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## **An MBE for Paul Harding**

Everyone who knows Paul Harding (and who does not?) will be delighted about his MBE for services to biological recording announced in the Queen's Birthday list this summer. Top man at the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton, Paul has had a hand in almost every distribution atlas ever published. But his influence goes far beyond producing atlases. When things need doing in the world of biological recording, everyone turns to Paul, and somehow he finds time for everything. Paul's name is on innumerable papers and publications about biological recording. Just check out the bibliography of the development of biological recording in Appendix E

in the 'Source Book'. He has played a key role in the vision and birth of the National Biodiversity Network, and he leads on the NBN's project of linking national schemes and societies for which a three-year post has just been secured. But Paul has never lost contact with grass roots. He is an active member of the National Federation of Biological Recording, was a founder member of BRISC, and has taken time to come up and participate in many of our annual conferences over the years. He is also a much valued friend. Our warmest congratulations, Paul! The MBE is greatly deserved and public recognition for efforts relating to the natural environment does not come easily.

Anne-Marie Smout

## **ACCESS TO BTO's DATA**

### **Introduction**

**Concerns were expressed at the Inverness Conference about the accessibility of biodiversity data. Since the British Trust for Ornithology was explicitly mentioned during these discussions, I thought it might be useful to explain to readers of *BRISC Recorder News* what the policies of the BTO are over this issue.**

### **Information**

Most people want information rather than data. That is to say, they want to know the conclusions rather than all the details from which those conclusions are drawn. For example, someone interested in the decline of the Skylark in Britain over the last 30 years is more likely to want to study the graphs that summarise that decline rather than to be presented with the mountain of Common Birds Census information that underlies the graphs. For that reason the BTO puts a lot of effort into making information available in publications and on its website ([www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)). The Trust is currently investing heavily in web technology to enhance our ability to make up-to-date information widely available, as well as to enhance other aspects of our operations.

You may ask why we do not also make raw data available. We could, you might think, put all of our data on our

website. Apart from the costs of such a huge undertaking there are a number of other drawbacks. By maintaining some control over the use of BTO data the Trust is able to reduce the risks of it being misused or even abused. Soon after I became Director of the BTO, I had to refute publicly a high-profile paper written by an eminent ecologist because he had misunderstood the BTO data that he had used as the basis for his conclusions. And just occasionally we find that a consultant is willfully misinterpreting BTO data in order to support his client's case.

### **Data Requests**

That is not to say that we do not make data available. Indeed, we make it readily available. It is important that such a valuable resource is exploited to the full for the benefits of ornithological science and bird conservation. In the last year alone, we supplied data in response to almost 150 separate requests.

There are circumstances in which we do not supply data that people have requested. We do not supply data that have been supplied to us in confidence or which are sensitive in conservation terms. Nor do we supply sets where a significant proportion of the data have been supplied by one person or one team who wish to do the analysis of the data themselves. Data sets are not supplied when someone else has already been supplied with them for the purpose of analysis or where BTO staff are already doing or planning analyses.

In supplying data we lay down certain conditions for their use. These are mostly designed to prevent the data being passed to third parties and to prevent them from being used for purposes other than those specified in the original data request. We also lay down that the source of the data should be properly acknowledged. We believe that this is important because it is one of the ways in which the dedicated volunteers who are responsible for gathering the data in the first place get their efforts recognised. Even where the acknowledgment is simply to the British Trust for Ornithology, this is a recognition of the efforts of the volunteers because the BTO is a membership organisation.

Occasionally users of BTO data do not adhere to the conditions that are laid down or they misuse the data. In these circumstances we are unlikely to supply them with further data.

### **Charges for Data**

There is no space here to go into the details of our charging structure. Suffice it to say that more than half of the data sets that we supply are subject to only a nominal charge. Such charges go nowhere near to covering the costs of supplying the data; their sole purpose is to cover legal technicalities. We do, however, make realistic charges to what one could call "commercial" users. The income that we receive from doing so covers the cost of the data supply service, although (contrary to widespread misunderstanding) we do not make huge surpluses from

data sales. We expect people who are using our data for commercial publications, for example, to pay a reasonable amount for doing so. We also expect environmental consultants to pay for the use of the data because we do not see why they should make profits out of the voluntary work of fieldworkers especially when those fieldworkers, through their membership subscriptions and donations to the BTO, are also supporting the cost of running the surveys.

