

Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre Annual Report 2013-14



The year April 2013 to March 2014 was a successful one for the Centre, with a full stable complement of three staff augmented by a team of enthusiastic volunteers. The additional resource enabled the Centre to work on some major projects which provided an essential source of funding and the value of the new recording officer post was demonstrated by 115% more records being added to the county's database compared with the previous year as well as a full programme of recording events and training.

CBDC Staff

CBDC Manager

CBDC Biological Data Officer

CBDC Biological Recording Officer

Teresa Frost (TF)

El-Moustafa Eweda (ME)

Gary Hedges (GH)

Headline Data Figures 1/4/13 – 31/3/14

Number of records entered/added to Recorder 6 (includes refreshes) **132,407**

Of which approximately:

19% came from local schemes, county recorders, societies, bioblitzes etc.

39% came from individual recorders

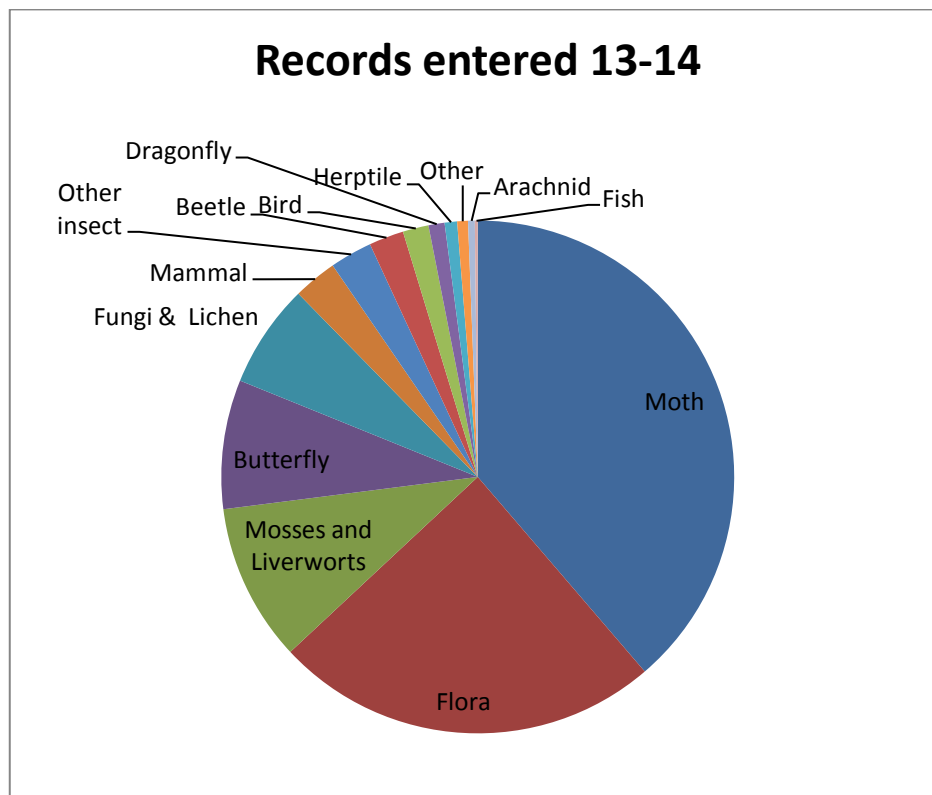
0.4% came from consultants/recorders doing paid consultancy work

15% came from national schemes and organisations

27% came from data refreshes from neighbouring Local Records Centres (including 5% from the Forestry Commission via ERIC NE)

0.1% came from public sector organisations (local authorities/Natural England/Environment Agency)

Approximately 1,300 individuals contributed records to the database. The database stood at **840,874** records on 18/3/14.



All CBDC data (except the Tullie House Collections due to the additional work required for non-Cumbrian data) was refreshed on the NBN Gateway in December 2013. The number of records publically accessible via the NBN Gateway stood at 391,277 records. In addition, almost all other records were uploaded in to a hidden dataset that was not publicly accessible, holding 303,577 records, for the use of Natural England, the Environment Agency and potentially other

CBDC partners in future. The hidden dataset includes some duplicate datasets already on the Gateway from other organisations; plants and birds; and recent data yet to be verified from other taxon groups.

