# *WILTSHIRE COUNTY RECORDER'S REPORT 2009-2010*

Wood Mouse picture courtesy of Andrew Everhale

*Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre*

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the County recorder's Annual Report 2009-2010 for the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC). I would like to thank all those who have found the time to submit a report for inclusion in this document and I hope you will forgive some minor editorial changes that I have made in an attempt to standardise the document.

The unpredictable and relentless weather has stifled a few recorders in the past year but what their records lack in quantity they make up for in quality. The past year has been particularly fruitful for some recorders with many species recorded from the County for the first time.

Also included in this report is an offer for County Recorders to participate in a survey of Spye Park, a County Wildlife Site which covers an area of approximately 11.7 ha and includes some substantial areas of rare lowland heath habitat. There is also a plea for more information from County Recorders for news items for the WSBRC website, including new species records, information on training days, etc. The WSBRC relies on help from County Records and your input is greatly appreciated. Keep up the good work.

**David Legg**
**WSBRC Assistant**

# RECORDING AT SPYE PARK

The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) are compiling an application for Higher Level Stewardship for Spye Park estate, near Calne and have requested supporting data from WSBRC. We have a very large data holding for the estate and surrounds, but some of it is rather old, so it would be useful to obtain more recent data for as many taxonomic groups as possible.

At the 2008 event we organised at Spye Park Heath Wildlife Site several County Recorders expressed an interest in gaining access to the rest of the estate and it would seem that this would be an ideal opportunity. Anyone interested should call Rob Large on 01380 725670 ext 223 or email him robl@wiltshirewildlife.org.

# THE WSBRC NEEDS YOU!

We are always looking for good-quality text to use on our website and in the WWT members magazine and we would like to encourage the County Recorders to submit articles. This article can be about anything you wish, from a new species record for the County to information on training days and other activities you would like to promote to the public and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust members. Articles should be between 200 and 500 words long with any corresponding images, and should be submitted to Vicki Brown at the WSBRC by post to the Devizes office, or e-mail VickiB@wiltshirewildlife.org

# COUNTY RECORDER'S ANNUAL REPORTS

## AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**Gemma Harding**

A few records were received this year for all widespread species of amphibian and reptiles, an even spread of records came from the public and personal recording. A distribution map for the county has not yet been produced and as a fairly new recorder I am not familiar with previous records and distribution in the county so cannot be sure if records are higher or lower than previous. Recent new records from the BRC are yet to be received for verification.

The Wiltshire Amphibian and Reptile Group undertook a number of events in 2009 most of which were linked to Wildlife Trust events such as the orchard project launch and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty event. I also gave a talk at for the Tisbury Natural History Group and attended the National Herp Workers Conference.

This year I am hoping to research county populations through existing records/ maps to gain a better understanding of distribution of species in Wiltshire, and will hopefully be able to put some time into smooth snake investigation. Myself and volunteers will be working with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust with the NARRS project to identify sites in Wiltshire for future survey.

## BRYOPHYTES ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**Sharon Pilkington**

### New VC records

Several new vice-county records have been made recently. Two of these species were to be expected as they have been spreading across much of the country in recent years. The tiny leafy liverwort ***Cololejeunea minutissima*** was found near Sandpool Farm near Ashton Keynes. It was subsequently found at another site in the Cotswold Water Park soon after and there are now records from Clinghill Wood near Bromham and Savernake Forest. It is not the easiest species to find, but I anticipate many more records in the future.

***Didymodon nicholsonii*** is a rather nondescript olive-green moss that forms low-growing carpets on damp tarmac such as driveways and pavements. It is one of the few bryophytes that can be spotted from the car (with practice!) but was not actually recorded from VC7 until it was found at Bowden Hill. Subsequently it has been reported from Melksham town centre and Smallgrain picnic site near Calne. It used to be a rare moss but has spread across the country in recent times. It is surely widespread in VC7.

