



B2.6 Forth Nature Counts

Project Overview: This project aimed to increase the level of biological recording within the IFLI area and generate as many verified biological records as possible, ensuring that records end up in the public domain and contribute to conservation work and monitoring of IFLI project and programme success. Led in-house by the IFLI Community Engagement Officer and supported by three consecutive Wildlife Recording Assistants (beneficiaries of the IFLI Training Tomorrow's Talent project), the project delivered activities under three clear strands:

1. To develop the skill and knowledge levels of novice and more experienced recorders, through formal and informal training methods.
2. To engage and enthuse communities and recorders in their local wildlife using a range of events and social media.
3. To increase the number of verified wildlife records for the Inner Forth area.

Over the four years, an annual wildlife identification and survey skills workshop programme was delivered, with most sessions being fully booked. Feedback was sought from attendees to develop and refine the programme, whilst remaining focused on species and habitats that are found within the IFLI area. Sessions were led by specialist contractors (ecologists, botanists etc), staff from partner and other agencies (as in-kind contributions) and on a few occasions by IFLI trainees. Following an offer from an expert volunteer, two seasons of moth trapping and ID workshops took place around the area, attracting a small regular group and enabling records to be generated on sites that had not been surveyed previously. These records contributed to the Butterfly Conservation Moth Atlas.

Five Survey Walks located on sites where IFLI projects were taking place were designed by the wildlife recording assistants. These were 2-4km transects crossing a variety of habitats and designed to be walked by someone wanted to either focus on a particular group of species, or record a variety of species that they could confidently identify. These walks were advertised as a volunteering offer and Nature Recorders were recruited throughout the project to walk their chosen survey walk up to 5 times per year.

Following a competitive tendering process, Buglife Services were appointed as data management contractors. They created the Inner Forth Nature Counts form on iRecord, delivered bioblitz and volunteer training sessions, verified a range of records on iRecord and provided a report with recommendations for the next steps of the Forth Nature Counts project, for the IFLI Natural Heritage Working Group. This report forms part of the IFLI legacy plans. The iRecord form was regularly and widely promoted to workshop attendees, used by project volunteers and during the bioblitz that took place. The data generated through the project was downloaded by the two Local Biological Record Centres that cover parts of the IFLI area: Fife Nature Records Centre and The Wildlife Information Centre.

To engage a wider audience in the work of the project, social media and the IFLI e-newsletter was regularly used to highlight 'target species to record'. These were 3-

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4 species to look out for recording each month that are locally rare or under-recorded in the Inner Forth area. A free notepad and iRecord business card were printed and made available at all events.

In February 2018 'Source to Resource' was held as a final event for the project. This brought together seventy volunteers, recorders and staff from a range of species recording schemes and NGO's. Through talks, interactive workshops and a stalls area, the journey that biological records make from the recorder to verifier and beyond into large datasets and scientific use, were illustrated and discussed. Pleasingly it also facilitated a keynote talk from Dr Mark Eaton, a principle author of the State of Nature Report.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved:	IFLI Team – Community Engagement Officer.
	Buglife Scotland – data management contractors.
	Various contractors and in-kind support from NGO staff as workshop facilitators and leader plus advice from the IFLI natural heritage working group members.
	Volunteers and workshop participants.
Project Location:	Landscape-wide
Project dates	Year 1 quarter 1 to Year 4 quarter 4. May 2014 – March 2018.

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
<i>Biological records verified & uploaded onto the NBN</i>	2,000	2,040	13,625 records of 1,540 species from 45 taxon groups have been added to the FNC iRecord form of which 2,040 had been verified. 102 different people have contributed records to the form.
<i>Participants in training events</i>	250	290	290 different people took part. 1,016 participant places were filled on training events.
<i>Training events delivered</i>	48	118	This includes wildlife identification workshops, guided survey walks, 12 mini bioblitz and the final conference. Year 1, 7 events; Year 2, 30 events; Year 3, 41 events; Year 4, 40 events. The last identification event in March 2018 was cancelled due to extreme snowy weather.
<i>Volunteers involved</i>	50	27	29 people officially registered as volunteer Nature Recorders. Of these, 21 submitted timesheets to us