There have been times in the past when academic researchers have gained access to BTO data and published papers that were useful in helping them build their careers, without any sort of acknowledgement being made to the volunteers who gathered the data. Fortunately those days are past. We now have various fruitful collaborations between academics and the Trust, which not only result in high quality papers being published but also in the BTO and its members getting proper recognition. Frequently we will make joint applications for funding with our academic collaborators and will include an element for the cost of accessing the data.

Many of the research projects that the Trust carries out are the result of our success in tendering for contracts. Part of our ability to be successful and therefore to fulfill the Trust's mission is based on our having access to such extensive databanks. To open these up to our competitors, without charge, would be a foolish thing to do.

Some people object to us charging for data on the grounds that the BTO is publicly funded. This is not so: we do not receive grants from government. It is true that we do have a substantial contract with the JNCC but note that this is a contract to do certain work, not a grant. Furthermore, the funding supplied by JNCC for doing this work does not cover the full costs because it is a partnership to which the BTO makes a financial contribution, as well as the huge contribution of members' time.

The majority of the BTO's funding is hard fought for, in competition with other research organisations. To develop the Trust and enable it to make ever-greater contributions to science and conservation we have learnt to be lean and hungry. No organisation could survive if it was to start giving away its assets. Indeed, if the BTO were to give away data, which represents one of its key assets, then the members of Council would be in breach of their duty.

In any case, publicly funded bodies do not give away their data. The Natural Environment Research Council has a policy that those people whom it funds to do research should deposit their datasets with the Council at the end of their projects. However, many do not and it is notable that the British Geological Survey, which is run by the NERC, has a massive commercial arm for selling its data. To take another example, it would be wonderful if Ordnance Survey data could be downloaded freely from the web but the OS makes too much out of its sales operations for that ever to be a realistic possibility.

### **Feedback at the Local Level**

One very important aspect of the supply of information and data is the provision by the BTO of information originating from a local area back to the birdwatchers in that area. We already do a great deal in terms of supplying information for County avifaunas, County bird reports and so on. We have over the past several months been consulting people as to how we can more effectively respond to their needs in this respect and the BTO's Council is to discuss the issue later this year.

One theoretical possibility would be simply to deposit copies of our data with local record centres. There are three chief reasons for not doing so. First of all, few if any record centres have the expertise to interpret the data and turn them into useful information. This is not meant to be a slight on the abilities of those working in local record centres: it is merely a result of the BTO data being specialised and needing both the specialist knowledge, and the right computer programmes for their analysis. It is more effective for the analysis to be done centrally and the information to be provided to local users.

The second reason why we do not deposit our data in local record centres is because we would thereby lose control over it. We would not be in a position, therefore, to prevent its misuse or its abuse by third parties.

Thirdly we do not feel it appropriate to deposit the data with organisations that are not ultimately controlled by the volunteer fieldworkers who have gathered the data in the first place. The BTO is a membership organisation, governed by a Council elected by the members themselves. If members do not like what the BTO is doing they can turn up at annual general meetings and get their own candidates elected to Council (it does happen!). Handing the data over to other organisations, however competent and however well meaning, would break this important link between the volunteers and the use of the data that they have gathered.

### **The National Biodiversity Network**

The development of the National Biodiversity Network adds a new dimension to the dissemination of information and to our ability to draw together information from a variety of sources. The BTO has supported this development from its early stages and will continue to do so.

Jeremy Greenwood  
Chairman of BTO  
The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk

### **From the Chair**

Please note that subscriptions were due in April and that if outstanding subscriptions are not paid before November, this newsletter will sadly be the last communication from

BRISC. We think we offer a very good value for a very modest annual subscription. For those who are still to renew this is a plea: PLEASE renew your membership, we need you!

