

# Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre

*Information on the natural environment from the Humber to the Wash*

## Newsletter Summer/Autumn 2005

### Name change – Biological to Environmental

It has been decided to change the working name of Lincolnshire Biological Records Centre to the permanent one of Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre. This takes into account the aim of the Records Centre to include geological data, and, in the future, other data relating to the natural environment.

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Welcome to the first newsletter of Lincolnshire ERC.

I came into post as Development Officer in January 2005, and since then my main task has been finding out about the current situation regarding biological and geological information in Lincolnshire, and what services potential users would expect a Records Centre to provide. I have tried to get in touch with all the key recorders and data holders, but please get in touch if I have missed you out, or if you have any comments to make. One of the outcomes of this process will be an ongoing meta-database of available resources, including information on format, age, coverage, accessibility, etc. In conjunction with the ERC Working Group, I have also started to draft policies documents and a business plan, along the guidelines produced by the National Biodiversity Network.



LINCOLNSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL



Lincolnshire  
Wildlife  
Trust



It is planned that a prototype ERC will be launched at the beginning of 2006, being fully operational by the beginning of 2008. Despite it still being early in the development phase, the ERC is already involved in a number of projects, including the Wildlife Sites review and Humber Environmental Data Centre.

The aim of this newsletter is to reach as broad a range of people as possible. If you have any questions, queries, thoughts or opinions, then please get in touch with me, or a member of the Working Group [see last page].

Margaret Haggerty, Lincolnshire ERC Development Officer

## **Biological recording in Lincolnshire and the formation of a Records Centre**

Don Wright, Chairman BAP Steering Group

Organisations associated with natural history and nature conservation keep records and they are generally not available outside the organisation. Most naturalists keep good records of their work and they may or may not be shared with other naturalists. The method of recording will vary. One recorder of note had accurate records on the back of envelopes and scraps of paper stored in a pillow case! In the 1970s Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust recorded data from over 1000 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, all on record cards. English Nature, County Councils, Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union and others all collected data. Clearly a 'sorting office' was needed.

In the mid 1990s meetings were held to 'formulate some ideas' about running a data network in the county. In September 2000 English Nature initiated meetings with Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust to consider setting up a Biological Records Centre. A consultancy - Baker Shepherd Gillespie - was given the task of producing a report on the 'Current situation and the future.' This report was received in March 2002 and the conclusion that there was a strong need and desire for a Local Records Centre (LRC) was made available to all the partners of the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) through the BAP Steering Group. A further contract was offered by English Nature with the main aim of investigating the feasibility of establishing a sustainable LRC for the historic county. By this time a LRC Steering Group had been set up which was more representative of the interested partners. Bill Butcher from Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) led the study and produced a first report in June 2003. There was a lengthy debate as to who should run

the LRC, should it be Local Authority led, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust led or should it be independent of any organisation. Eventually a majority of the LRC Steering Group recommended to the BAP Steering Group that an independent model be established and this was agreed.

It took several meetings to establish funding, produce job descriptions and a partnership agreement, and agree on a base and method of advertising, etc. In August 2004 I wrote to all members of the BAP Steering Group to announce that four sources of funding had been identified, namely English Nature, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union. Through their generosity a post of LRC Development Officer could be established for a period of three years, during which time a more widely funded business plan would be drawn up to make the LRC sustainable.

The first meeting of the Working Group [see Contacts, page 9] was held in December 2004, under the chairmanship of Rick Keymer (English Nature) and Margaret Cole was appointed as Development Officer. She started in early January 2005, based at an office in Banovallum House, Horncastle (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust HQ). Earlier in the year Margaret married and changed her surname to Haggerty. Regular meetings of the Working Group have been held with Margaret giving detailed reports of progress at each meeting.

## **County recording: the Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union perspective**

Richard Chadd, President Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union

The LNU has a proud history of ecological and environmental study, stretching back to its foundation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Despite sporadic upheavals (including the occasional possibility that the Union could fold completely), it is still thriving in 2005 and forms the core of an exemplary County Recorder Network. A huge amount of expertise exists within this Network, with specialist recording effort ranging from fungi to mammals, via algae, bryophytes, higher plants, millipedes, shieldbugs, sawflies, beetles, caddisflies, fish and just about every organism which grows, flies swims or scuttles around, over or in the good earth of Lincolnshire. County geology is also an area of expertise.

