

HBIC Recorders Forum 2010 – by Andy Foy (HBIC Senior Ecologist)

The 2010 HBIC recorders forum was held on the 6th March, at Littleton Village Hall. This was a new, larger, venue for the event which enabled over 90 people to attend. The focus of the presentations and discussion in the morning was on invasive species. First off, Huw Thomas (DEFRA) provided a national perspective by outlining the *Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy*. The 2008 strategy aims to minimise the risks posed by invasive non-native species in Great Britain and reduce their negative impacts. It hopes to achieve this through widespread awareness; a shared responsibility across government, key organisations, land managers and the public; and by reducing detrimental impact on vulnerable habitats and species through mitigation, control or eradication.

John Clark (HOS) presented the *Ups and Downs of Alien Aves* by outlining the origin and history of some non-native bird species in Hampshire. He contrasted the decline of those species considered invasive aliens, such as the Canada Goose and Barnacle Goose, which have been the target of control measures in the past with the increase in population and range of species such as the Red Kite that have been the focus of considerable re-introduction effort, demonstrating that each case should be judged on its merits.

Catherine Chatters (HWT) outlined the *New Forest Non-Native Plants Project*, a three year project focusing on invasive plants adversely affecting mires and wetland areas. Two more species (Creeping water primrose, Parrot's feather) have now been added to the original list of five (Himalayan balsam, Giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed, New Zealand pygmyweed, American skunk cabbage). The project has been raising awareness of the problems with land owners, commoners and the public, many of whom are keen to help. As well as mapping the distribution of these plants they have been using contractors and volunteers to tackle affected areas.

Mike Wall (BC) continued the alien theme by telling us about *Alien and Invasive Moths in Hampshire*. Mike reminded us that there has been a long history of 'adventive' moth species in the British Isles as a result of food and plant imports. However, despite the huge explosion in the recording of adventive species, up 600% since 1980, the number of new species arriving has remained largely constant with roughly one new species per year. Of these species only one-in-four have gone on to become very common and only one has reached pest status.

Lizzy Peat (HBIC) rounded off the morning session by highlighting the recent increase in demand for records of invasive species. Lizzy is collating a new county list of invasive species, for HBIC's new *Invasive Species Layer*, based on the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat list, with input from county recorders and other experts. Anyone with suggestions should get in contact with Lizzy.

The afternoon provided an opportunity to learn about other recording projects in Hampshire. Graham Roberts (HWT) got things started with an insight into *American Mink: Status, impact and control within Hampshire* by giving a brief history of mink farming in Britain from the early 1930s, when <50 fur farms existed,

sharing information about Hampshire's wildlife

The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre Partnership includes local authorities, government agencies, wildlife charities and biological recording groups.

through their heyday in the early 1960s, when >700 farms existed, to the present day. The escape of mink, starting in the 1950s, coincided with the decline in otter populations enabling mink to become widespread across Hampshire and most of the UK. Although recent strategic trapping of mink has proved successful it seems likely that their populations can be controlled at best rather than eliminated.

Naomi Ewald (Sussex University) presented her study of *Temporary Pond Invertebrates* in the New Forest. Of the 600+ ponds in the New Forest approx. two-thirds are temporary ponds, well above the national average. Unfortunately these important habitats are not afforded any specific designation protection. Of the 60 ponds surveyed in the study invertebrate species counts varied from 5 to 68, with *Coleoptera*, *Hemiptera* and *Tricoptera* representing the most common groups. The results highlighted the complex ecologies of temporary ponds because of variations in habitat, geology, temperature variation, rainfall, and predator presence. The variety of ponds in the New Forest is their strength, so long as their management is appropriate.

John Vigay gave a personal account of Yeoll's Copse in Lovedean which he describes as an *Ecological Time Capsule*. The woodland, thought to have changed little in size since roman times, has resisted constant threat from recreational damage, retaining a wide range of native species and containing no alien species,. Its tree species includes wild service tree, whitebeam and sessile oak, plus a wild service-whitebeam hybrid thought to be a first for Hampshire. Different taxonomic groups are being surveyed, the results of which John hopes to soon be published in a booklet.

Debbie King (HWT) provided an overview of the forthcoming *Waders and Brent Goose Strategy 2010*. This is the culmination of a 3 year project to update the 2002 Brent Goose strategy by re-surveying all known sites and also to include wading birds. Over 1,000 sites were identified and over 20,000 species records were collected in addition to important features and characteristics of each site. The data allows sites to be classified on usage by waders and brent geese. Computer modelling also highlights sites vulnerable to threats from sea level rise, urbanisation, increased storm damage, etc and has allowed potential new sites to be identified based on 'ideal' characteristics.

Before the close, Ken MacKenzie (The Overton Biodiversity Society) summarised the reasons, processes and outcome of *Producing a Local BAP* for Overton. The 3 year project collected data from various sources, including HBIC, and produced a BAP with action plans for all habitats within the parish and a selection of representative species. Finally, Dave Burges (HWT) closed proceedings by summarising the day's presentations.

Many thanks to all the speakers for informing, entertaining and enthusing us all and to Dave Burgess and Nicky Court for Chairing.

Next year's forum will be held on **Saturday 5th March 2011** at **Littleton Village Hall**. We look forward to seeing you there.

sharing information about Hampshire's wildlife

The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre Partnership includes local authorities, government agencies, wildlife charities and biological recording groups.