

## CPERC Ten Year Anniversary Event Report

10.00am - 3.30pm, Saturday 2nd May 2015



Location: Madingley Hall, Madingley,  
Cambridge, CB23 8AQ

[www.madingleyhall.co.uk](http://www.madingleyhall.co.uk)

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## 1) Event Programme

10.00 - 10.30	Phil Ricketts <b>'Ten Years of CPERC'</b>
10.30 - 11.15	Owen Mountford <b>'Cambridgeshire's (and Norfolk's and Lincolnshire's) backyard: a focus on the Flora of the Fenland'</b>

### Break

11.30 - 12.15	Louise Bacon <b>'The Birds of Cambridgeshire'</b>
12.15 - 1.00	Ken Rolfe <b>'The Highlands and Islands of Cambridgeshire'</b>

### Lunch

2.00 - 2.45	Peter Kirby <b>'Entomological recording in and around Peterborough'</b>
2.45 - 3.15	James Fisher <b>'The importance of biodiversity information for local planning authorities'</b>
3.15 - 3.30	Summing up and depart

## 2) Attendance

Approximately 40 individuals attended with affiliations with the following organisations:

Birdlife International, Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, British Dragonfly Society, Cambridge Ecology, Cambridge Natural History Society, Cambridgeshire and Essex Branch of Butterfly Conservation, Cambridgeshire Bat Group, Cambridgeshire Geology Club, Cambridgeshire Bird Club, Cambridgeshire Traditional Orchard Group, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Cheveley Biodiversity Group, Conservation Constructions, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Huntingdonshire Fauna and Flora Society, Huntingdonshire District Council, MKA Ecology, Natural England, Peterborough City Council, South Cambridgeshire Fungus Group, Wildlife Trust BCN

### 3) Summary of Presentations

#### Phil Ricketts 'Ten Years of CPERC'



The centre manager of CPERC, Phil Ricketts, welcomed everyone to the event and began with an introductory talk about how CPERC (formerly known as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre) was formed ten years ago, and outlined its importance, relevance and success in managing the county's wildlife and designated sites, and gave a brief history of the staff and volunteers.

Phil first outlined the general aim of CPERC which is to store information about the wildlife and natural history of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area in one place, and manage that information so that it is accessible to those who would like to use it.

Some examples were shown as to how the wildlife and habitats of Cambridgeshire have dramatically changed over the last few hundred years, to illustrate one of the reasons why it is important for CPERC to store the information it does.

CPERC manages a database which now holds over 1.5 million species records. The adjacent map displays the geographical distribution of the records over the county; red and yellow

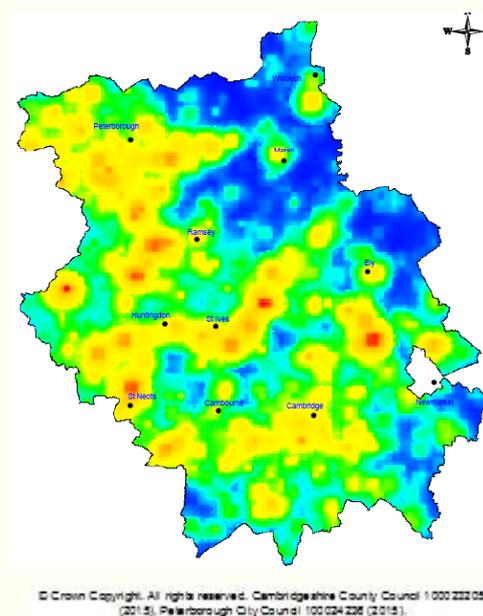
areas have a higher density of records whereas blue areas have the lowest density.

These are the combined accomplishments of volunteer species recorders, taxonomic experts, local groups, parish projects, Wildlife Trust staff, ecological consultants and members of the public sending us their records.

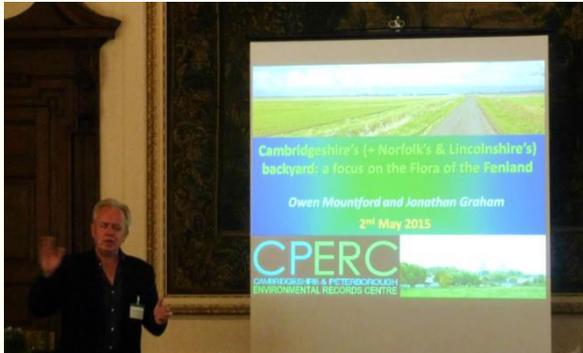
Phil emphasised that CPERC is a partnership organisation and is very much made stronger by all those with an interest working together to provide a valuable repository of information for now and for future generations.