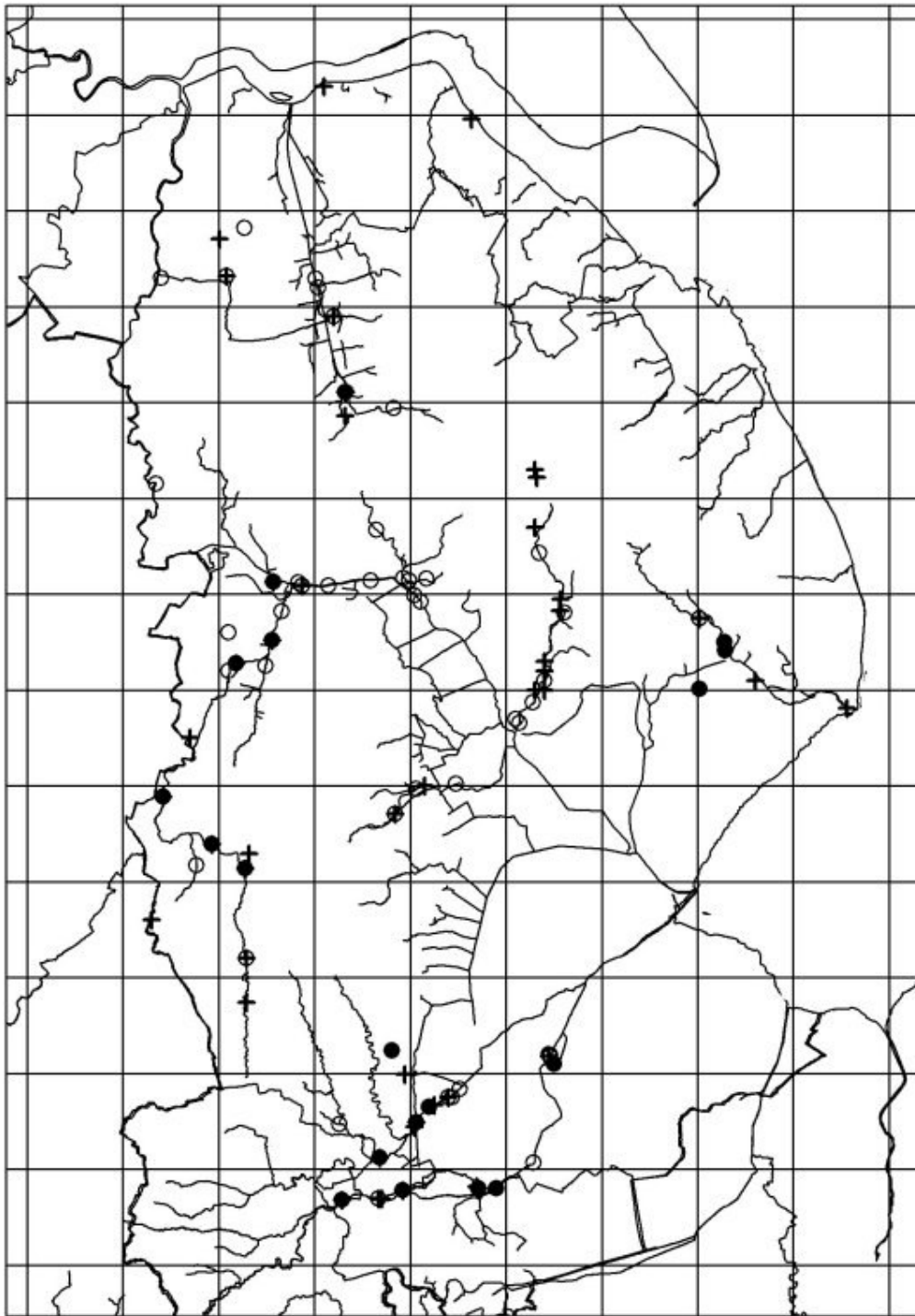
Much of this recording effort has a definite direction and purpose. The LNU has published county floras and county-based guides to certain groups, such as moths & butterflies, and has contributed to national recording schemes in, for example, spiders and dragonflies. Certain areas, however, may be well recorded, but the effort is substantially under-utilised, including that in my own specialist field of freshwater invertebrates. Changes in distribution of species, both expansion and contraction of recorded populations, may be accelerating with habitat destruction (or creation), changes in farming practice and increasingly unstable weather patterns. The spread of invasive, non-native species, such as Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*) and Australian Swamp Stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*) is another issue worthy of the most rigorous attention.

Contribution of county records to a Lincolnshire Records Centre can result in an improvement in our appreciation of distribution-patterns for species and concomitant gains in our understanding of ecological associations, on a local, county-wide or even national scale, and management practices necessary for the maintenance and expansion of species cohorts and improvements in entire ecosystems. Control of invasive, non-native species can also be facilitated in this way. At the largest scale, collation of records in a Records Centre can contribute to our understanding of the effects of global warming. Even the datasets that are routinely sent to national recording schemes can benefit from analysis that provides a local perspective, as in the example of range-expansion of the Banded Demoiselle Damselfly (*Calopteryx splendens*) illustrated below. Utilisation of those datasets which lack national recording schemes can add to this perspective.