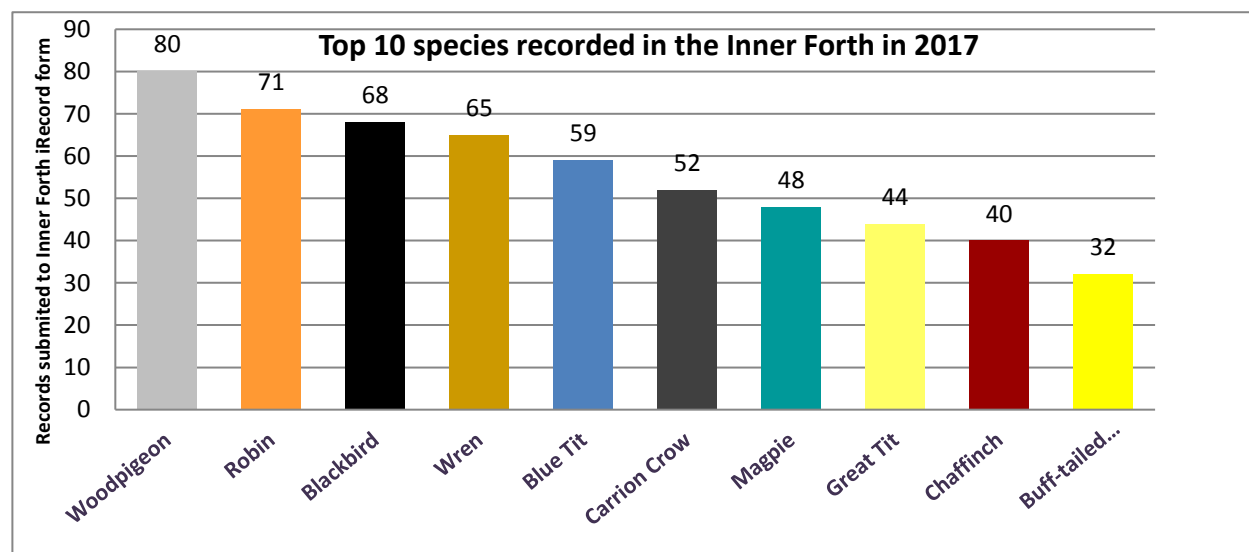
(Initially the target was number of volunteers regularly submitting wildlife records)

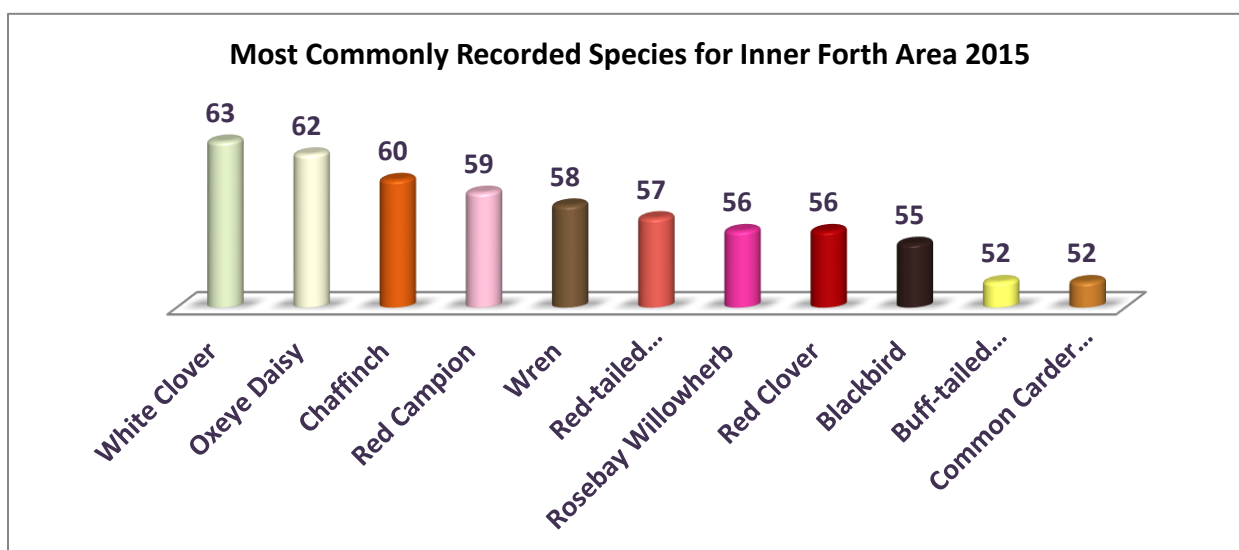
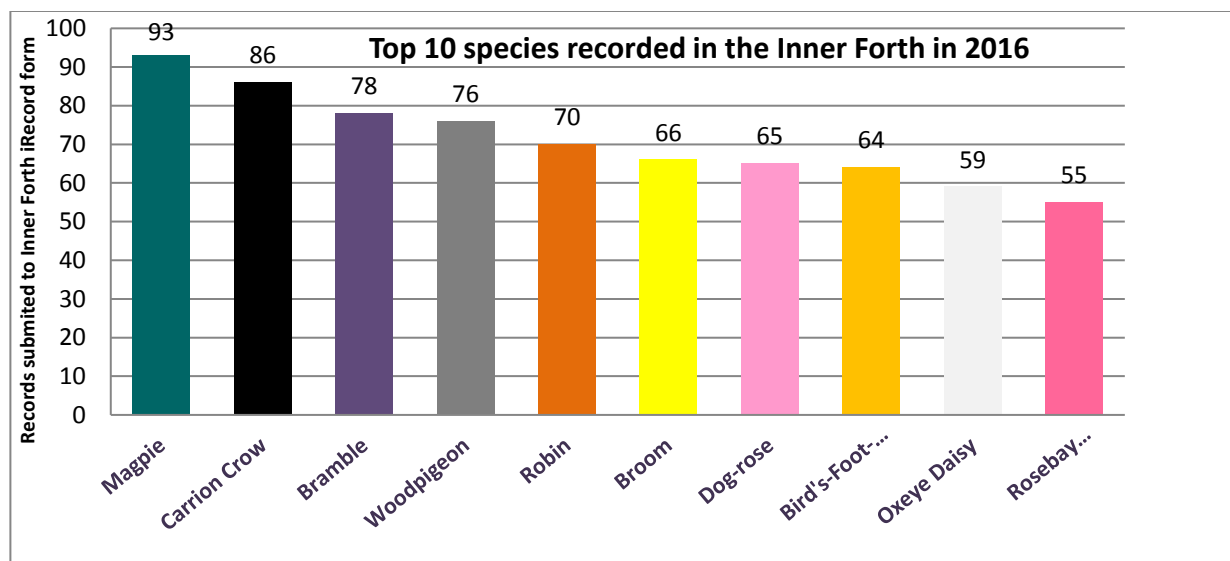
for this role. 11 of these regularly volunteered for more than 6 months. An additional 2 people volunteered as skilled workshop leaders and 4 volunteers assisted with workshops.

