

# Summary Forth Nature Counts Project in 2015

**November 2015**

**Kate Fuller (IFLI), Adam Ross (IFLI) & Scott Shanks (Buglife Scotland).**



## Project Introduction

The Forth Nature Counts project (FNC) is one of 50 discrete but interlinked projects within the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative (IFLI). FNC sits alongside other IFLI projects that seek to increase community participation in features of natural, built and cultural heritage throughout the Inner Forth.

FNC aims 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. This aim will be achieved by:

- Providing free training opportunities throughout the year for individuals and groups to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to identify and record a range of species.
- Regular promotion of wildlife recording and the species that can be found within the area.
- Offering structured volunteering opportunities for involvement in wildlife recording.
- Holding a pool of wildlife recording equipment, ID guides and other resources, available to loan.
- Creation of a data input system to enable input, collation and verification of biological records from the Inner Forth area.

The FNC project will run throughout the lifespan of IFLI from May 2014 to April 2018 and is led by the IFLI Community Engagement Officer (Kate Fuller), and supported by a Wildlife Recording Assistant. This report looks the progress made by the project over 2015, but touches on the initial work carried out in 2014.

## Forth Nature Counts in 2014

The project started in May 2014 when the IFLI programme officially began. Activity within this first seven months was limited but included workshop delivery and promotion, appointment of a contractor and their initial works, appointment of a Wildlife Recording Assistant and planning for 2015.

### Workshops & Promotion

Five wildlife recording workshops were delivered to a total of 61 participants (see table 1). In addition, meetings were held with potential workshop providers to arrange species identification workshops for 2015. FNC Workshops will be primarily led by external organisations or IFLI partners who have the skill and knowledge to design and deliver a species themed identification workshop. Contractors and volunteers will also be involved in future years. Workshops are designed to be suitable for a range of interests, held at a range of locations throughout the IFLI area and may build in progression over the project lifespan.#

Workshops and the FNC project in general were promoted via the FNC page on the IFLI website ([www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/projects/recording-celebrating/forth-nature-counts](http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/projects/recording-celebrating/forth-nature-counts)), the IFLI Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/innerforthlandscapeinitiative](https://www.facebook.com/innerforthlandscapeinitiative)) and Twitter feed ([www.twitter.com/innerforth](https://www.twitter.com/innerforth)).

<b>Workshop date (2014)</b>	<b>Workshop Theme</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Lead partner</b>	<b>Attendee Numbers</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> May	British Bats	Linlithgow Loch, West Lothian	CSGNT	10
23 <sup>rd</sup> May	Habitat Surveying	Kettilstoun Mains, West Lothian	CSGNT	14
15 <sup>th</sup> July	Bats	Riverside, Stirlingshire	Stirling Council & Central Scotland Bat Group	17
24 <sup>th</sup> July	Wildflower ID	Stirling, Stirlingshire	CSGNT	6
20 <sup>th</sup> September	Fungi ID (2 sessions)	Balquhidderock Wood & Abbey Craig, Stirlingshire	Stirling Council	14

### Contractor Services

A competitive tendering process was undertaken to appoint a contractor for 'services in relation to IFLI biological data monitoring system'. At the conclusion of this process, Buglife Scotland were selected and appointed to the FNC project to provide support. Support includes but is not limited to; creation of a data entry system for biological data recorded by volunteers; data verification; reporting on data; support to design and deliver small themed biological recording sessions; advice on key species to target recording efforts towards; providing proposals for project sustainability post April 2018.

Buglife Scotland undertook initial works to create a custom 'form' on iRecord to capture wildlife records from volunteers and the general public. iRecord was proposed by Buglife Scotland as a suitable solution to the data holding, management and verification needs. Verified records from iRecord are automatically uploaded onto the National Biodiversity Network / Atlas of Living Scotland so are widely available. The form can be found and used at [www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/enter-inner-forth-records](http://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/enter-inner-forth-records)

### Wildlife Recording Assistant

This is a trainee post whose role is to support delivery of the FNC project. The role is in itself an output of IFLI's Training Tomorrow's Talent project, a great example of cross-programme working and benefit. Paul Barclay was recruited as first IFLI Wildlife Recording Assistant and held the post from July 2014 to July 2015.