The Huntly Natural History Society has for some time not been very active and have consequently decided to close its bank account, although members will still be active individually. It was very generously decided that the balance of £46.22 should be sent to BRISC, for which we are most grateful, and would like here to express our thanks.

As far as your committee is concerned, there have been more changes. Alison Hannah has decided not to return to work after her maternity leave, but stay at home and be a full time mum, at least for the time being. Both she and tiny baby Robin are doing well. It has been decided not to fill her post, and Corrie Cheyne, who replaced Alison during her maternity leave, is now leaving the SWT.

On quite a different tack, there will be a Scottish launch of the National Biodiversity Network on 5 October at the Royal Society of Edinburgh's splendid premises in George Street, Edinburgh. The occasion will be hosted by Sir John Burnett, Chair of the NBN Trust and Professor Janet Sprent & Dr Jeff Watson of SNH. Present at the launch will be an invited audience representing all levels of government and all the major statutory and voluntary naturalist and wildlife organisations. Peter Peacock, deputy minister for finance and local government, will be responding to the initiative on behalf of the Scottish Executive. The morning's talks will look at purpose and vision of the NBN. I have been asked to chair the afternoon session that focuses on the technical side of the NBN (Gateway, Recorder 2000, species dictionary). I am very pleased to be asked and regard it as a most welcome recognition of BRISC's activities. There is no time to get a report into this newsletter, but one will appear in the January issue.

Another important launch will be taking place on 29 October. BRISC joins forces with the Butterfly Conservation and BRC to host a Scottish launch of the Millennium Atlas at Perth Museum. A programme and invitation has been included with this mailing, and anyone interested should contact Richard Fox as soon as possible (see programme for details). This is a very special opportunity to hear from the editors about all the exciting results of the survey leading to the atlas, and learn about future plans. And it is FREE. Do make sure you book promptly.

This autumn has been a time for meeting persons in high places. Through Scottish Environment LINK, BRISC was chosen as one of eight organisations to lunch with the European Commissioner on the Environment, Margot Wallström, and her small party of three (including a Scott, Paul Macaleavey from Alloa, who is on her Council). Although the programme ran late and lunch was reduced to 35 minutes, we managed to have a reasonably meaningful

discussion, touching upon renewable energy, the water directive, the benefits to Scotland of EU environmental directives and programmes, our disappointment in efforts by the Scottish Executive to commit sufficient funds for CPS and now the Rural Stewardship Scheme, thus causing wide disappointment for too many of the applicants. Even the problem of monitoring and long term databases which no one wants to fund, was raised. But it was making the contact that was most important. The Commissioner agreed to see a representation from LINK in Brussels and has been invited back to Scotland next year to address a LINK conference.

And lastly, but not least, BRISC is trying hard to find funding for a three year development officer to implement our Strategic Document. SNH is very supportive and has promised half the cost of a post, but we need to raise the other half. Raising funds is a time-consuming and frustrating business but your committee is doing its best. If anyone amongst our members feel they can offer expertise in this field, do get in touch. We are also looking for separate funding for a new leaflet and other projects. Members will of course be kept informed about the outcome.

Anne-Marie Smout

## IT corner:

### Recorder 2000 courses

Are you struggling with this new software? Or perhaps you have never used it but would like to get started, or you are comfortable with the basics but want to get more out of this specialist software? Richard Weddle has already got plenty of experience in putting on such courses and has agreed to put on two courses for BRISC members, a basic course and one for more advanced users. Dates are

- ◆ Monday 12 November 2001 – **Basics**. This course will deal with basic data input and output
- ◆ Monday 19 November 2001 – **Intermediate**. This course will deal mainly with reporting and with the crucial aspect of exporting / importing data.

