Worms-Eye View
field notes from the National Biodiversity Network Conference, 2024

We're not reintroducing beavers, but
behind the scenes, tending the data,
pausing to look up, clock that butterfly,

never-before north of Dundee. That dot
on maps making its mark; a world-changing
hedgehog, snuffling. The worms' agenda

and soil's courage through all weathers.
Whether we should flip bars over, which
colours to pour into figures, shaping truths

through Excel. Choices that are really opinions.
Meanwhile, a nation kneels to notice who lives
in micro-forests on sea defences. Flow of data,

green lichen of not-knowing, as beings record
beings. Data burrows through international humus
and the tie-dye of Living England. Bottlenecks unclog –

glug glug flow of visualisation and metadata, dancing
together. Quadrangles over counties, countries. Do we
do detail or a montage, as we struggle to speak fungi?

The finite capacity of nature, those who measure it.
The shiny data, sat on a whole compost heap
of infrastructure. A map is an atlas is a book of spells:

a grammar of animacy; a gateway, a stile, a kissing
gate. Data-sharing platter, spatial-mapper, portal-
zapper, download-strata. A flow of nutrients,

underpinning not undermining. Stood on this atlas,
scratching our heads, together. On this superfluity
of magic, the nature of data, its shareable flavour.

Flocks of under-loved gatherers amongst eDNA
digitized virtuscape   downloadable land   a QR
of checkered field squares   data arrives   live

in the land of hedgehogs   the uncertainties
lodged between spines   dot-to-dot of not-knowing
the grist of seeking   savouring   what we still have

the not-knowing how to exit the Anthropocene
until we let butterflies tell stories of flowers
place hands on timber   listen as its pulse

slows with our own   invite starlings to murmurate
in our amygdalae   the thought trilling
that we are a part of   not apart from   this data

a life with bees   an island   coming back to life
a life where we recall that Darwin wrote *Love*
too and he meant it as much as *Evolution*

Caleb Parkin, April 2025