### First recent records

There are many species of bryophyte in North Wiltshire which have not been recorded for half a century or more. Joan Appleyard was very actively recording in our area in 1950 but little has been done since so many species are at risk of being regarded as 'extinct' if they have no recent records in VC7. With this in mind I have set about tracking down some old records. Savernake Forest has proved to be particularly fruitful. In one visit just before the Christmas snow I found ***Dicranum majus***, ***Plagiothecium undulatum*** and ***Rhytidiadelphus loreus*** all in one small area of the wood. These acidophile species were recorded 50-60 years ago from only this area, though they are all common in upland areas in the west of Britain. In addition ***Leucobryum juniperoideum*** was found in the same locality, new to VC7. Savernake is a bit of a hotspot for bryophytes in our area and provides a locus to a number of regionally scarce species, such as the epiphytic moss ***Orthotrichum stramineum*** and liverwort ***Frullania tamarisci***.

At Swillbrook Lakes near Ashton Keynes, I found another 'wanted' moss. Unfortunately this large colony of ***Orthotrichum tenellum*** was growing on the bark of a willow that had just been felled as part of habitat improvements (!) so it is unlikely to persist. However, since then I have found it at another site nearby so its future seems more secure. The same willow also supported the diminutive epiphyte ***Syntrichia papillosa*** which is also very scarce in the VC (though almost certainly under-recorded). This species has since also been found on Elder at Morgan's Hill.

**Other interesting finds**

Stanton Park, near Swindon, has an extensive area of wet woodland. Tim Kaye and I did a bryophyte survey of the area in 2009 and discovered two notable species associated with this habitat. ***Nowellia curvifolia*** is a tiny, dark red leafy liverwort that favours rotting wood in very humid places. It is relatively common in oceanic areas of Britain but very rare this far east. There are several good-sized colonies in the woodland at Stanton Park. Deep among the willows we made another good find: the nationally scarce moss ***Platygyrium repens*** grows on trees there. It had previously only been known from a woodland near Wootton Bassett but has since been found on scrub during a Wessex Bryology Group visit to West Yatton Down. It is likely to be present elsewhere in the VC but is not the most obvious moss!

## COLEOPTERA ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**Michael Darby**

My major field work project this year has been a survey of Parsonage Down, the NNR in the south county. Although often described as probably the most important calcareous grassland site in the UK information about the Coleopterous fauna was unknown. The survey involved monthly recording over a twelve month period and included, amongst other methods, flight intercept traps, vacuum sampling and pitfall traps. More than 10,000 insects have been recorded and 350 species identified to date of which several are new to the county. One very important discovery, made in a Dorchester attic during the course of the year, was of a large amount of data from a previous survey carried out by

the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology on behalf of English Nature in the 1970s and 80s, and abandoned after several years work for financial reasons. This is now being analysed and should allow comparisons of the faunas to be made.

My other preoccupation during the course of the year has been to write and publish *Wiltshire Beetles: History, Status, Distribution and Use in Site Assessment.* This is the first book to cover the county fauna and lists 1,839 species with information on locations, dates and names of recorders. The illustrations include 125 rare and notable species as well as many that are well known. Introductory sections cover the history of beetle recording from a cleric in the early 19thC to modern day professional entomologists, and include the important work carried out at Marlborough and Dauntsey's schools. Major sites are listed and information provided about changes in the fauna. Further chapters cover the use of beetles in the assessment of woodland and grassland sites. I would particularly draw attention to this last in which I have proposed the development of a **Calcareous Grassland Quality Index** enabling sites to be scored and graded using a carefully chosen list of indicator species each of which is given a rating according to its fidelity and continuity within the habitat. A table listing the scores achieved by 30 sites within the county is provided.

I also published 'The Beetles of Wylye Down National Nature Reserve' in *Wiltshire Studies*, 102 (2009), pp.1-11 (results of an English Nature contract to carry out a 12 month survey. Lists 202 species of which 17 were new to the county and 24 nationally rare) and '*Onthophilus punctatus* from pitfall traps in Wiltshire' in *The Coleopterist*, 18(2) (2009), p.147.