## Project Support

Paul was responsible for setting up a Forth Nature Counts library. This involved research into wildlife ID books and equipment, then after purchase, appropriate labelling and creation of a simple booking system. He additionally assisted with gathering information for 2015 workshops, entering these events onto the IFLI website events calendar and taking bookings. To promote the FNC project, Paul wrote a themed story for each edition of the IFLI e-newsletter. These focused on less well known species specific recording schemes (such as Project Splatter that records road kill) and encouraging uptake in recording at all times of year.

## Forth Nature Counts in 2015

### Workshops & Promotion

Sixteen wildlife identification workshops were delivered to a total of 144 people during 2015, as shown in the table below. The capacity of each workshop varied on the location capacity and preference of the workshop lead, but was usually 8 or 12. Overall we operated at around 91% capacity. A number of workshops were fully booked and had waiting lists in operation. On a few occasions one or two individuals did not attend on the day without prior warning. Reminder emails were sent to each booked attendee a week prior to the workshop to provide final information and to allow the IFLI team to be told of last minute cancellations which may allow someone from the waiting list to attend. There were individuals who attended more than one workshop, however details of this is not included in this report, but is available.

<b>Workshop date (2015)</b>	<b>Workshop Theme</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Lead partner</b>	<b>Attendee Numbers</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> February	Distance Bird ID	Kinneil Lagoons, Falkirk	David Bryant, volunteer	7
11 <sup>th</sup> February	Winter Tree ID	Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire	Emilie Wadsworth, CSGNT	11
8 <sup>th</sup> May	British Bats	Cambuskenneth, Stirlingshire	Emilie Wadsworth, CSGNT	12
21 <sup>st</sup> May	Habitat Surveying	Kettilstoun Mains, West Lothian	Emilie Wadsworth, CSGNT	2
23 <sup>rd</sup> May	Bird Song & Passerine ID	Culross, Fife	David Anderson, RSPB	11
28 <sup>th</sup> June	Bumblebee ID	Fallin, Stirlingshire	Anthony McClusky, Bumblebee Conservation Trust	12
4 <sup>th</sup> July	Moth ID	RSPB Skinflats, Falkirk	David Bryant, volunteer	3
8 <sup>th</sup> July	Invertebrate ID & Sampling	Stirling, Stirlingshire	Suzie Bairner, Buglife Scotland	12
18 <sup>th</sup> July	Saltmarsh plant ID & Ecology	RSPB Skinflats, Falkirk	Chris Knowles, RSPB Scotland (IFLI Trainee)	10
22 <sup>nd</sup> July	Wildflower ID	Fallin, Stirlingshire	Emilie Wadsworth, CSGNT	9
25 <sup>th</sup> July	Dragonfly ID	Kincardine & FCS Devilla Forest, Fife	Daniele Muir, British Dragonfly Society	9
6 <sup>th</sup> August	Wildflowers & Pollinators	RSPB Skinflats, Falkirk	James Silvey & Dan Brown, RSPB Scotland	8
26 <sup>th</sup> August	Summer Tree ID	Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire	Emilie Wadsworth, CSGNT	11

12 <sup>th</sup> September	Distance Wading Bird ID	Blackness & Kinneil Lagoons, Falkirk	David Bryant, volunteer	7
16 <sup>th</sup> September	Fungi ID	Kinneil Estate, Falkirk	Chris Knowles, volunteer	6
7 <sup>th</sup> November	Migrant Wader & Wildfowl ID	RSPB Skinflats & Kinneil Lagoons, Falkirk	David Anderson, RSPB	14

**INNER FORTH LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE**

## Wildlife ID & Survey Skills Workshops 2015

Join the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative and friends for a series of FREE wildlife identification & survey skills workshops throughout 2015. No prior experience is necessary but booking is essential!