Phil thanked all those who contributed to making CPERC a success over the years.

For further information about CPERC and to learn more about what we do please visit our website [www.cperc.org.uk](http://www.cperc.org.uk)



## Owen Mountford ‘Cambridgeshire’s (and Norfolk’s and Lincolnshire’s) backyard: a focus on the Flora of the Fenland’



Owen Mountford, a renowned ecologist specialising in wetland vegetation and long standing member of staff at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology illustrated the progress of the Fenland Flora Project which he has coordinated in conjunction with Jonathan Graham.

Owen provided a fascinating overview of the habitats and land cover in the fenland area, focusing on how the history of the distribution and management of drains and ditches have influenced fenland vegetation. Fenland is now an area where there is much habitat restoration and creation taking place, with various schemes to enhance the landscape for wildlife, such as reedbed creation for breeding bitterns.

The fenland area contains a diverse range of habitats including mudflats, arable land, hedgerows, droves, ditches, reedbeds, lowland meadows, lowland calcareous grassland and grazing marsh. There are also very small remnants of woodland amongst the vast expanse of arable fields providing islands of semi-natural habitat, sheltering diverse bryophyte and pteridophyte flora. The Fenland Biodiversity Audit found that the area

harbours numerous UKBAP priority species of concern for conservation, with 24 species having a primary stronghold in the fens.

Owen showed his immense enthusiasm to get back out into the fenland area to continue identifying and recording its flora, and for covering as much of the area as possible in collaboration with other volunteer recorders.

## Louise Bacon ‘The Birds of Cambridgeshire’

Louise Bacon, bird recorder for Cambridgeshire and until recently a long standing member of staff at CPERC, summarised the findings of many years of recording by the Cambridgeshire Bird Club and others which culminated in the most recent Cambridgeshire Bird Atlas, published in 2013.

Louise explained The Cambridgeshire Bird Club logo bares the emblem of a black-tailed Godwit, a flagship species with around half the UKs breeding population, estimated at 20-40 pairs, found in Cambridgeshire.



Louise highlighted the most important sites and habitats within Cambridgeshire for breeding and overwintering birds. The Ouse Washes and the Nene Washes hold the highest number of overwintering Whooper Swans, but with a notable decline in Bewick Swans. Reservoirs such as Grafham Water are

important for providing deep water for long-tailed sea ducks and great northern divers. Reed-bed habitat restoration work has enhanced breeding numbers for bearded tits and bitterns. The area's woodlands such as Monks Wood, Castor Hanglands, Brampton Wood and Hayley Wood are all important sites for woodland birds such as nuthatch. Habitat mosaics of scrub and woodland corridors provide a home for treecreepers and nightingales. Species such as the black redstart have adapted to thrive in urban areas, and are sometimes found within our larger settlements.

Records have shown that barn owls are now doing well due to the high numbers of nest boxes now made available around the county, which has compensated to some extent for the decline in the numbers of suitable barns and derelict buildings. The house sparrow population has now stabilised to some extent, after a steep decline in the 1980s and 1990s. Research has shown that house sparrows now prefer less affluent areas of towns and cities, which is thought to be due to suitable habitat being more available in these areas.

For further information please visit the website [www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk](http://www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk)