## DIPTERA ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**Anthony Bainbridge**

**1. Details of any species recorded that are new/rare/unusual to Wiltshire.**

***Ctenophora pectinicornis*** (fam. Tipulidae) (1f) nationally scarce, associated with dead wood, esp. beech.

The following are relatively uncommon but have been previously recorded from Wiltshire and may have interest perhaps only to me!

***Sepedon spinipes*** (fam. Sciomyzidae)
***Chelifera precatoria*** (fam. Empididae)
***Dolichocephala irrorata*** (fam. Empididae)
***Cordilura albipes*** (fam. Scatophagidae)

Other records now in the 2009 database generally mirror earlier findings.

**2. Have you noticed any significant changes in the distribution of one or more species in the County?**

I think not – but of course finds of uncommon Dipteran species tend to reflect the activity of a specialist recorder rather than revealing new information on distribution at the species level. Only Syrphid (hoverfly) records - these having been for long the most dominant observations - allow valid conclusions to be drawn about absolute frequency / scarcity.

**3. Was it a good or bad recording season? Give details as to why.**

Generally not good – too wet and still too few recording activities outside the Syrphidae. My own time seems never to be as free as I hope it will become.

**4. Were most of the records collected by yourself/ recording groups/public?**

Mostly by myself and one or two notable local photographers, notably John Notman at Bentley Wood.

## EPHEMEROPTERA ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**Cyril Bennett**

**1. Details of any species recorded that are new/rare/unusual to Wiltshire.**

(a) Mayfly (Ephemeroptera) – ***Nigrobaetis niger*** (Southern Iron Blue) – BAP species.
River Avon (Amesbury. River Wylye (South Newton).

(b) Mayfly (Ephemeroptera) ***Ecdyonurus insignis*** (Large Green Dun)
River Nadder (Barford St. Martin).

**2. Have you noticed any significant changes in the distribution of one or more species in the County?**

Most mayfly species have reduced considerable over the past 20 years and Wiltshire would seem to be the same.

**3. Was it a good or bad recording season? Give details as to why.**

Difficult to say has I have only been working on mayflies in this county for 2 years.

**4. Were most of the records collected by yourself/ recording groups/public?**

Self

## FUNGI (VC7) ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**Dave Shorten**

As in most years, recording of fungi fruiting is a rather patchy affair, largely dependant on weather patterns where fungi are reliant on moisture availability and temperature availability to fruit. 2009 was not an unusually productive year but with some high points, despite the relatively dry patch from February to June and an unusually dry September.

Overall Cotswold Fungus Group contributed almost 2,200 records to WSBRC from its fungus forays in North Wiltshire from late February through to the end of November. Whilst only a very small proportion of these were significant (new species to the area, red-data listed species of conservation concern, etc), all records have value even if only showing the continued presence of a common fungus species on a site.

***Left***, the common but beautiful Amethyst Deceiver: ***Laccaria laccata.***
Mostly found in broadleaf woodlands and usually under Beech, for example in Savernake Forest.

One relatively uncommon find for the year was the Scarlet Caterpillarclub: ***Cordyceps militaris*** that grows on the over-wintering pupae of larger moths, usually buried in mossy soil. There are only seven recorded finds for it in North Wiltshire from 1992 – 2008 and on only four sites. It was recorded twice in 2009, at Cadley Church churchyard and a new location for us on Chittoe Heath at Spye Park.


As the Scarlet Caterpillarclub is relatively uncommon in the area, my only good photograph of it (left) comes from a find at a mycological meeting in Normandy, also in autumn 2009.