However, in total 102 different people contributed records to our iRecord form.

What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of the Inner Forth?

This project was designed in response to a known weakness linked to biological recording data flow in the area. Although Fife Nature was operating as a Local Biological Records Centre (LBRC) in Fife, the remainder of the Inner Forth area (parts of Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire) did not have such a service. The Forth Nature Counts project was developed by the IFLI partnership and its Natural Heritage Working Group to explore how this gap could be overcome on a short term basis and in the longer term, what sustainable options may exist. In 2016, The Wildlife Recording Centre expanded their LBRC functions into Falkirk, Stirling Clackmannanshire and Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, so the picture changed. Through the FNC project we have liaised with TWIC, co-advertised recording events and volunteer opportunities, generated over 13,000 new records (many in under-recorded species) and shown that there is an interest in biological recording in this area.





Some highlights from the iRecord form:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whisky fungus (SWT Cambus Pools) • Great Burnet (SWT Bo'mains Meadow) • Twite (RSPB Black Devon Wetlands) • Green Hairstreak butterfly (Easter Drumclair) • Pine Marten (RSPB Skinflats) • White Legged Snake millipede (Devilla Forest) • True lover's knot moth (Wester Moss SSSI) • Flaming scalycap fungus (Dunkeld to Inver Path) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golden ringed dragonfly (Dumyat path) • Woodcock (Garibaldi Bing and Wester Moss) • Gypsy Cuckoo Bumblebee (Balallan House, Stirling) • Red-horned Nomad Bee (Gartmorn Dam) • Hairy Snail (Jupiter, Grangemouth) • Triple-stripe Piercer Moth (Kinneil Local Nature Reserve) • Lesser Treble-bar moth (Skinflats Reserve) |
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What difference has this project made to people?

From post-workshop evaluation forms and unsolicited emails from the public we have robust dataset that shows that the project has made a positive difference to the people who participated.

In 2017:

- 43.3% of workshop participants were employed, 30.8% were retired. 57% were female. This is similar to records from 2015 and 2016.
- 13.5% of workshop participants were aged 12-24; 19.2% aged 25-34; 11.5% aged 35-44; 6.7% aged 45-54; 15.4 % aged 55-64; 27.9% aged 65+. This is similar to records from 2015 and 2016.
- 75% of respondents completely agreed (5 on a scale of 1-5) with the statement, "I have gained new skills in wildlife identification and surveying today." Compared with 71.8% in 2016 and 67% in 2015.
- 49% of respondents completely agreed (5 on a scale of 1-5) with the statement, "I will submit records to the Inner Forth Nature Counts iRecord form." Compared with 41.3% in 2016 and 26% in 2015.