Date	Workshop Theme	Location	Time
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> February	Distance Wading Bird ID	For Blackness, Falkirk	
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> February	Waterfowl ID	Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire	
Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> April	Wildlife recording for all levels and interests	Balallan House, Stirling	
Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> May	Wildlife recording for all levels and interests	Cardenden, Stirling	
Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup> May	Wildlife recording for all levels and interests	Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire	
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> May	Habitat Surveying	North Inch, Stirling	
Saturday 2 <sup>nd</sup> June	Wild Bird & Pheasant ID	Culross, Fife	
Saturday 30 <sup>th</sup> May	Wildlife recording for all levels and interests	SWT Jupiter, Grangemouth, Falkirk	
Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> June	Wildlife recording for all levels and interests	Kinneil Local Nature Reserve, Falkirk	
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> June	Wildlife ID at the King	Falkirk, Stirling	
Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup> July	Wildlife recording for all levels and interests	RSPB Skinflats, or Airth, Falkirk	
Wednesday 9 <sup>th</sup> July	Introduction to Invertebrate ID	Balallan House, Stirling	
Saturday 19 <sup>th</sup> July	Salmonid Plant ID & Biology	RSPB Skinflats, or Airth, Falkirk	
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> July	Wildflowers ID	Falkirk, Stirling	10:00 – 12:00
Thursday 24 <sup>th</sup> July	Wildflowers & Pollinators	TBC, likely to be Falkirk area	TBC, Daytime
Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> August	Summer Time ID	Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire	10:00 – 12:00
Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> September	Distance Wading Bird ID	Blackness & Kinneil Lagoons, Falkirk	09:00 – 11:00
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> November	Migrant Wader & Wildfowl ID	RSPB Skinflats & Kinneil Lagoons, Falkirk	10:00 start TBC

Please book with Kate Fuller, IFLI Community Engagement Officer or Paul Barclay, IFLI Wildlife Recording Assistant on 01324 831 568 / [info@innerforthlandscape.co.uk](mailto:info@innerforthlandscape.co.uk)

For new IFLI wildlife ID workshops & full event details, please check online [www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/eventscat](http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/eventscat)

[www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk](http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk)  
[info@innerforthlandscape.co.uk](mailto:info@innerforthlandscape.co.uk) 01324 831 568  
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Heritage Lottery Fund

Other events were held as part of the FNC project in 2015, these were aimed more at engaging the public in wildlife recording rather than up-skilling attendees. Eight half day Bioblitz took place, in very mixed weather conditions and with limited public attendance, perhaps highlighting the importance of inviting specific interest groups in the future or the engagement benefit of utilising sites with known high footfall such as SWT Jupiter in Grangemouth. A talk was held as part of the IFLI Festival in September and due to contact with the Marine Conservation Society and Stirling's Low Carbon Future, two small events were delivered at short notice in local communities. These were good ways to link IFLI's message with that of other organisations and work in partnership to deliver mutually beneficial, engaging and enjoyable events.

Workshop date (2015)	Workshop Theme	Location	Lead partner	Attendee Numbers
25 <sup>th</sup> April	Bioblitz (AM and PM sessions)	Balallan House & Back Walk, Stirlingshire	IFLI, with Buglife Scotland	11 (including 3 attendees)
9 <sup>th</sup> May	Bioblitz (AM and PM sessions)	Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire	IFLI with Buglife Scotland and Clackmannanshire Council	2
30 <sup>th</sup> May	Bioblitz (AM and PM)	SWT Jupiter Urban Wildlife	IFLI with Buglife	25 (including



	sessions)	Centre, Falkirk	Scotland, TCV OPAL community scientist and SWT	12 children)
6 <sup>th</sup> June	Bioblitz (AM and PM sessions)	Kinneil Local Nature Reserve, Falkirk	IFLI with Buglife Scotland, RSPB, Falkirk Council and Friends of Kinneil	11 (including 2 children)
12 <sup>th</sup> August	Make a wildflower planter (drop in session)	Fallin Bing, Stirlingshire	IFLI with Stirling's Low Carbon Future	Unknown
1 <sup>st</sup> September	Wildlife Watching around the Forth (talk)	Stirling, Stirlingshire	Buglife Scotland with IFLI	1
21 <sup>st</sup> September	Beach Clean as part of Great British Beach Clean weekend	Limekilns, Fife	IFLI with Marine Conservation Society and Fife Coast & Countryside Trust	3

### Contractor Services

Buglife Scotland continued to verify a proportion of records, as per their in-house specialities, that were added to the Inner Forth Nature Counts form on iRecord. They identified taxa where no verifiers were currently available and future work will hopefully locally address this as lack of verification which is a major downside to the system. It should be noted that for some species/taxa, verifiers bulk download data once per year, so verification can take some time. Buglife additionally assisted with the planning, design and delivery of the eight half day bioblitz sessions.