One of the highlights of the year was the opening of the Mushroom Discovery Room in the renovated farm buildings at Stanton Country Park, just to the north of Swindon. The posters, displays and giant fungi models explain the role of fungi in our everyday life as well as their importance to the park itself. Stanton Country Park is managed by the Swindon Ranger Service on behalf of Swindon Council. If you are in the area, please do visit the exhibition, its fun and education for all the family. For more information, check out their website at: http://www.swindon.gov.uk/leisuresport/parksandgardens/leisure-stantonpark.htm

Over the last thirteen years of fungus foraying we have recorded 907 species of fungi there, the second highest recorded site fungus flora in North Wiltshire, with 63 species new to the site in 2009. One of the two Red Data species of fungi present at Stanton Country Park is The Flea's Ear: ***Chlorencoelia versiformis*** (***Chlorociboria versiformis*** as was) below left. Closely related to the Green Elfcup ***Chlorociboria aeruginascens***, below right, it is not anywhere near as common, not as colourful and doesn't stain the wood green as it grows on it and decomposes it. However, it is still a remarkable find and there are only six records of it in North Wiltshire, five at Stanton Country Park And one at Clouts Wood, a W.W.T reserve near Wroughton.

## MACROMOTHS ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**Marc Taylor**

In opening I would like to thank my predecessor Mr. John d'Arcy to whom we are grateful for his custodianship of macro moth records over so many years. When John announced his decision to step down on May 22nd to Purgle, Jane and I, our first response was to ask if he would stay on and allow me to introduce more contemporary recording techniques. Sadly he declined acknowledging the prevalence of IT in the role of recording, something to which he was applying himself, but felt it was for others for whom IT was more readily understood to continue with.

I have for some time been entering county records into MapMate, but past numbers seemed very low. To give some idea of the conundrum two recorders Mrs. Ingrid Powell and Mr. Wayne Clinch, friends who only began to trap from 2008 have just presented me with 2300 records. This at a time when Wiltshire has presented Moth counts with 38500

records representing at least 25 years of recording. I reasonably estimate that by April 31st when I have to offer up any final submissions to the National Moth Atlas Wiltshire will than have 50000+ records in our data set. This enlargement is set to increase year on year and is derived by using the existing recording methodologies matched with the most appropriate IT technologies. Simply the who, what, where and when will not change, but storing paper based submissions up until autumn before submission could not be continued. Having reviewed Wiltshire's practice and consulting widely, not only of Lepidopteran records but most groups at both county and national level, I have proposed some changes as follows below. Before that I must state that I make no demands of recorders, it is purely voluntary. However there are ways of supplying records which allow for maximized accuracy and minimize the collation, validation and verification needed to have a healthy and accurate data set, that will not only be accessed by existing users, but for those who have studies and uses we cannot imagine.

The suggested way of proceeding:

1. You record the who, what, where and when in your preferred way. We will suggest the use of our Excel spreadsheet or even a word table set up to replicate the Excel layout as this allows for an almost seamless transfer into MapMate. I will meet and introduce those wary of this development, but to date many are saying the biggest issue was others prejudice and when they used it was very straight forward.
2. Records can be submitted on whatever frequency you wish (Any species which need to be verified by an 'authority' must have appropriate detail present. This should be as swiftly as possible to maintain the specimen's health, where a dissection is needed advice will be provided to undertake killing the specimen in an accepted fashion). We would suggest that unless you record anything which the spreadsheet indicates needs further check, then quarterly submission would help manage the task of importing records.
3. All records will be acknowledged and if necessary further information will be sought promptly to allow for acceptance or declination.
4. Any negotiated requests on site confidentiality will be honored and an agreed way of recording that species will be used to allow its inclusion whilst satisfying the recorders terms.
5. Working parties are being invited to be set up to identify a number of key points to strengthen and support the best recording practice possible, these include
    a. Historic record retrieval and validation
    b. Identifying a 'County list' of moths
        i. Where visual identification will not suffice
        ii. By vitue of their status – abundance and distribution

All this work and development has only been able to have begun at the request of and supported by many people to numerous to individually mention. I have had at least three widely announced meetings throughout Wiltshire to meet recorders and listen to their ideas for how we can reinvigorate moth recording. We are trapping in Savernake Forest on a regular basis to help the Forestry Commisions to understand how its work is

affecting biodiversity. We are actively supporting the Garden Moth Scheme and national Moth Night. Trapping at Stanton Fitzwarren Park will become a regular feature. A number of schools throughout the county ask us to trap in their grounds and use the catch to support the children's studies on the environment. There is much scope for recording and once again using IT has been a boon by helping:

1. Create a database of recorders, soon a 'phone tree' will act to support this
2. Facilitate 'dynamic' field trip listing, if it rains one message can reach all signed up right up to the point of departure. If migration or notable species become of interest extremely swiftly organized trapping can be undertaken, often within hours.
3. Digital photography and the net have meant records have been mailed upon catching and identification has been achieved when before there was no county based authority, we now have species specialist 'on call'.