The courses both will take place at the Department for Adult and Continuing Education, St Andrews Building, No 1, Park Drive, Glasgow, with a start time of 9.30am. Costs are £35 per person, which includes hand-outs but bring your own lunch. Number of places are restricted. Please book your place directly from

Richard Weddle, Canto Information Ltd  
89 Novar Drive, Glasgow  
Tel/fax 0141 3391343  
e-mail RichardWeddle@fdn.co.uk

### FREE Webwise CDs

I am in possession of 20 free BBC Webwise CDs for anyone who might be interested. The CDROM is a very good introduction to using the Internet, email and

computers in general. It is suitable for any age and any level of expertise (as long as the user knows how to switch on a computer and put in a CD) and would even be of use to competent users who are not quite sure of all the computer terminology as there is a very good jargon buster. At the end of the taster session, if you have completed everything successfully, you will get a BBC certificate of achievement. The whole CD is introduced by Phillipa Forrester.

If you would like one, please get in touch with

Anne-Marie Smout (Tel 01333 310330 or email [amsmout@aol.com](mailto:amsmout@aol.com))

### DMAP Version 7.1

DMAP is a Windows software package for distribution mapping and coincidence mapping. It can be used with data entered into a wordprocessor, spreadsheet, general database, or biological recording database such as AditSite, BioBase or *Recorder*. Version 7.1 has recently been released which has the following new features added since the release of V7.0:

- **Frequency Mapping.** This new facility displays a distribution map which show the number of records per Grid Reference or Grid Square. These frequencies are coded as Quantity Symbols, and a Key is automatically generated which relates these Symbols to the actual frequencies.
- **User-defined Symbol Priorities.** In earlier versions of DMAP, the Symbol Priorities for duplicate records were fixed. In V7.1, users can, if they wish, modify these priorities.
- **Maps can be saved as GIF Image files** for displaying on Internet Web Sites. In earlier versions of DMAP, maps for Web sites needed to be converted from BMP or WMF files to GIF or JPG format. V7.1 allows the saving of DMAP maps directly as GIF files, removing the need for any conversion.
- **A scanned Bitmap Image can be used as a background map.** This means that users can now simply use a scanner to produce a base map for DMAP, as an alternative to digitising a map.
- **UK PostCode interpretation.** Within the UK, the location of species records can be given as Post Codes as an alternative to (or in addition to) Grid References. The Postcodes are automatically converted to Grid References by DMAP. This facility is available in all copies of V7.1 but it requires an additional database and associated linking software available from AFD Software Ltd. Further details about this are available on request.
- For the British Isles maps supplied with DMAP, the **co-ordinate display** in the DMAP Status Bar can now be in alphanumeric format, displayed as **British, Irish, or**

**Channel Islands Grid References** when the mouse is over these areas. Further details about implementing this are available on request.

#### **DMAP and Recorder 2000**

*Recorder 2000* provides two ways of producing distribution maps:

1. An in-built mapping tool, MapServer, which has some basic distribution mapping functionality.
2. DMAP support *via* a DMAP Data Export Module. This gives access to DMAP to provide some more advanced features for species and biotope mapping, including Distribution Mapping, Quantity Mapping, Frequency Mapping, Coincidence Mapping, Multispecies Mapping, Biodiversity Mapping, and a variety of ways of getting publication quality maps into documents, reports, and biological atlas publications. The DMAP Export Module is able to export data to DMAP for a single species, a group of species, or all species in the database.

DMAP itself is not supplied with *Recorder 2000*, but the DMAP Export Module is supplied as part of the *Recorder 2000* package. *Recorder* users who already have DMAP can continue to use their version of DMAP or can, if they wish, upgrade to the latest version of DMAP. *Recorder* users who do not have DMAP can obtain it *via* the contact information given at the end of this article.

A Web page specifically for people who are interested in using DMAP with *Recorder 2000* has now been set up on the DMAP Web site and can be accessed by following the links:

How to... Use DMAP with *Recorder 2000*, or, directly, as <http://www.dmap.co.uk/rec2000.htm>

This page will be updated periodically and it contains useful information including any DMAP-related add-ons available from *Recorder 2000* Resellers, like the one already described there for advanced distribution mapping, from Thurner Automation.

