

# Cofnod Recorders' Day & AGM 26/11/2011



**Les Starling**, Cofnod's Chairman, opened proceedings with a general welcome to everybody attending the event. Thanks were also given to all those who'd supported Cofnod's activities through the year.

Our first lecture of the day was by **Dr Rachel Taylor** from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Rachel's talk was entitled *Bringing the BTO closer to Wales*, and she took the opportunity to present BTO's activities and aims, highlighting the impartiality and research focus of the organisation. We were also informed that a new BTO office had been established in Bangor



University's Thoday Building, and that two staff members are now based there: Rachel herself as Ecologist and Kelvin Jones as Development Officer.

The second presentation of the day was given by **Brian Burnett** – *Discovering our lesser known plants*. Brian illustrated his talk with live specimens of several common moss species, emphasising some of the difficulties for a beginner starting with this group. A lively debate ensued with various opinions being proffered on the merits of Bryophyte keys and various identification works! The recently formed *North Wales Non-flowering Plant Group* was publicised and interested parties encouraged to attend their field meetings as a means of learning more about these plant species.

**Richard Gallon** took the floor to highlight eight interesting spider species which people should look out for. These included the wasp spider *Argiope bruennichi*, which although not yet recorded from North Wales, is likely to become part of the fauna within a few years time. A summary sheet is provided to remind people of the need for records of these spiders.

Following a short tea break **Ceri Morris** (MISE Project Officer, CCW) described some of the co-operative work being undertaken between Wales and Ireland regarding mammal populations. Work on iconic mammals such as the Pine Marten, Polecat, Red Squirrel, Harvest Mouse and Hazel Dormouse was introduced, and we were told how DNA analysis of faeces and hair samples was providing new insights into their ecology and populations. Ceri made a plea for Barn Owl pellets to be sent to her; these could be analysed (using DNA sequencing techniques) to check for the presence of harvest mouse remains.



**Roy Tapping**, Cofnod's manager, updated attendees on some of the projects and developments undertaken by Cofnod in recent years. He also discussed how success was measured, noting that it wasn't just gauged on hard figures, but also included less tangible factors such as trust, awareness and confidence.

The AGM followed—minutes will be available separately from the Cofnod website, [www.cofnod.org.uk](http://www.cofnod.org.uk).

**Aisling Carrick** (Cofnod's Data Manager) gave a talk entitled *The data we hold and how we're managing data flows*. In it she summarised not only the number of records held by taxonomic group, but also gaps in our holdings. The importance of Cofnod's ORS (Online Records System) and its use by vice county recorders to verify records was highlighted.

Following on from Aisling, **Mick Brummage** (N.E. Wales Reptile Recorder) gave a talk illustrating his use of the ORS in recording Sand Lizards. Mick demonstrated the value of the ORS mapping facility in charting the spread of lizards from the translocation sites at two of North Wales' re-introduced populations. He also explained how he now maintains all his reptile data on the ORS and that this has simplified his data management.

Roy's second talk of the day was entitled *How's your data being used*. He showed attendees the various outputs that Cofnod generate, including Planning List reports, GIS outputs, commercial reports and customised products. Roy explained how Cofnod's database was being used to inform various external projects: Local Developments Plans; Review of Consents; AONB Plans; LBAPs etc. Future developments were mentioned and an emphasis was placed on the rapidly evolving nature of Cofnod's products and services.

The final talk of the day saw Aisling discussing various technical improvements to the Cofnod systems. She mentioned the development of an automated data checker which would help identify issues with data, thereby improving data quality across the system. It was also suggested that in the future data suppliers may be able to upload spreadsheets of records directly onto the Cofnod database. The possibility of a mobile recording application for smart phones was put forward, and this may be linked to existing identification apps. Aisling would welcome ideas for these and other areas of development.

Les Starling rounded off the day by summing-up events and thanking the various speakers. The day provided an excellent opportunity to meet fellow recorders and exchange ideas.

## **Speakers' Contact details**

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# Have you seen these spiders in North Wales?



***Atypus affinis***  
Eichwald, 1830

Look for silk tubes on southerly facing short grassy slopes.



***Meta menardi***  
(Latreille, 1804)

Look in caves, drains, and other dark damp places.



***Argiope bruennichi***  
(Scopoli, 1772)

Look for it in orb webs built low down in rough grassland (autumn).



***Scytodes thoracica***  
(Latreille, 1802)

Look for it walking about on house walls at night.



***Misumena vatia***  
(Clerck, 1757)

Sits on flowers – watch for butterflies which don't fly off flowers!



***Dolomedes fimbriatus***  
(Clerck, 1757)

Acidic bog inhabitant, often near open water.



***Micrommata virescens***  
(Clerck, 1757)

Clearings in oak woodland – doesn't build a web.



***Araneus marmoreus***  
Clerck, 1757

Builds an orb-web in brambles (autumn).

Please report your sightings to:

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