The total number of data enquiries for the year was **324** (255 commercial; 60 free of charge; 9 for partner organisations with extant agreements). This was an increase of 9% (4% commercial; 30% free of charge; no change partners) compared with the previous year. The income from commercial searches and service level agreements was £28,361 a decrease of 6.5% compared with the previous year, due to less funds from SLAs rather than data searches.

Office volunteers (Dean Atherton; Donna Salter; Eleanor Shield; Jess Owen; Joshua Waller; Lucy Merry; Paul Nichol; Phill Brown; and Stuart Colgate) together contributed **505** hours over the year (0.3 FTE). Approximately 54% of time was spent on digitising records and 44% of time on digitising Phase 1 habitat data. The volunteers also helped with other tasks such as writing *Sighting of the Week* Facebook posts. This does not include volunteer time spent biological recording or volunteer expert time spent verifying records.

Agreements/Contributions

Partner contributions were made by Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Carlisle City Council and Eden District Council signed a multi-year agreement as a new partner. Natural England and Environment Agency, North Pennines AONB (Wildwatch HLF) and Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB (Morecambe Bay Nature Improvement Area) also had extant agreements. One Steering Group member, the Lake District National Park Authority was unable to make a contribution in 2013/14 and South Lakeland was lost as a funder after contributing for several years. The County Council gave a grant of £20,000 from the Environment Fund (£10,000 of which reflected lack of funding in 2012/13).

Project Grants

Grant funding was obtained for CBDC staff to undertake four projects during the year. The first was *Coast to Coast B-Roads* (£8,250) a habitat connectivity analysis to identify landscape scale pollinator corridors to inform future habitat creation across Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester on behalf of Cumbria Local Nature Partnership/Buglife, funded by the Co-operative Group¹. The second was the production of display materials for the *Solway Wetlands exhibition* at Tullie House, funded by the Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme HLF project (£1,000). The third was to create a web page² and downloads of information gathered in Cumbria Wildlife Trust's *Uplands for Juniper* HLF project (£3,500). Lastly £600 from the National Biodiversity Network allowed staff to give three Rodis online recording Workshops for recorders in Kendal, Millom and Grange-over-Sands.

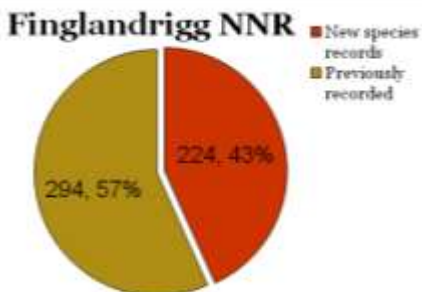
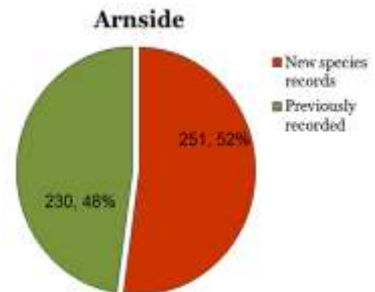
¹ www.cbdc.org.uk/bee-roads

² <http://www.cbdc.org.uk/Juniper-Project>

Significant Achievements

BioBlitzes

CBDC partnered with local organisations to deliver two BioBlitzes during the year, one in the north of the county at Finglandrigg NNR nature reserve (with Solway Wetland Landscape Partnership Scheme, Natural England and Tullie House Museum) and in the south at Arnside (with Morecambe Bay Limestone and Wetlands Nature Improvement Area). The species tally was a close-run thing, with 481 species being recorded by 36 recorders on 29th May 2013 and 518 species found by 36 recorders on 14-15th June at Finglandrigg. The Arnside BioBlitz was particularly valuable in allowing recorders in the south of the county to meet the CBDC team. Attendance from the public was reasonable but the weather was not ideal for either event.