#### **For further information about DMAP:**

**Web Site:** <http://www.dmap.co.uk/>

**Email:** [info@dmap.co.uk](mailto:info@dmap.co.uk)

**Tel:** 01344 883929

**Dr Alan Morton, Blackthorn Cottage, Chawridge Lane, Winkfield, Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 4QR.**

Two ID workshops from The native woodlands discussion group & Argyll Green Woodworkers Association:

**18-20 October 2001 Introduction to Woodland lichens – Tutors Brian & Sandy Coppins**

**1-3 November 2001 Woodland Bryophytes – Tutor Ben Averis**

**Both workshops at Kilmartin Hotel, Kilmartin, Argyll. - members £35 non-members £45. Organiser Carol Crawford (Tel 01292 –280800)**

#### **Additions and Amendments to Members List published in the last issue of BRISC Recorder News. Please note the following**

##### **Additional addresses:**

- ◆ Paul Daw, Tigh na Tulloch, Minard INVERARY PA32 8YQ email [monedula@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:monedula@globalnet.co.uk)
- ◆ North Lanarkshire BRC – Jenny Storey now has her own email [storeyj@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:storeyj@northlan.gov.uk) It also appears that her surname got left out in the previous list.
- ◆ Linda Tedford, Seafield Bungalow, Forres, Invernesshire, IV3 6TN – email [info@finlaystone.co.uk](mailto:info@finlaystone.co.uk)

##### **Amendment**

- ◆ Barbara Sumners email should have read [Barbara\\_Sumner@excite.co.uk](mailto:Barbara_Sumner@excite.co.uk) (Barbara Sumner), i.e. with an underline between first and second name - NOT a dot.

The NBN has been successful in obtaining funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a three-year officer to take forward the NBN's project regarding national schemes and societies. The post will be based at Monks Wood. Trevor James, until recently chair of NFBR, has been appointed to this challenging job.

#### **Historic Perthshire Plant Records Go Online**

Perth Museum has just launched its first online database. The Perthshire Herbarium website

([www.pkc.gov.uk/herbarium](http://www.pkc.gov.uk/herbarium)) tells the story of the Perthshire flora and its study by botanists and collectors since the Nineteenth Century. Perthshire is one of the classic areas of British botany. There are many thousands of botanical specimens collected in Perthshire present in the world's herbaria but the collection at Perth Museum is probably the largest single Perthshire collection. The three Perthshire Watsonian vice counties cover an area of 6,800 square kilometres which includes the old counties of Perthshire and Clackmannanshire in their entirety, and portions of Fife, Angus, Kinross and Stirlingshire.

The plants of Perthshire were being recorded as early as 1684 by Sir Robert Sibbald (1641-1722), founder of the Edinburgh Botanic Garden, in his 'Scotland Illustrated'. But it was the nineteenth century revolution in travel which brought botanists flocking to the Perthshire mountains in the footsteps of earlier pioneers. It is this 'golden age' of natural history that is so strongly represented by the collection.

Much of the collection was brought together by the eminent Scottish Naturalist, Dr Francis Buchanan White (1842-1894) while he worked on the only comprehensive flora of the area, *The Flora of Perthshire*, published posthumously in 1898. White worked in close association with the Perthshire Society of Natural Science, which he founded and of which he was the first President. The Society is still closely associated with Perth Museum and Art Gallery and has a Botanical Section.

The Perthshire herbarium is a collection of 12,800 pressed plant specimens collected in the three Perthshire vice-counties since 1860. This collection was recently catalogued with funding from a grant award by the Museums & Galleries Commission / Jerwood Foundation Cataloguing Grants Scheme. Part of the website has been developed in conjunction with the Scottish Cultural Resource Access Network and is a searchable database of this nationally important collection.