Adult Banded Demoiselle Damselfly (*Calopteryx splendens*)

Establishment of a Lincolnshire ERC provides a real opportunity to learn all we, as a community of committed naturalists, can about the county environment. It allows research to be undertaken by those who lack knowledge in a particular area, perhaps so that they can be encouraged to add their time and talents to the recording effort. Ultimately, it can result in publication of the data, in book format or electronically, for the use of the naturalist community, and, as the ultimate goal, result in an overall gain in ecological diversity and species richness in an already fascinating county.



Range-expansion of larval Banded Demoiselle (black circles 1990-1994, crosses 1995-1999, white circles 2000-2003)

## **Local Planning Authorities, Strategic Environmental Assessment & Wildlife Sites**

Neil Pike, English Nature Conservation Officer (Lincolnshire)

A lot has changed for Local Planning Authorities in the last 18 months. The Government has introduced the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which, among other things, has created the Local Development Framework process. The other piece of regulation to be introduced has a more direct impact on the environment, and places a duty on Local Authorities and others to monitor and report on the impacts on the environment of their plans and programmes. This is the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004.

The Regulation requires any statutory authority responsible for preparing and implementing policies, plans or programmes to undertake an initial assessment of the likely environmental ramifications of the plan or programme, identify environmental receptors, collect baseline information on these, and monitor the impacts of the implementation of the plan or programme against them. A number of SEAs have been prepared already, and as Biodiversity is an identified area that SEAs must report against, Statutory Agencies must now identify environmental receptors, identify baselines and monitor against them. The key issue for us is which receptors they choose.

The initial temptation, not surprisingly, has been to select those receptors for which baseline information is already available and which other organizations monitor. The percentage of SSSIs in favourable condition is a particular favourite, as is the hectareage of Local Nature Reserves per 1000 population. There is nothing wrong with these receptors *per se*, but they do not tell the whole story in terms of monitoring impacts – SSSIs enjoy separate legal protection, and condition of them seldom relates to development control pressure – management of the sites themselves is a much greater driver for condition. Wildlife Sites could be better and more informative receptors.

Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites, often individual fields or woodlands that have a value, both alone and in combination, to wildlife. In terms of both number and extent, they are reliant on planning policy to a far greater degree than SSSIs as they do not enjoy legislative protection. They therefore rely on policies contained in development plans for survival and as such they, alongside protected species, represent an

environmental receptor that can better reflect the green credentials of any plan or project with a land-use planning element.

Utilising Wildlife Sites as environmental receptors in SEAs for planning documents is not straightforward – the effort, in terms of management and resources, needs to be made available to Wildlife Site projects to provide baseline data, and to monitor the status of them as the SEA process requires. This, however, would be required for any robust set of environmental indicators, and the utilization of Wildlife Sites in the SEA process offers an opportunity for plan-makers to get added value from the process as contribution to the Wildlife Site project also has direct biodiversity benefits outside the statutory site system.

In Lincolnshire, a group consisting of Local Authorities, Statutory Agencies and Non-Government Organisations are refining the Wildlife Sites system, with the aim of producing robust, regularly updated information on the county's Wildlife Sites. As it develops, it will require further support, and I hope that it will prove to be an environmental resource of the highest value to decision-makers in Lincolnshire. For more information on the Lincolnshire Wildlife Sites project, contact the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

## **Working with Humber INCA and the Humber Environmental Data Centre**

Darren Clarke, Humber INCA Field Officer

The Humber Estuary is of international importance for birds and also of vital importance to the economy of the UK. In addition to the outstanding wildlife habitats, it has the largest ports complex in the country and major concentrations of the electricity generation, oil refining, chemicals, iron and steel, food processing and other industries. It is surrounded by vast tracts of high grade farmland and over a third of a million people live on its floodplain. The area also has a rich historic environment. The challenge is to protect and enhance nature conservation while also gaining further economic growth.

The national and international legislation under which the Humber is designated requires rigorous appraisal of proposed development plans and projects so that there

are no significant negative impacts. The Humber Environmental Data Centre is being set up to provide planners and developers with readily available, quality assured information for such assessments.

Vast quantities of monitoring data are gathered by many organisations and companies on all aspects of the Humber's environment. The Centre will provide a 'one stop shop' for information covering the physical environment, chemical quality, ecology, archaeology, some socio-economic criteria, etc. The south side of the estuary is in the area of the Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre while the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre covers the north. HEDC, run by Humber INCA, will work with partner organisations, including the two county record centres to gain, archive, present and supply such information to ensure that decision-making takes account of all aspects of the Humber's environment and statutory requirements in as simple and streamlined a manner as possible.

By working in partnership across administrative boundaries this network of organisations will be a major aid to ensuring that the estuary is managed in a sustainable manner and that its wildlife riches are protected and enhanced for future generations.

HEDC will make an important contribution to Humber INCA's mission of '**Industry and Nature in Harmony**'.



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