Third Cumbria Wildlife Recorder's Conference 19 October 2013

The third Cumbria Wildlife Recorders' conference on Saturday 19th October was attended by 64 naturalists from around the county. The theme of the day was "Cumbrian Wetlands" to tie in with the temporary exhibition on the Solway Wetlands. We were again fortunate to have a wide variety of excellent talks from both local speakers and further afield. The recorders were updated on the latest news and developments at CBDC including a summary of the recent records added to the database, developments online including the addition of an event calendar to the CBDC website, www.cbdc.org.uk and the popular "Sighting of the week" feature on the CBDC Facebook page. We put out a call for more volunteers to help with databasing species records and with a new project to digitise the Cumbria habitat survey from the 1980s which has resulted in several new volunteers joining the CBDC team.

The CBDC staff then made way for a rapid series of fascinating, eloquently delivered talks on a diverse range of recording topics which made for a very interesting and informative day. The morning session was kicked off by David Clarke's illuminating account of the monitoring techniques and efforts undertaken as part of the White-faced Darter reintroduction project. This was followed up before Coffee by Sam Griffin's 'a newt's eye view of development', giving the audience a refreshing perspective on current Great Crested Newt conservation in the UK, highlighting recent declines, data deficiencies and reasons for optimism for the future.

The break provided an opportunity for Recorders to peruse some interesting posters and displays such as Russell Gomm's Solway Recording Project before Jeremy Roberts took to the stage to start the second period of the morning session with a talk on monitoring rare plants in upland mires. Jeremy centred his talk around his recording efforts of a few rare plants, such as Marsh Saxifrage, and the challenges he had to overcome, with interesting illustrations, for example showing how a GPS can be used to track search effort. The next talk saw Fellow of the Freshwater Biological Association (FBA), Ian Wallace, give a rare insight into the history and current vital work of the FBA intertwined with some personal experiences. Staying true to the wetlands theme, Stephen Hewitt took the conference to lunchtime by illustrating the importance of Cumbria's river shingle habitats for invertebrates through his, and accomplices, extensive survey work in recent years.