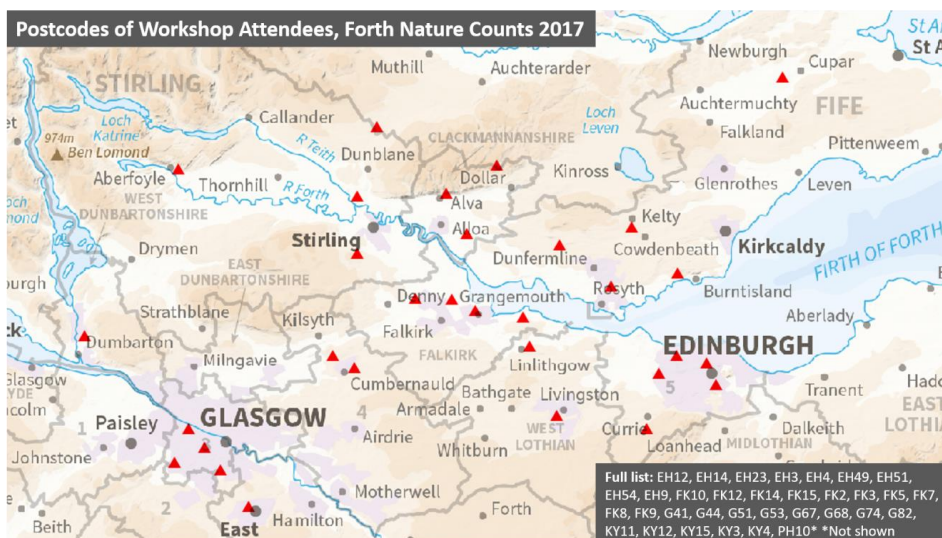
From 2017 comments added to the evaluation form:

- 67.1% of responses describe either an improvement in knowledge or an increase in confidence when handling the subject matter.
- 21.9% of responses suggested a positive change in behaviour for the participant, for example resolving to join relevant societies or setting up their own recording projects.

Examples of responses from workshop evaluations are similar to those from volunteers:

- "Made me realise the importance of monitoring and citizen science which I hope to work on when I graduate."
- "Better understanding of key species to look for when looking at habitats"
- "I know more about hoverfly species and what characteristics to look at for identifying them"
- "Professional information - will use for work"
- "It improved my knowledge, and got me out in the fresh air with likeminded people"

The workshops attracted attendees from across the central belt of Scotland:



Useful Links

The Forth Nature Counts page of the IFLI website holds a wealth of information and downloads including the six Survey Walk packs, monthly target species to record posters, a guide of how to use iRecord and slides from the Source to Resource conference:

<http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/projects/recording-celebrating/forth-nature-counts>

The Inner Forth Nature Counts iRecord form can still be access and used as records are sent to the relevant vice-county taxonomic recorder for verification, then inclusion in nationally used species datasets: www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/enter-inner-forth-records

Future Plans

This project came to a close at the end of the IFLI delivery period at the end of March 2018. Whilst the 'next steps' document prepared by Buglife Services and Kate Fuller from the IFLI team presents four options for continuing the project depending on the level of resource available, no formal decisions have yet been taken as part of the IFLI legacy period and project as to whether aspects can and will be continued.

From anecdotal evidence we know that a number of our volunteers continue to record wildlife. The iRecord form will remain available and the Survey Walks are freely downloadable from the IFLI website.

Lessons Learned

It takes a few months to set up a volunteer offer and then a few more for volunteers to start participating, and a few more for the committed and regular volunteers to become apparent. These volunteers are the ones that go out of their way to share their experiences with you and bring the results of the project to life for those responsible for managing it.

You will be surprised by offers that emerge, eg volunteers and organisations who are keen to take part in a variety of meaningful ways.

Involving trainees in delivering the project allows them to develop a wide range of skills, confidences, knowledge and professional networks, plus enables more to be delivered for project participants which ultimately feeds into generating a higher and more diverse number of biological records.

If the workshop has a clearly advertised topic, good facilitator, suitable indoor space, suitable outdoor habitat close by and plenty of tea, coffee and biscuits, most people will forgive any adverse weather!

A mixture of workshops covering more easily accessible topics (birds, wildflowers, trees) and more specialist subjects (fungi microscopy, saltmarsh plant; distance estuary bird ID, sphagnum mosses) will attract a range of participants and encourage attendees to develop their skills and interests.

iRecord is a fantastic resource for collecting biological records and allowing recorders ownership of their data, but has challenges as not all taxa have verifiers and verification can be slow depending on the way that it is done by the recording schemes and vice-county recorders. Talking about the benefits and

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challenges of this system to others who use it, including at a high level (eg Scottish Biological Information Forum or NBN) and to volunteers, allows for experiences to be shared both up and down the chain.

Photographic Evidence

2018 Source to Resource Conference, Alloa



2015 Winter Tree ID, Gartmorn Dam Country Park



2016 Rocky Shore ID at Limekilns



2017 Advanced Estuary Bird ID, Kinneil Foreshore



Funding Partners

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