

Climate and Nature (CAN) Champion Scheme

Focus Meeting – August 2026

Danny Moody, Chief Executive of Northants CALC, welcomed attendees to the latest CAN Champion Focus Meeting and introduced guest speaker Richard Coppins from the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre (NBRC). Richard provided an engaging introduction to wildlife recording, explaining why biological records are so important and how local councils, community groups and residents can contribute to nature recovery across Northamptonshire.

Richard began by explaining the role of the NBRC, which acts as Northamptonshire's central hub for collecting, verifying and managing environmental information. The centre maintains a growing database containing over 1.2 million species records, more than one million of which have been verified, covering 57 taxonomic groups. In addition to information on species, the centre also holds valuable data relating to habitats, geological sites and Local Wildlife Sites. This information is used by a wide range of organisations including local authorities, researchers, consultants, conservation organisations and government bodies. The NBRC also supports local recorders through its library, wildlife events and community networks.

The meeting highlighted that wildlife recording is about much more than simply identifying unusual species. Richard explained that biological records provide an important evidence base for conservation, research, land management and environmental decision-making. These records help build a picture of where species occur, how populations change over time and how wildlife responds to pressures such as habitat loss and climate change. Information collected locally can also contribute to regional and national datasets through organisations such as the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas, national recording schemes and public bodies including the Environment Agency.

Attendees were introduced to the principle that every wildlife record should answer four simple questions: who observed it, what was recorded, where it was seen and when it was observed. Providing this information allows records to be verified and used effectively. Photographs were strongly encouraged, particularly for mobile species such as birds, mammals and insects, as images help experts confirm identifications and improve data quality. Richard stressed that while rare and protected species are important, common species should not be overlooked. Building a complete picture of biodiversity requires records of all wildlife, and species that appear common today may provide valuable evidence of environmental change in the future.

The presentation also explored how wildlife records contribute to wider nature recovery work. Richard demonstrated how ecological information can be combined with mapping data to identify existing habitats, statutory protected sites, ancient woodland,

important wildlife areas and locations where biodiversity could potentially be enhanced. This evidence forms part of the foundation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, helping to identify opportunities for habitat creation, restoration and improved ecological connectivity across the landscape.

The session also showcased a number of resources available to support anyone interested in wildlife recording. Richard highlighted the range of identification guides available, including resources that can be borrowed from the NBRC library. Participants were introduced to tools such as the Merlin Bird ID app, which can identify birds through their songs and calls, and iRecord, the national platform used to submit wildlife records. Local recording communities and specialist groups, including the WILDside Facebook group and Northants Butterflies, were also recommended as valuable sources of support and advice. Training opportunities run by the Wildlife Trust and the NBRC were highlighted as excellent ways for newcomers to build confidence and develop identification skills.

Throughout the presentation, Richard emphasised that wildlife recording is something that anybody can become involved in, regardless of experience. By recording local wildlife and sharing observations through recognised channels, individuals can contribute directly to the evidence base used to protect and enhance Northamptonshire's natural environment. The session demonstrated how local observations can scale up to inform county-wide nature recovery planning, support decision-making and contribute to national understanding of biodiversity trends.

Question	Answer
Do you have many developers' ecological consultants requesting information from you?	Most years over 300 enquiries are received – there are guidelines to follow, such as they're supposed to do a desk based study.
Can we create or have access to such plans with overlays for our own Parish?	An interactive layer is available online – interactive mapping through the Principle Authority: North Northamptonshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy NBRC can supply maps to Parish Councils related to funded Parish Plans. There are additional useful guides to creating parish plans on the Nene Rivers Trust website Parish Nature Recovery Strategy Portal - Nene Rivers Trust CIO
I've tried to access the biodiversity data as an individual and told it's not available – can private residents (including Nature Recovery Groups) make use of your data,	The resolution and detail the NBRC is able to provide will depend on the purpose and recipient of the request to ensure the data is handled correctly. For

and are there any limitations for what parishes can use, including planning apps etc?	example, to protect certain species. The purpose is also required to the licensing requirements of the data. There are also some open source data, such as the interactive LNRS layers mentioned above, but others need a form to be completed for the licensing purposes – please contact The Record Centre for details.
Is there a cost for your services?	There is a fee. Discretions may be made for a charitable projects, but for funded projects the NRBC does ask for a small fee to cover our administrative time. Let the NBRC know the situation and the fee could be reduced (case by case).
If we spot a significant species while out and about – such as Mink – do you want to be informed? Or are you primarily interested in surveys of sites?	Would be more than happy to receive records of this, knowing their distribution beyond the known/heavily surveyed areas is key. So not just interested in site surveys, would be interested in specific records. These records can then be passed on to the relevant county recorders for verification.
What's the minimum quality of data wanted?	The who, what, where and when is key – any additional information beyond is a nice benefit to have (for instance: numbers seen or estimated ages). A full guide to biological recording can be found here NBRC Wildlife Recording Handbook - 13.02.20.pdf
Is there benefit and/or opportunity for councils to encourage and/or organise specific events for groups and members of their community to go around on a certain day or time to record what they see? How would we go about sending the information over to you?	Events like these are usually called bioblitzes. Yes, you can collect the data, collate it and send it across as a spreadsheet, contact the record centre if you would like a template for recording. The community element can be really important and aids the idea of it being fun. Individuals can also submit records on irecord full details of how you can get involved can be found here Get started with iRecord... iRecord
Is there a mechanism that the land owner is flagged that a new species is found on their land? Or do they have to seek the information?	If they request the data, then the designations of the species and protections would be listed.