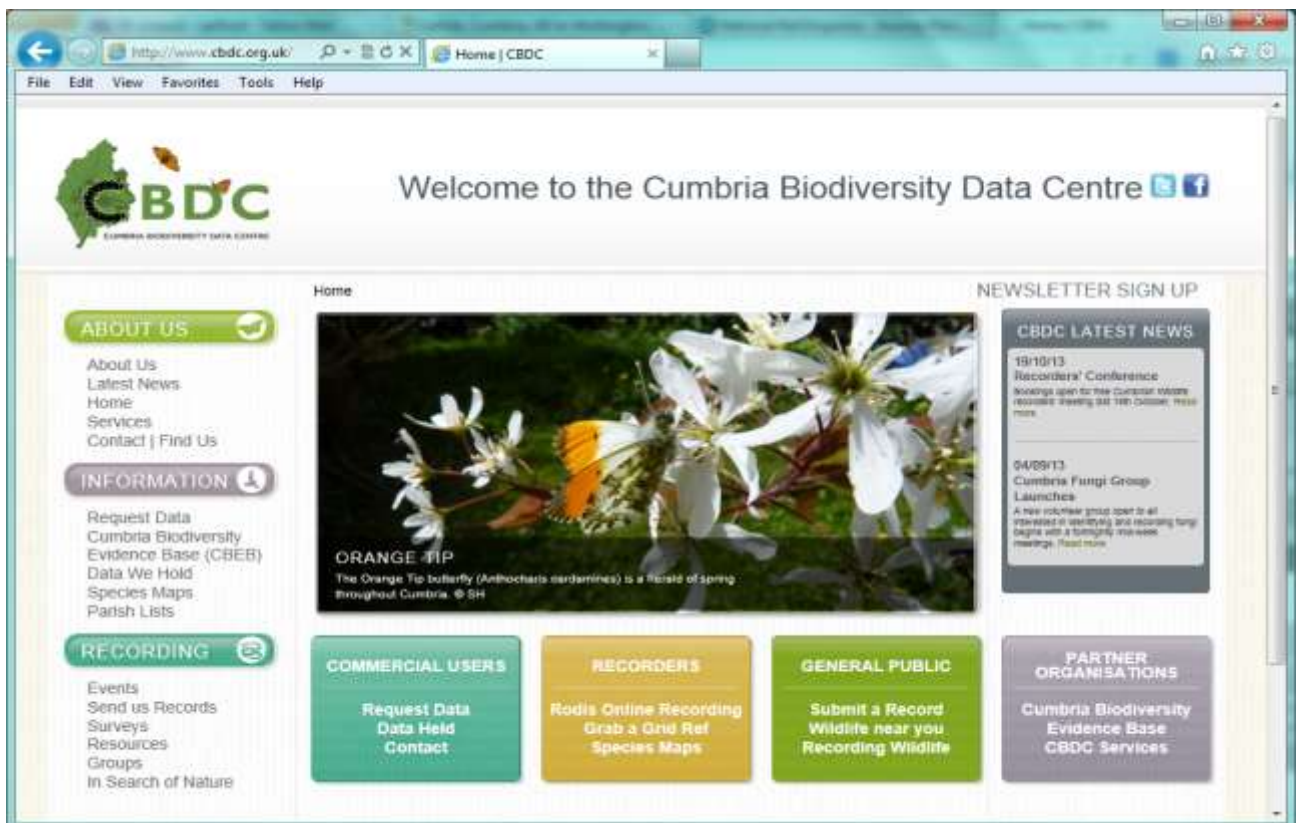
The early afternoon session, chaired by David Clarke, had CBDC manager Teresa taking off her CBDC hat for a moment to speak about the Wetland Bird Survey and the uses and challenges in analyses of this data, the topic of her PhD. Russell Gomm followed with recording the Bog-bush Cricket on the Solway. Russell explained how to increase Cricket detectability through the use of a Bat Detector. Before the final coffee break it was Stephen Hewitt back on stage again, this time fascinating the audience with a talk on Otters taking advantage of Schelly spawning near the banks of the deep lakes and the recording via Camera Traps that this study involved. Ian Wallace and Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Simon Thomas delivered the final talks to an attentive audience on the Trichoptera (Caddisfly) recording scheme and how County Wildlife Sites surveys have contributed to large scale habitat restoration plans, and the need to monitor

future population changes respectively. The day ended with an Open-mike session which saw Sam Finn (WildWatch North Pennines Project Co-ordinator) provide an update on the WildWatch project, Chris Winnock (Chairmen of Butterfly Conservation (BC) Cumbria Branch) call out for new members of BC, David Clarke advise the audience of the upcoming BDS Dragonfly atlas, and Gary Hedges with news of Ranavirus and Shoresearch on behalf of Emily Baxter – CWT Marine Conservation Officer.

The conference was live tweeted and tweets and photos can be found at:
<http://storify.com/CumbriaBDC/wetlands-2013>

Launch of cbdc.org.uk

After a long period of development whilst working on other aspects of setting up CBDC, the new website was launched on the 17th May 2013. The website aims to make finding relevant information easy for all users of CBDC, provide advice to recorders and offers the opportunity to disseminate digital data and information.



Summary of other meetings and activities

CBDC has been working with Cumbria Bird Club on producing wintering and breeding maps of over 200 species from the Cumbria bird atlas survey for a new county atlas to be produced over the next few years and supporting them by attending three *Birds of Cumbria* avifauna steering group meetings.

CBDC continued to share experience and best practice with the Local Records Centre (LRC) community, meeting with the Borders LRCs (Apr) and North West LRCs (May & Oct). The CBDC team attended the ALERC conference in Birmingham at which TF gave a talk on *Managing Spatial Species Information* (Oct). GH attended the NFBR conference (Apr) and national Bioblitz conference (Nov). TF attended the National Biodiversity Network conference (Nov); ALERC Board meetings and was additionally nominated by ALERC to become a trustee of the National Biodiversity Network and so attended three NBN Board meetings held at the Natural History Museum in London.

