printer have been procured. This has greatly improved our ability to handle the increased number of records and ever-growing number of enquiries from environmental consultants, conservation organisations, students and the public.

The NBRC has responded to over 300 enquiries since 2005, 130 of which were made in 2007.

Increased support and investment in the Centre in 2008/09

Natural England will continue its support of the NBRC for 2008/09 by contributing a very welcome £15,000 to the Centre. Likewise, Norfolk County Council is increasing its level of investment in the Centre.

It is contributions like these which will help improve the service offered by the Centre.

What next for the NBRC?

2007 was a great year for the NBRC and 2008 looks set to be the same. Funding applications to support the Centre have been submitted to District Councils and are being progressed at present. Over the next 12 months, we will be hoping that we can build on current progress and deliver the vision laid out by the Business Plan.

Supporting the Recorder network

In view of the fact that Recorder programmes 3.3 and 3.4 are no longer supported and have been replaced by more recent versions, the Centre will in future operate its database on Recorder 6.

For any recorders interested in working in Recorder 6, a limited reserve is available to cover the cost of purchasing this software and providing a day's training at Gressenhall. Depending on demand, this offer may need to be limited to the first six

expressions of interest, but it is hoped that we will be able to repeat this offer in the future.

It is understood that some Recorders may not wish to upgrade to Recorder 6 immediately, or may wish to use different biological recording software. However, records held on other, older software packages, can be exported directly to Recorder 6, if submitted in an Excel spreadsheet format that provides the basic information about "who, what, where and when" (i.e., using columns headed: Date, Grid Ref, Species Name, Location, Recorder and Comments). Any other additional information would be most welcome but is not necessary for the data to be transferred. Chris Jones at Norfolk County Council can be contacted on 01603 638123 if any recorders would like further guidance.

A big thank you...!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the very many people and organisations who have contributed time, records, funding and in-kind resources to the Centre over the last year. We look forward to continuing to work closely with all of you in the year to come.

Please look out for our new newsletter, which will be released in the spring/summer of 2008.

With best wishes to you all

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