Where a location is on the border of two counties is there any guidance as to which records office we should contact? Or should it be both?	As a rule of thumb whichever county has the larger proportion of the search area should be contacted. The record centre will contact the neighbouring record centre once they know the search area and the information request forms have been filled.
Who decides what is important? I am sure farmers are more aware about what is happening under the soil and from the climate point of view, biodiversity under the soil is very important. Beware 'cute' conservation!	Many species carry statutory designations, and it is these species which are flagged in data searches. Along with their relevant designation. For the Local Nature Recovery project additional locally important species were flagged the methodology for selecting these species can be found here Local Nature Recovery Strategy North Northamptonshire Council
As someone who keeps personal records – do you take records of roadkill? For larger animals, deer badger etc?	Yes, we do accept these records. They would still follow the same recording format but if you could mark the records with a comment to say that it was recorded as such.
Is there a quick and easy way to find exact locations grid references?	BNHS Grab a Grid Reference OL This is the easiest way to find grid references and you can set the resolution.
So if we organised a survey do we email you for recording forms?	You can contact the NBRC for their forms, or you can collect the data on a spreadsheet or submit them to irecord.
Does the NBRC provide training days for doing a survey?	The NBRC has just started doing this for rangers at Country Parks, but have been having discussions around offering it as a workshop. Other resources you could look into are the Wildlife Trust Workshops Training Workshops Wildlife Trust for Beds Cambs & Northants
We ran a community bird recording weekend over the May bank holiday. Locals recorded what species they saw and the location. Can we just submit this list, or does it need to be presented in a certain way to you?	Submitting the information onto iRecord would be great Get started with iRecord... iRecord If not, contact the record centre and they'll send you a template for the data.
Does data from I-naturalist feed into your records. And what about other citizen science data collection surveys eg butterfly trust surveys?	We collect data from a number of different data sources. This data is then collated and sent for verification from the county recorder.

Is there a similar Nature Recovery Strategy pilot exercise for West Northamptonshire coming up?	Yes, each county in England is making a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. We are not sure of the exact date that West Northamptonshire is due to publish their strategy. But it should be published on their website when it is ready Local Nature Recovery Strategy West Northamptonshire Council
Would you be able to suggest a species/group and a time frame that we could all survey ? That would provide some more systematic data.	That's a good thought. I would generally encourage recording what you enjoy. But a few easy groups to start with would be Plants, Birds, Butterflies and Moths primarily due to the large number of recording guides, apps and support available to help you make records. But also there are lots of great groups and individuals in the county who can help you with the other groups too. Such as the Nene Valley Bat Group and the Northants Badger Group.
I am writing a piece for our Newsletter on nature matters and wonder if you have a quick summary of the most important and simple summary of what a normal resident can do? eg which is the best way of reporting and the web URL to put in the Newsletter?	Introduction to Wildlife Recording Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre Here is a guide we have written, hopefully it's a good starting point for you.

Following the Q&A, and building on this theme, Claire Poulton, Nene Rivers Trust, outlined a pilot project supporting Parish and Town Councils in North Northamptonshire to develop Parish Nature Recovery Plans. Participating councils receive a range of maps and datasets produced using information from the North Northamptonshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. These include details of existing habitats, species records, biodiversity opportunity areas and practical actions that can support nature recovery within their communities.

Claire explained that the plans allow councils to combine local knowledge and community aspirations with robust environmental evidence. Depending on local priorities, councils may choose to focus on a range of objectives including reducing flooding, improving wildlife habitats, increasing access to green spaces, enhancing resilience to climate change or strengthening local pride in the natural environment. The intention is that councils can identify and prioritise practical projects and actions that can be delivered over the next five to ten years. Richard explained that the habitat

opportunity maps produced through the LNRS provide a useful starting point for identifying where these interventions may have the greatest impact.

The meeting concluded with an update from Danny Moody on the new CAN Champion Directory, to be launched the following week, and a reminder about the forthcoming Annual CAN Champion Meeting in November. Danny thanked Richard and Claire for sharing their expertise and encouraged CAN Champions to explore opportunities to contribute to wildlife recording and nature recovery initiatives within their own communities.

Useful Contacts and Resources

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Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre

Claire Poulton

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Nene Rivers Trust

Useful Resources

- iRecord: <https://irecord.org.uk/>
- Merlin Bird ID: <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>
- WILDside Recording Community:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1881392962133285/>
- Northants Butterflies: <https://www.northantsbutterflies.com/>
- North Northamptonshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy:
<https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/conservation-and-protection/local-nature-recovery-strategy>
- Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre Resources and Library:
<https://www.northantsbrc.org.uk/resources/recorders>