I make no apology for not listing any moths this time. I only began on May 22nd, right away had to organise the last two years records for all wishing to offer them for the provisional National Moth atlas. This work was presumed to have begun, it has not. Wiltshire was almost entirely represented by a white hole on all national maps. We have been working with 8 months notice to 'harvest' records which by virtue of them not being paper based had not been forwarded but which we knew were out there. The suggested time span was two years from all contributors, if this is achieved we then role back another two years and so on. Then we move onto 70000 records from Rothamsted trapping, were aggregation is very common and the recorder is not appropriately recorded. It has been a heck of a baptism, trying to bring our stand of recording forward to realize contemporary methodologies and requirements.

## MICROLEPIDOPTERA ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**Michael and Godfrey Smith**

The most notable feature of recording in 2009 was its unexpected nature. Weather conditions which are often stated, or accused, of having been particular spoke-in-the-wheel for recorders appear to have been of little importance throughout the year.

The majority of species noted were recorded infrequently, very often less than five times. This is illustrated by the fact that only four species were noted more than 10 times. This in itself clearly indicates that there is little opportunity of assessing the status of almost every species recorded.

Two exceptions to the above statement are ***Cameraria ohridella*** on Horse Chestnut. This recent addition to the County List continues to spread and in many instances considerably disfigures tenanted trees. ***Ectoedemia argyropeza*** which inhabits Aspen has in at least one sight, and in the space of one year, declined from abundance to apparent absence. However this is a common occurrence and should not be viewed with concern.

A total of 231 species were recorded which is about 25% of the county list. Records were received from five recorders plus the County Recorder. Nationally the amount of recording of the Microlepidoptera is quite low if compared with other taxa such as birds, flora and butterflies and comparisons with more 'popular' orders cannot be made in practical terms.

## SAWFLIES ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**John Grearson**

The summer of 2009 was the third consecutive year with wet, windy and cold weather during the emergence period for sawflies. I was not able to run my Malaise traps in the bad weather and thus the number of records for the year was less than usual. In total, there were 189 new records added to the database of which 11 were received from observers other than the county recorder. The county database now holds 3950 records of 296 species.
The notes below show four species recorded in Wiltshire for the first time and another species which had only been recorded once previously, in 1963.

***Ametastegia albipes* (Thomson)** – This tiny black species was found at Rowley Ponds, Bentley Wood on 12th May 2009, the only previous Wiltshire record having been at Blackmoor Copse in 1963, recorded by Sir Christopher Andrewes. There is some uncertainty about the larval host plant used by this species although ***Populus tremula*** (Aspen) is suspected. This plant does occur at Rowley Ponds and further study is planned there to search for the larva which is unknown at present. This species seems quite scarce in Britain. In addition to the 1963 record above there were 4 single records in the 1980s in Cornwall, Bucks. and Surrey. More recently, it has been recorded at 10 sites in mid and south Wales and single sites in Cheshire and Lancashire. Not all of these 12 sites have Aspen present so the food plant question is not fully resolved.

***Apethymus serotinus* (Müller)** – During a meeting of WWT Wardens at Green Lane Wood on 18th October 2009 an adult of this species was found by Michael New and photographed by Paul Darby.This was the first county record. The two British ***Apethymus*** species, both associated with ***Quercus***, are regarded as locally common and are unusual in that the adults fly in late summer and autumn. The eggs overwinter before hatching in the spring. There are five Wiltshire records of the other species, ***A. filiformis*** (Klug).