It is intended that this pilot project will lead onto the development of a major web resource for accessing the collections of Perth Museum & Art Gallery in the future. The database is searchable on the online website at [www.pkc.gov.uk/herbarium](http://www.pkc.gov.uk/herbarium)

Mark Simmons  
Principal Officer Natural Sciences  
Perth Museum & Art Gallery

**Scottish Environment Statistics**

have recently been published. This new annual publication provides summary information showing trends in key aspects of the Scottish environment and a commentary describing the information shown. The information is also available on the website Scottish Environment Statistics Online at

[www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/envonline](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/envonline)

which provides a wider set of statistics relating to the environment in Scotland, source details, and links to related sites. Copies of a booklet 'Key Scottish Environment Statistics' are available free from the Stationary Office Bookshop, 71 Lothian Road, EH3 9AZ email [edinburgh.bookshop@theso.co.uk](mailto:edinburgh.bookshop@theso.co.uk) or phone 0870 606 5566 fax 0870 606 5588

**Scottish Environment LINK, the Marine Environment, Nuclear Power & Climate Change, Consultation on Access, Biodiversity, Reviews of Woodland Grant Scheme & Farm Woodland Premium Scheme in Scotland, etc.**

These are just some of the issues that have exercised Scottish Environment LINK in the last few months. With BRISC's very limited resources, both as regards manpower and finances, it is an enormous bonus to us that we can rely on LINK to make sure that such important issues do not go unchallenged, and that the voice of the voluntary sector in society is heard loud and clear in the right places. Small organisations such as BRISC are indebted to larger partners within LINK with more resources to lead on these political issues. It is unfortunately the case that politics shape our lives – and the future of the environment – but on our own, BRISC could never manage to make much of an impact, or respond to more than a few issues. Importantly, all partners in LINK are free to comment, sign up or abstain. For BRISC members' information BRISC has recently signed up to a Marine statement to Westminster, supported by similar LINK groups in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which says

“The fate of UK's people has for millennia been intertwined with her seas. Our marine life is extraordinarily diverse yet we have long taken our seas and coasts for granted. Growing human pressures together with poorly co-ordinated management, have resulted in damage to our marine ecosystems and the overexploitation of our marine natural resources.

We are now faced with a stark choice; to continue to preside over the decline of our oceans or to take action now to put our oceans on the path to recovery and regeneration. It is only by decisive action that we can hope to pass on to our children a rich and diverse marine environment.

If ever there was a need for 'joined up government' then surely it is in the recovery of our seas. Environmental groups call upon the UK and devolved governments to make a commitment to adopt a suite of national integrated marine policies.”

We have also signed up to a statement on Nuclear Energy and Climate Change to the Scottish Executive and for use in the press:

"Nuclear power can never be part of sustainable development since it creates dangerous wastes which must be looked after for many thousands of years. Nuclear power also entails routine radioactive emissions, the potential for catastrophic accidents and the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation. Scottish Environment LINK recognises the urgent need for action to reduce climate change emissions and opposes

the construction of any new nuclear capacity in Scotland, calling instead for the Scottish Executive and Scottish business to greatly expand appropriate renewable energy capacity and invest in much greater energy efficiency."

In addition BRISC has given our support to LINK's reply to a consultation on forestry and grants from the Forestry Commission, too long to state here, to consultation on Access and others.

LINK has also expressed disappointment that nature conservation has not been included in the Executive's legislative programme of 18 bills for the coming year books for this session. It was hoped that the recent consultation on 'The Nature of Scotland' would result in much needed legislation.

Anne-Marie Smout

## Book Reviews

**Vansteewegen, Christian. (1998). *L'histoire des oiseaux de France, Suisse et Belgique: L'évolution des populations, le statut des espèces*. Delachaux et Niestlé. ISBN 2-603-01106-5 pp 336. pbk 179Fr.**

I picked up this excellent book on the shelves of an ecological visitor-centre at St Martin de Crau in the Camague this summer, and as it is not likely to be noticed in the usual bird journals in this country, it is worth drawing attention to it here. Essentially it is a survey of the twentieth-century distribution of birds in France, Belgium and Switzerland, though it has a few intriguing references to earlier centuries: for example, a reference to the sale of 2000 Night Herons in the market at Gouda in 1357.

