



## Annual Report 2021

Privet Hawkmoth *Sphinx ligustri* caterpillar, K Gamble

**LRERC** is the Local Environmental Records Centre covering Leicestershire and Rutland (VC55). We sit within the ecology section of the Planning, Historic and Natural Environment Team at Leicestershire County Council. The ecology team in 2021 consisted of Sue Timms (Team Manager), Jennifer Lucas (Admin Officer), Donna Oxbrough (Senior Planning Ecologist), Chloe Walker (Planning Ecologist), Karen Headley (LRERC Records Officer/Surveyor) and Kirsty Gamble (LRERC Senior Records Officer).

LRERC collate, standardise and validate data from various sources including expert local naturalists, NatureSpot, Environmental Consultants, iRecord and National Recording Schemes.



The Ecology team surveying along the Grand Union Canal in Wistow, June 2021

### Our Archive

LRERC has a substantial paper and electronic document archive dating back to the 1950's. This includes species records for various taxonomic groups, habitat surveys and site-specific information. It is a unique archive and a valuable resource and it is used regularly, to look at land use change across Leicestershire and Rutland, to support research and to identify historic locations of species not recently been recorded which can lead to their rediscovery.

The archive is constantly growing; we try and keep everything that we can and we are always seeking important documents. If you have an archive we may be interested in please contact us to discuss it.

Our archive is catalogued and searchable by LRERC staff. Much of our archive has been scanned but documents are also held in a secure off-site location and can be recalled with a few days' notice.

### Species database

LRERC's species database is held on 'Orca' and, as of the end of 2021, held over 2,300,000 records. These are across over 55 taxonomic groups, dominated by birds and plants.

### Habitats and Sites database

LRERC holds habitat and site information in QGIS. At the end of 2021 this included over 6000 locally designated sites (LWS/RIGS) across Leicestershire & Rutland, and digitised Phase 1 habitats for approx 62500ha (Leics only) equating to approx 30% of the county.



## Updates in 2021

**LRERC's Species database** grew significantly in 2021, over 400,000 records were added equating to 19% of the total database. This is partly reflective of the new LRERC structure (implemented mid-2020) and partly due to us obtaining some significant datasets. The largest number of records have come from the field-by-field surveys completed in the 1980's/90's (extracted by Russell Parry), and older records from the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society that have been digitised. Both of these projects extend into 2022. Additionally, Ian Merrill (VC55 Odonata recorder) has provided us with a copy of the Dragonfly database, filling a significant hole in our data.

New records added on to the database were dominated by birds (180,000), vascular plants (112,000) and dragonflies (52,000).

The date of the earliest record imported in 2021 was 1750, with the majority of records being between 2000 and 2009.



Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*  
pair, J Lucas



A511 Ashby bypass verge, K Headley

### Sites and Habitats Updates in 2021

69 new locally designated sites were added to the sites database in 2021. Species-rich hedgerows and mature trees comprised over half of these new sites. 15 new mesotrophic grasslands sites were also added.

In 2021 LRERC staff surveyed approximately 47km of road verges across Leicestershire. While many of the verges were of poor quality, most of the locally designated verges surveyed were found to still have interest, with several new stretches also identified as being of LWS quality.

**LRERC collate data from lots of different sources.** Many records for both the species and sites databases are extracted from ecological reports submitted in support of a planning application. These reports have a bias towards protected species but do contain other information. Ecology Consultants' reports are the biggest source of our protected species data.

We also include records from various online recording programmes within our database; this obviously includes NatureSpot (the online recording website for Leicestershire and Rutland) but also iRecord, Swift Mapper and the Record Pool.

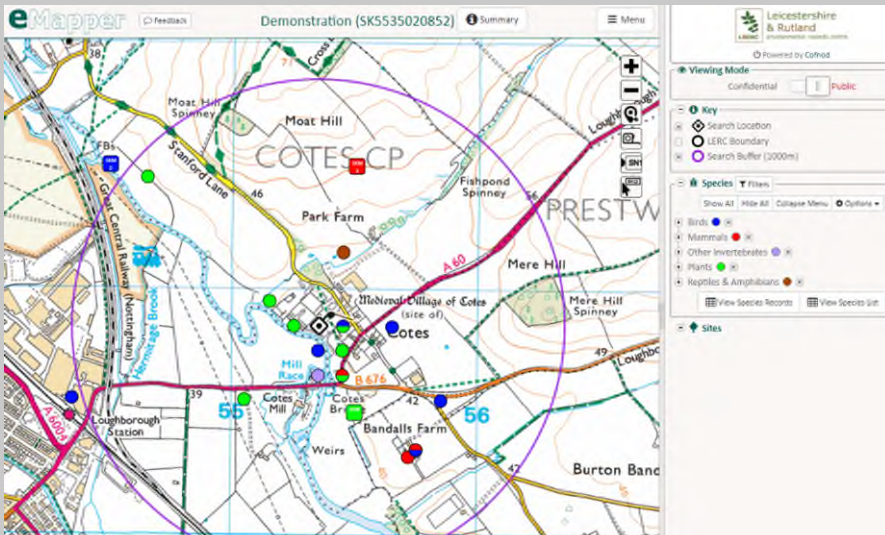
Records are sent in locally from our network of County Recorders, who, in many circumstances, also collate records for their taxonomic group. These records, along with those from National Recording Schemes such as 'Trichoptera Recording Scheme', are valuable as they are verified.