***Fenusella nana* (Klug)** – A female of this species emerged on 3rd May 2009 from a mine in a leaf of ***Betula*** collected at Spye Park on 27th July 2008. The first record for Wiltshire, widespread throughout Britain but probably overlooked because of its tiny size and leaf-mining lifestyle.

***Nematus sylvestris* Cameron** – 3 larvae found on ***Salix cinerea/caprea*** hybrids at Ashton Keynes on 9th July 2009 have been identified from photographs as this species, later confirmed by rearing. The first Wiltshire record, probably scarce in Britain but this is a difficult genus which has been little studied.

***Pristiphora brevis* (Hartig)** – This is the only sawfly species, currently known in Britain, to use ***Thalictrum flavum*** as a larval host plant. There are two healthy patches of this plant growing at Upper Waterhay SSSI and adults and larvae have been found there for the first time in 2009. Some of the larvae have been reared. The first Wiltshire records of this very rare species which has only been found at a few other British sites.

## VASCULAR PLANTS ANNUAL REPORT 2009

**Sharon Pilkington**

### New and interesting records

Once again the neophytes dominated the new arrivals scene. Neophytes are those plants that have joined the British flora as self-perpetuating populations within the last 500 years or so. Many of these species have arrived as garden plants and have escaped or been introduced into the wild. Others arrive as aliens via trade routes (docklands often have interesting neophytic floras) and spread, perhaps aided by changes in the climate. Although some neophytes have become notorious as invasives (Japanese knotweed ***Fallopia japonica***, New Zealand pigmyweed ***Crassula helmsii*** and Water fern ***Azolla filiculoides*** spring to mind) most appear to be relatively benign and are often overlooked or ignored by all but the most ardent botanists.

In recent years I have recorded the spread of the so-called halophytes along the trunk roads and motorways of Wiltshire. Whilst Reflexed Saltmarsh grass ***Puccinellia distans***, Lesser sea-spurrey ***Spergularia marina*** and Cockspur ***Echinochloa crus-galli*** are now widespread along roads such as the M4, A303 and A36, scope remains for spotting some of the rarer halophytes that are moving into our area. **Summer-cypress *Bassia scoparia*** has been seen on major trunk roads (the whole plant tends to turn red in late summer and is thus conspicuous) but localised records are tantalisingly few. **Grass-leaved orache *Atriplex littoralis*** is a more understated plant but was found in South Newton on the side of the A36 last year and should be present elsewhere.

**Early meadow-grass *Poa infirma*** is a rare grass of open coastal habitats. It occasionally pops up as a casual inland and early in 2009 Paul Stanley spotted it in the very unpromising location of the Stonehenge Visitor Centre car park, the first record for South Wiltshire (VC8). The only other record is from the car park at Leigh Delamere Services on the M4 in 2002.

Later in the year Leonie Washington-Campbell of the Cotswold Water Park Society found **Clustered stonewort *Tolypella glomerata*** in newly created scrapes at Lake 74 in the CWP, a first record for North Wiltshire (VC7). This is a distinctive species that takes advantage of new habitats before perennial aquatic vegetation becomes established. Returning to the site with Leonie, I noted it to be frequent but already having to compete with masses of Common stonewort ***Chara vulgaris***.

**Golden dock *Rumex maritimus*** is one of Wiltshire's most attractive and rare docks. Its only known site used to be Coate Water but there have been no records of it from there since 1986. In 2009 Tim Kaye found about 50 plants by an old canal in Swindon, whilst I found a single plant at Kent End Quarry in the CWP, so its local future looks brighter.

Recording of native **Black-poplar *Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*** continued in 2009 in the CWP. This work involved ground-truthing paper records of this enigmatic tree and then surveying each tree and its location in detail. Some of the trees have already been used to provide cuttings for planting initiatives in the CWP to prevent this majestic species from dying out in our area. Although some other areas have a higher density of Black-poplars than the CWP (for example the Vale of Aylesbury and parts of Manchester) North Wiltshire is unusual in having a very high proportion of female trees. Females produce copious quantities of seed 'fluff' in June and so males have been preferentially planted in most areas. Indeed, the other Wiltshire hotspot for this species – the Wylye valley – is dominated by male trees. The survey is unfinished so far but has found many previously unrecorded Black-poplars.