The author works at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium and at the Natural History Museum in Paris. He is exceedingly well informed on the history of bird distribution. The book is in two parts: an account of the evolution of the European avifauna and its characteristics in his chosen area, and a detailed account of the fortunes of individual species.

Of 283 species breeding in France, he considers 15% as too rare to detect a trend, 54% as stable or probably stable, 11% as declining and 19% as increasing – a conclusion based on comparing the French Atlas of 1970-75 with that of 1985-89. To British eyes, this seems remarkably cheerful, a reflection both of the considerable success of the bird protection movement in France and the nature of a habitat where intensive farming is comparatively restricted.

In detail, the shape of the trend over the century can vary remarkably. The White Stork hit a low point in the middle decades but is now increasing rapidly both in France and Switzerland. The Black Stork is also on the march. By contrast, the Lapwing was a scarce bird around 1900,

expanded dramatically in mid-century and has crashed since – for instance from 20,000 pairs in Sologne in 1961 to around 3,000 in 1990. Increasing species include many raptors since effective protection was given around 1960, such as the three harriers, Honey Buzzard, Goshawk, Hobby and the two kites, though they have probably still not achieved their nineteenth-century strength. The Rook, a bird of the north in 1900, has expanded steadily south throughout the century without any obvious setback, and much the same can be said of the Black-headed Gull. More logical in the light of global warming is the northward spread of the Serin, Bonelli's Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Cetti's Warbler and (unevenly) the Zitting Cisticola, with the concomitant decline of the Icterine Warbler. But how do we account for the spreading distribution of the Bullfinch and the Black Woodpecker? The Herring Gull, the Lesser Black-back and the Great Black-back have all expanded enormously, and it is no surprise that Gannets and Fulmars are spreading, but all three species of auks are in steep decline. Also in decline, sadly, are the Little Bustard, the Hoopoe and the Ortolan. The herons and the egrets are mostly on the increase, but not the two bitterns.

Particularly interesting is the history of the Starling. Up to 1940, it was unremarkable, but a formidable explosion of numbers and range suddenly took place, involving the doubling of population in three years and the invasion of the Mediterranean and the Pyrenees from the north. In Belgium, by 1972, roosts were being dynamited in an effort to limit the damage to cherry orchards, and 620,000 birds were eliminated in six years without any impact whatever on the local population. Since 1980 the population has stabilised and fallen back, attributed by the author to colder winters and drier springs and to more limited food supplies.

Altogether, this is an absorbing book for anyone excited by the mysteries of bird distribution and wanting to take a wider view than that of our own islands alone. It also very clearly shows the value of taking a longer time perspective on changes in numbers than we tend to do in this country.

Chris Smout

**Leverton, Roy (2001). *Enjoying moths*. T & AD Poyser Ltd. pp. 276 ISBN 0-85661-124-7 hbk £29**

If you have ever been thinking about getting into moths, this is the book for you. True to the title, the author's own enthusiasm for moths shines out of every page and is extremely infectious. The text is easy and informal, full of personal observations, funny anecdotes, and practical advice. The book is also beautifully produced and a pleasure to handle. The author confesses to having been a collector of specimens in his youth but has since taken up photography as 'a kinder alternative'. And what photographs! Wonderful images in full colour generously adorn almost every page throughout, all taken by the author

himself and making anyone, who has tried to photograph moths for year, marvel at the sharpness and composition. The author used to live in Sussex but found the south overcrowded and relocated with his family to Banffshire in 1989. Many of the photographs as well as personal observations are consequently from Scotland.

There are twelve chapters covering all aspects of moths and 'mothing'. The first three chapters discuss the biological aspects – What is a moth (what makes moths different from butterflies, life cycle, feeding strategies, over-wintering strategies, etc); colours, patterns and shape (what is the purpose of colour, and how moths recognise their own species and find mates). It is a mind-blowing fact that male moths can detect females by a scent (pheromones) that these release ('call') to advertise their presence and willingness to have a mate over a distance of 1km! Most females are mated even before their wings have dried. There is also a chapter on numbers and distribution (what is successful species, losses and gains on the British list, range and abundance).

