

NBN Conference review

02/12/2015

On 19th and 20th November, just under 180 delegates from biodiversity organisations, local environmental records centres, recording schemes, government bodies, students and individuals all concerned with biodiversity data and biological recording came together at the Lakeside Conference Centre in York for the 15th NBN Conference.

For the first time in its history the Conference ran over two days and moved away from London, which had been its home for all previous NBN Conferences, to York.

The extended duration allowed us to reassess the programme and format of the Conference resulting in four keynote addresses, the annual Sir John Burnett Memorial lecture as well as the main presentations and an increased number of speed talks, which had proved so popular in 2014. Across the two days 35 speakers covered a broad range of subjects within the global to local theme. A summary of the common themes arising from this wide range of speakers is given below and the abstracts for each talk can be found in the conference booklet [here](#).

We were also pleased to include a symposia to discuss public engagement in wildlife recording, a session which was developed and coordinated by Bristol Natural History Consortium, who are responsible for the National BioBlitz programme.

1. Open Data

A common message from almost every talk was the importance of open data. A wide range of benefits of open data were identified, which included the motivation of recorders when they see their dot appear on the map, ensuring quicker time to market such that data can be used to efficiently inform policy and decision making and to open the door to new audiences and enabling innovation. This repeated message reinforced that we must continue to openly discuss open data, the challenges and opportunities it will present and strive towards embracing the open data revolution. On this very subject, a poignant end to the Conference came in the shape of Andy Clements, Director of British Trust for Ornithology, handing over 145 million BTO records for upload to the NBN Gateway.

2. Collaboration

It was extremely motivating to repeatedly hear the message that working together is critical to achieve our individual and collective goals. Being a network for nature, hearing 'partnership' and 'collaboration' being talked about as vital components for success was hugely important. The NBN Action Plan will build on this through its working groups, bringing together individuals and organisations from across the Network to collaborate together and push ourselves further than we have done before to bring about change.

3. All scales of recording and partnership are invaluable

In a Conference which was all about building the partnership globally and locally, hearing stories from individuals who have a lifetime of recording behind them, to projects which are encouraging mass participation, not just in the UK and Northern Ireland, but worldwide, really did demonstrate that everyone's contribution is vital to the recording effort, at whatever level that may be.

NBN Honorary Membership

The 2015 NBN Honorary Membership was awarded to Bill Ely. Bill was completely surprised to receive this award in recognition of his commitment and contribution to biological recording and the mentoring of others. You can read the full story and reason for Bill's award [here](#).

UK Awards to Celebrate Biological Recording and Information Sharing

In addition to the Conference, we held a ceremony to present the inaugural UK Awards to celebrate biological recording and information sharing. This was carried out on Thursday evening in central York and was attended by over 100 people. A separate news article on this fantastic evening can be found [here](#).

Sir John Burnett Memorial lecture

The Sir John Burnett Memorial lecture was delivered by David Stroud of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee who discussed "Data across scales: from local studies to global change processes". An inspiring presentation outlining the importance of volunteer and professional recorders not only in helping shape environmental decision making at a local and national level but stressing the importance of these data for reporting globally on our rapidly changing environments.

The lecture was kindly sponsored by Forest Carbon.

Accessing the presentations

All of the presentations can be downloaded from the links below and a selection of photographs from the two days can also be viewed below.

The Conference Delegate Booklet can be downloaded [here](#) containing all of the talk abstracts.

We did not record this year's Conference due to cost constraints and low viewings of the recordings that we carried out in 2013 and 2014. We will be looking into streaming the event in the future, following feedback to this effect.

A big thank you!

Thank you to everyone who attended, presented and sponsored the 2015 NBN Conference and for helping to make it a success.

We cannot finish without noting the death of NBN CEO, [John Sawyer](#), less than two weeks before the Conference took place. This could have overshadowed proceedings, but whilst people wanted to talk about it and we held a minute's silence in his memory, the Conference and Awards ceremony really did feel like a celebration of John's life and the amazing work he had started for the NBN.

Perhaps the final key message from the conference should be that, collectively we will carry on John's work to support both his and the NBN vision.

Presentations - Thursday 19th November

[Keynote address Donald Hobern, Global Biodiversity Information Facility](#)

[Alison Dyke, Stockholm Environment Institute](#)

[Dominic Oldman, British Museum](#)

[Keynote address Roderic Page, University of Glasgow](#)

[Liam Lysaght, National Biodiversity Data Centre](#)

[Tom August, Biological Records Centre](#)

[Ella Vogel, NBN Consultants Portal](#)

[Katy Potts, Train the Trainers](#)

[Ben Brown, NBN PhD researcher, University of Nottingham](#)

[Plenary presentation Jonathan Silvertown, iSpot / University of Edinburgh](#)

[Ed Bartlett, National Trust](#)

[Tatsuya Amano, University of Cambridge](#)

[Rachel Stroud, NBN](#)

[Rich Burkmar, Field Studies Council](#)

[Ryan Clark, Buckinghamshire County Council](#)

[Damian McFerran, Centre for Environmental Data and Recording \(CEDaR\)](#)

Presentations - Friday 20th November

Keynote address - Andy Musgrove, British Trust for Ornithology

Suzanne Waymont, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

Janet Simkin, British Lichen Society

Paula Lightfoot, Seasearch

Jan Collins, Bat Conservation Trust

Christine Johnson, Outer Hebrides Biological Recording

Katie Watson, Student - Nottingham Trent University

Bill Ely, volunteer recorder

The Sir John Burnett Memorial Lecture, 2015 – David Stroud, Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Chris du Feu - volunteer recorder

Matt Arnold, MEDIN

Joseph Bailey, University of Nottingham

Phillip Buckham-Bonnett, University of York

Dave Raffaelli, University of York

Andy Clements, British Trust for Ornithology