**Site-specific recording**

As a continuation of the condition assessment work the Wiltshire Botanical Society undertook for Natural England in 2007-8, a detailed survey of **Calstone and Cherhill Downs SSSI** took place in 2009. This was ably organised and reported by Richard Aisbitt, who broke this large chalk grassland site down into manageable chunks and deployed WBS volunteers onto it on a number of separate occasions throughout the year. Specifically, we were seeking the plants that are listed in the SSSI Citation for this site, so we needed a spread of survey dates to suit all species. The results of the survey indicated how data-deficient (in botanical terms anyway) the site used to be, with a scattering of mostly old records. It also showed how much can be accomplished with many pairs of eyes. For example, there was an old record of Field fleawort ***Tephroseris integrifolia* ssp. *integrifolia*** for the site so we visited in early June to see if we could find any plants. In the event we recorded over 120 in one part of the SSSI, far more than we had hoped for. Later on in the year we searched for Tuberous thistle ***Cirsium tuberosum***, Bastard-toadflax ***Thesium humifusum*** and Round-headed rampion ***Phyteuma orbiculare***. We also counted and mapped the distribution of Common Juniper ***Juniperus communis* ssp. *communis***. Richard's report was very well received by Natural England and the National Trust and shows how well a site can be surveyed given virtually unlimited botanist-time and good organisation!

Down in the south of the county, Leif Bersweden took it upon himself to record his local area. His botanical talent and passion shone through when he presented me with a species lists for **Figsbury Ring**, an archaeological site with chalk grassland on the edge of Porton Down. Given that Leif is still at school and has very limited means to travel to sites, he is a prolific recorder. Figsbury Ring has been somewhat neglected by botanists in the last few decades so it was terrific to have a completely up to date list of species for the site, common as well as rare. Whilst he was there, he also took a look at adjacent arable land and recorded **Fine-leaved fumitory *Fumaria parviflora*** and **Rough Poppy *Papaver***

***hybridum***, both rare plants in Wiltshire. In Farley he recorded a large population (500+ plants) of **Field garlic *Allium oleraceum***, a new record for VC8.

In Swindon, Tim Kaye undertook surveys of **Stanton Park**, where he is based as a ranger, and other parks in the Swindon area. From a recording perspective, this is a neglected part of the county and it is always good to have new records.

**BSBI Threatened Plants Project**

This year's target species included **Frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride***, **Tubular water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa***, **Opposite-leaved pondweed *Groenlandia densa***, **Copse-bindweed *Fallopia dumetorum*** and **Heath cudweed *Gnaphalium sylvaticum***. As before, WBS members searched for specific records and results were mixed. Unfortunately most populations were not found where they had been recorded in the past, mostly as a consequence of habitat change. An attempt to locate Opposite-leaved pondweed in the lake where it had been reported in 1984 was confounded by vast quantities of Nuttall's waterweed ***Elodea nuttallii***, which infests many of the CWP marl lakes. Another location for the species in the River Wylye at Longbridge Deverill was dominated by the submerged form of Fool's water-cress ***Apium nodiflorum***. Undergrazing appeared to have led to some local extinctions for certain grassland species such as Heath cudweed and Frog orchid, whilst Tubular water-dropwort appeared to be barely hanging on its wetland sites.

However, it would be wrong to think that a survey has failed if it does not result in the refinding of the target species. These surveys have provided an opportunity for people to go to new places and to record other species along the way. Thus it was that a fruitless search for Frog orchid on Sidbury Hill resulted in a find of the hybrid between Southern marsh-orchid and Common spotted-orchid (***Dactylorhiza* x *grandis***). Likewise, the search for Opposite-leaved pondweed in the CWP gave records of fruiting **Needle spike-rush *Eleocharis acicularis*** nearby, and an opportunity to record some of the stoneworts in the area.