Then we move on to the practical side of 'enjoying moths', with advice on how to identify moths (what to look for, guide books to use, seeking further help), and where to find them. There are chapters on finding moths by day as well as by night, describing how different moths inhabit different habitats and some of their favourite flowers. 'Dusking' is explained, i.e. using a net at dusk to catch species that are not attracted to light. There is a chapter on how to attract moths, discussing the merits of using sugar and wine-roping (with recipe), pheromones, light trapping, and most importantly, care of the catch as well as some thoughts on the effectiveness or otherwise of light trapping.

The alternative is visual searching, and there is advice on how to find eggs and caterpillars. Serious 'mothers' often rear moths in captivity, and there is advice and personal observations on various aspects of this. A whole chapter deals with photography as an alternative to collecting, and gives detailed advice of how to get the best results. If you wish to take things further and make a scientific contribution, there is advice on how to go about that, while the final chapter deals with the wider conservation of moths.

The four appendices with various lists I found less useful and complete. E.g. the author would have done well to contact Local Records Centres about numbers of species recorded for each Watsonian Vice-county, and I can add at least one conspicuous species to the list of day-flying moths (the Cinnabar). However, these are insignificant quibbles, and the book is entirely enjoyable and infectious in its enthusiasm in every way. We have been trapping moths on and off for nearly ten years, but this has greatly enthused us in our efforts – and I have learnt a lot and am still learning. We have already planned it as Christmas present for at least two relatives!

Anne-Marie Smout

## Lots of Dates for the diary in Oct /Nov 2001

**11 October – Solway Firth Partnership Annual Conference 2001** at Easterbrook Hall, Crichton Estate, Dumfries – morning 'Recovery in the Solway's coastal communities Post Foot and Mouth'; afternoon: 'Current Coastal Management Issues in the Solway Firth' - Entry FREE

**11-12 October -The Jungle of the Law:** New legislative instruments in Scotland. 3<sup>rd</sup> annual general meeting of the Scottish section of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, the British Geological Survey, Murchison House, West Mains Road, Edinburgh. non-members £60; members £45 - for both days, £35 and £25 respectively for one day.

**20 October Tree planting and family fun day at Glen Quey** by Dollar, organised by the Woodland Trust. Admission free. Contact the Woodland Trust Scotland, Glenruthven Mill, Abbey Road, Auchterarder, Pethshire PH3 1DP tel 01764 662554

**26-28 October – The Scottish Ornithologists Club's Annual Conference and AGM 2001** at Balavil Sport Hotel, Newtonmore. Registration fee £25 for two days or £14 for one. Food and accommodation extra. Booking and programme from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, EH7 5BT

**27 October - Access All Areas – Friends of the Earth Scotland's Freedom of Information Conference** at Renfield St Stephen's Church, Bath Street, Glasgow £10 Individuals, £50 NGOs. Contact Kirstie Shirra, FOE, 72 Newhaven Rd, Edinburgh or e-mail [kshirra@foe-scotland.org.uk](mailto:kshirra@foe-scotland.org.uk)

**17 November – Scottish Badgers – 7<sup>th</sup> National Conference** at Battleby. Programme and booking form from North Tayside Badger Group PO Box 6958, Forfar, DD8 1YT £22 with Lunch (£16 without)

**23 November – LINK Annual Conference: Making Links - Citizens and Sustainability** to be held in association with Education 21 Scotland at Edinburgh City Chambers. £35 including lunch

**28 November 2001 – Scottish Woodland History Discussion Group** meeting at Battleby. Programme and booking (£25) from Miss N Jeffress at the Centre for Environmental History and Policy, University of Stirling

**Deadline for material for next issue of BRISC Recorder News is 10 December 2001. All material to Anne-Marie Smout, preferably in electronic form. to [amsmout@aol.com](mailto:amsmout@aol.com) or by post to Chesterhill, Shore Road, Anstruther, Fife KY10 3DZ or fax 01333 311193**