LRERC are always looking to increase the database with new sources of information, from new recorders and recording groups and by establishing data sharing with other local partners and national recording schemes.

# Our Services and Products

Where does our data go?

**Commercial enquiries** form a large part of our enquires service. In 2021 we completed 460 commercial enquiries for over 120 different consultancies. Many of these consultants are working for developers but the information has also been used to inform road, rail and utility schemes.



Example of a Commercial datasearch

We have provided records to six different **National Recording Schemes**, with additional VC55 records being sent to us in return. This includes the Centipede Recording Scheme and the Weevil & Bark Beetle Recording Scheme. We're always looking to increase the number of national schemes and societies that we work with and will be pursuing this further.

In 2021 LRERC revised the information sent to Parish Councils to inform their **Neighbourhood Plans**. We provided information for 11 neighbourhood plans in 2021.

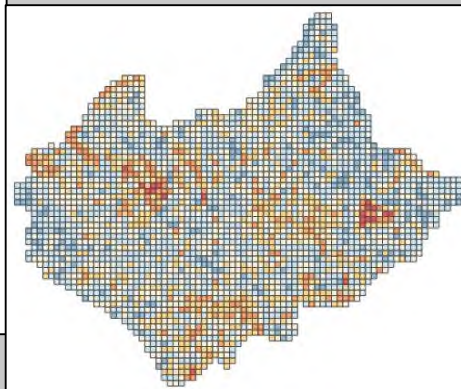
We have an ongoing relationship with many **Partners and County Recorders**, with read-only access to our main species database being provided. This allows individuals to access and filter the data at a time to suit them. Our partners include the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, ecologists at Leicester City Council and Charnwood Borough Council and trustees of NatureSpot.

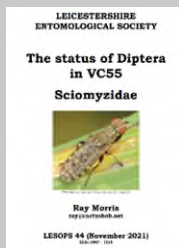
Our data is also used to inform **Biodiversity Strategies**. 2021 saw the completion of the Biodiversity Quality Assessment, providing a baseline of habitat diversity and the number of positive indicators of habitat quality across Leicestershire and Rutland using aerial photographs.

The roadside verge surveys carried out in 2021 feed into Leicestershire County Council's roadside verge maintenance strategy.

Our data is also being used to inform forthcoming strategies such as Biodiversity Net Gain and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

Protected Species and Designated Sites information is also used to inform the **Development Management** process. Alert layers are provided to all local authorities within Leicestershire and Rutland for use within their planning services, including Supplementary Planning guidance, land allocated for development and Local Plans.





## The wider recording community



The **Leicestershire and Rutland Entomological Society** produced 8 new publications including Rutland Orthoptera, Birch Leaf-miners and 6 publications on Diptera families.

### County Recorders

produced some updates, including Adrian Russell's Moth Review of 2020 and an update to An annotated Checklist to the Beetles of VC55 by Graham Finch.

**NatureSpot** continues to increase the number of records captured each year, with over 44,000 records sent to LRERC within the 2021 dataset. See Orca dataset D0140/008/01 for these records.

Unfortunately, 2021 saw the loss of a number of **notable local recorders**. Tom Hering and Richard Iliffe, both knowledgeable Fungi recorders both passed away, as did Maggie Frankum, a local expert in bumblebees and plant galls. They will be much missed and their contribution to the knowledge of these species within Leicestershire and Rutland will be in place for years to come. Full obituaries for Tom and Richard can be found on the British Mycological Society website and Maggie within the British Plant Gall Society newsletter. Copies of these are held by LRERC and available on request.

We're grateful to the Peter Gamble's family for passing on his natural history diaries to incorporate into the County Archive.

## What Next?

LRERC continues to **move forward** with plans in place for 2022. 2022 will see the continued growth of our sites and species databases with annual updates from many datasets being published. The field-by-field data imports and the LROS historic imports will continue.

It's an interesting time for biodiversity policy and work will continue to contribute to the local biodiversity net-gain policies and related documents including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Access to Nature plans.

LRERC will also continue to be involved in wider projects such as the Invasive non-native species working group.

**2022 Updates:** We have lost another two notable recorders this year in Dave Budworth (Bugs) and Adrian Russell (Lepidoptera). We will cover this in more detail in the 2022 annual report.

Sarah Postlethwaite has joined the ecology team in June 2022 as a Senior Planning Ecologist.

Please **contact us** on the details below if you are interested in finding out more about any of our projects or if you have some records that you would like to pass to us. Copies of the documents referred to within this summary are available on request from LRERC.



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