In September TF and Stephen Hewitt presented on the synergies between Local Records Centres, museum support of recording and the long history of biological record keeping by local museums at the Linnean Society Taxonomy and Systematics Plenary on *The Role of Museums and Collections in Biological Recording*. The event was attended by 70 participants representing a wide range of parties including LRCs, museum professionals and recorders. TF was subsequently invited to input into a National Nature Collections Information Project workshop in Dec. In March TF and Stephen Hewitt invited the NW LRCs and curators groups to Tullie House, having separate sessions in the morning and a joint session on sharing experience of working together in the afternoon.

Meetings regarding organisational needs and CBDC services were had with Cumbria County Council (June and Mar), South Lakeland District Council (Sep) and Allerdale Borough Council (Oct). CBDC Steering Group meetings were held in July and March. Other regular meetings attended by TF or GH included the Wildwatch North Pennines Advisory Panel, Cumbria Small Blue Network and Marsh Fritillary Meetings, Cumbria Freshwater Invasive Non-native forum and the Cumbria Local Nature Partnership shadow board.

Training attended by the team included a workshop on habitat suitability modelling (TF, Apr) and in October GH started a part-time post-graduate course on Biological Recording which CBDC contributed to the fees for.

CBDC had a stand at the Rheged Visitor Centre's Environment Fair for three days in April to introduce the Centre and biological recording to a wider audience. GH delivered a talk on Cumbria's butterflies to the generalist Museum Lunchtime Lecture audience, followed by an identification workshop for a smaller group. GH introduced the work of CBDC and recording to 25 Conservation Science students and 35 Wildlife and Media students from the University of

Cumbria (Feb). In addition to the Rodis online recording workshops funded by the NBN, two training workshops were run in Tullie House in January.

Summary of social media/media engagement

Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre
29 June 2013 · 48

****SIGHTING OF THE WEEK** 22th – 28th JUNE**

We have received an encouraging report of an increasing population of Greater Butterfly Orchids at a site in the Eden Valley from David Natrass this week. These beautiful plants, which are currently in flower, are only locally found in Cumbria and the UK as a whole, and are listed as Near Threatened under the IUCN (2001) Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain. They are usually found on alkaline soils, occupying deciduous woodland, chalk grassland, and damp, unimproved pastures and meadows (Harrap 2013). If you think you've found this species, be careful to check it's not the closely related Lesser Butterfly Orchid, which is best distinguished by the two pollinia (pollen sacs); they're closer together and parallel on Lesser, widely spaced and angled inwards towards the tip on Greater. Please remember that under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is illegal to uproot wild plants without permission. Image Copyright David Natrass.



387 people reached Boost Post

Unlike · Comment · Share

👍 Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre, Jody Palmer, Adam Natrass, Natalie Jayne Potts and 2 others like this.

During the year 31 Facebook posts of a “sighting of the week” with a photo and some notes on the species ecology and distribution continued to engage recorders, together with a variety of other posts about meetings and events. By March 2013 CBDC had a total of 176 Likes on Facebook (increase of 25% during the year). The number of twitter followers also increased to approximately 500.

CBDC was featured in the local press once during the year, in the News and Star newspaper (Carlisle and north Cumbria). The 2-page article published on June 17th focused on the record centre, its activities and support from volunteers as well highlighting the Finglandrigg Bioblitz.

LOCAL NEWS

We're putting our wildlife under the microscope

Cumbria is home to a vast and changing array of wildlife. **Duncan Bick** meets a group in charge of keeping track of what's out there

Volunteers help in study



Cumbria is home to a vast and changing array of wildlife. Duncan Bick meets a group in charge of keeping track of what's out there. The article discusses the work of the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre and the challenges of monitoring wildlife in a changing landscape. It highlights the role of volunteers and the importance of accurate data collection for conservation efforts.

LOCAL NEWS



Duncan Bick meets a group in charge of keeping track of what's out there. The article features a group photo of volunteers and staff from the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre. It details their ongoing work to monitor and record the local flora and fauna, emphasizing the collaborative effort between professionals and the public.