## Ken Rolfe 'The Highlands and Islands of Cambridgeshire'

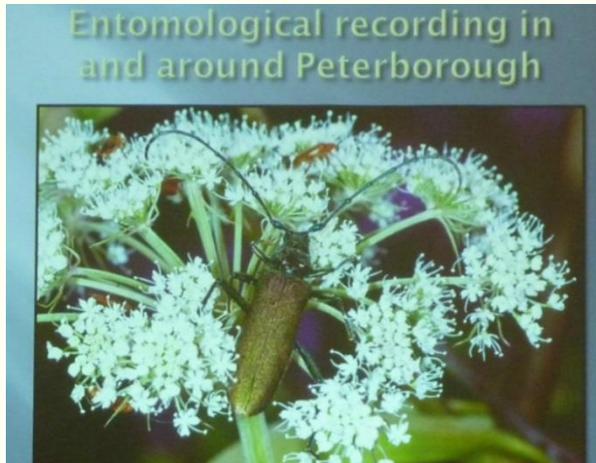


Ken Rolfe, chair of the Cambs Geosites Team, gave a general talk on the geology of Cambridgeshire. During 2008, the Cambs Geosites Team was formed to carry out a survey of the county determining where geological sites of local significance exist within Cambridgeshire, working with GeoPeterborough which has already identified sites in the Peterborough City area. Between 2012 and 2014, a list of criteria was agreed for the designation of Local Geological Sites. CPERC will hold information on these sites.

As of 2015, Local Geological Sites will now be designated in a process similar to that of County Wildlife Sites, and some sites now being considered for designation are for example the Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits, Dimmocks Cote Quarry and Orwell Clunch Pit.

Ken explained in detail how the geological strata of Cambridgeshire has been laid out, dating back to past geological periods: Oolithic limestone and Clays (Oxford, Ampthill and Kimmeridge) in the Jurassic period. Chalk, Gault Clay and the Upper Greensand formation in the Cretaceous period, and more recently boulder clay due to the Ice Age. Cambridgeshire has distinct geological areas and local variations which in turn lead to variations in the wildlife habitats found.

## Peter Kirby 'Entomological recording in and around Peterborough'



Peterborough based entomological expert Peter Kirby, has been recording in the area for many years and enlightened us on the significance of the sites and species in this area, from an entomological view point.

His efforts in surveying drainage ditches in Peterborough's arable land found drains containing up to 60 species of water beetle. Between 2010 and 2011, 173 species of solitary bees and wasps were identified from Whittlesey Brick Pits. Peter highlighted the fact that due to our relative lack of knowledge about many invertebrate species, even he struggles to understand the significance of what he is finding at times! This was brought into focus recently when he found many interesting species in a line of unremarkable conifer trees in the Westwood area of Peterborough, which are on the edge of the site of a now developed former airfield.

Peter highlighted six species new to Britain, amongst them *Chrysomela saliceti*, which arrived in Peterborough in 2013. There are likely to be many more first records for the county with increased surveying efforts, and the rate of the increase in the number of new

invertebrates is likely to be higher than ever through the import of exotic plants. Some examples of nationally scarce invertebrates found by Peter include *Synageles venator* (nationally scarce ant-like jumping spider found on dry reed bed habitats) and *Platyrhinus resinosus* (nationally rare beetle). Peter spends much of his time recording species and has made a highly significant contribution to CPERC's invertebrate records.



## James Fisher 'The importance of biodiversity information for local planning authorities'



James Fisher is the Wildlife Officer for Peterborough City Council and is currently chair of the CPERC Steering Group. James has significant experience of working with biodiversity information in a local authority context and outlined how the information

collected by CPERC, including the records passed on to us by local recorders, are used within a local authority.



good practice guidance for the National Planning Policy Framework. The BS 42020 Biodiversity: Code of Practice for Planning & Development specifies that record centres should be approached to provide species and habitat information to inform desk studies.

James also outlined all the positive wildlife conservation projects Peterborough City Council has been involved with, many of which CPERC have also collaborated on.

Peterborough City Council was one of the founding local authorities that helped set up and establish CPERC in 2005. Since then CPERC has regularly provided the authority with biodiversity information regarding European Protected Species, NERC Section 41 species, County Wildlife Sites and other information relevant to effective and sustainable planning. Local authorities play an important role in nature conservation and local records centres and recorders are vital to achieving this.



James explained his role in promoting biodiversity in planning and development, and outlined relevant legislation and guidance including the NERC Act 2006, The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, Biodiversity 2020, the National Pollinator Strategy and the

#### 4) Feedback Comments

*'Excellent talks, all very interesting and different'*

*'I enjoyed the enthusiasm and deep knowledge of the speakers'*

*'Excellent venue, lovely location, easy to get to'*

*'Excellent range of talk which linked to each other, impressive audience of high calibre recorders and local authority reps'*

*'Lovely venue, right balance of talks, breaks and refreshments, not too crowded a programme. Well done!'*

*'Looking forward to the 20<sup>th</sup> CPERC Anniversary!'*



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