Towards the end of 2015 work started on compiling a suggested list of species for FNC to promote recording of in 2016. These species are a mixture of under-recorded and of local interest as they are named in Local Biodiversity Action Plans. There are species to highlight for recording each month of the year and species to target during events to be arranged, such as bioblitz or targeting recording days.



Bioblitz in Stirling 2015

### Wildlife Recording Assistant

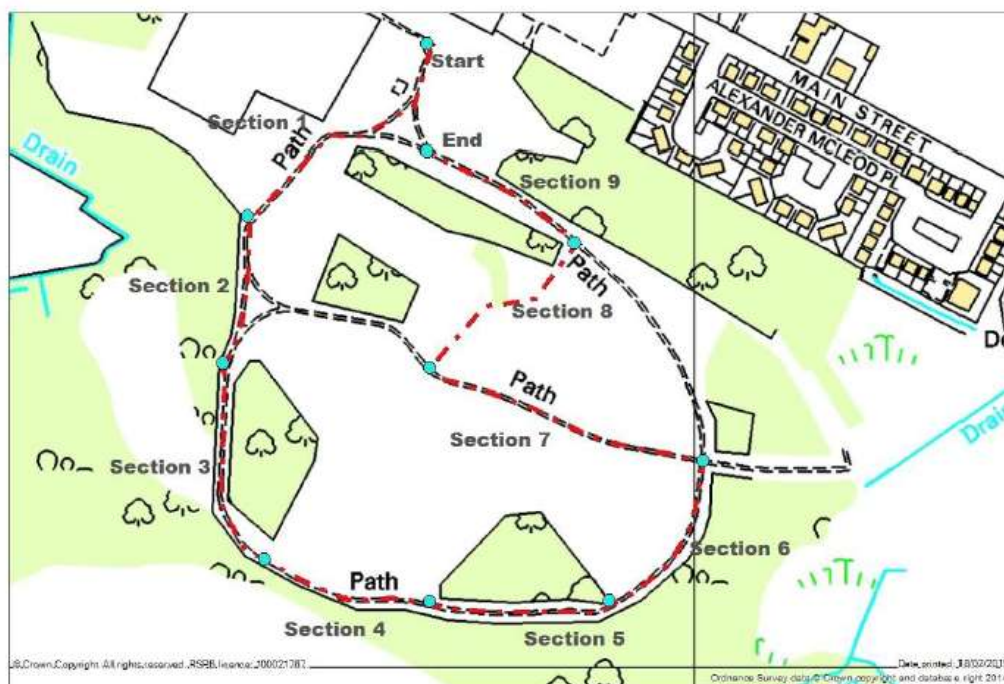
This part-time trainee role is balanced between supporting the delivery of the FNC project and developing skills or experience tailored to enhance future employability of the individual and provide insight into the

delivery of an externally funded project. Adam Ross became the second Wildlife Recording Assistant in July 2015, with a post running until November 2016. Adam and Ross had a short handover period in July.

### *Survey Walks & Volunteer Nature Recorders*

Over the winter of 2014/15, Paul devised a series of five 'Survey Walks' after research into different recording schemes and methods. The Survey Walks are aimed at generating a range of wildlife records on an area that includes at least one physical IFLI project site. Rather than setting up a species specific transect, the walks are designed so that individuals with a range of ID skills and knowledge can take part. Survey Walks are based at Kinneil Estate, Bo'ness; Kinneil Foreshore, Bo'ness; Valleyfield Woodland Park, Fife; Fallin Bing, Stirling; and Black Devon Wetlands, Clackmannanshire. Records generated can be input to the Inner Forth Nature Counts form on iRecord. In winter 2015, Adam started the process of identifying two to three additional Survey Walk locations to add to the group.

In mid 2015, Survey Walks were advertised as a structured volunteer offer called 'IFLI Nature Recorder'. To date sixteen volunteers have signed up to walk one of the routes. Volunteers are invited to walk their selected route 4-5 times per year, once in the Spring, twice over the Summer, once in the Autumn and once in the Winter. Two volunteers were immediately attracted to take part and have been regularly recording their chosen site at Fallin Bing. Other volunteers signed up in Summer and Autumn 2015. The majority have attended 'come and try a survey walk' sessions run by Paul or Adam that are designed to introduce interested participants to the sites and method. Eight of the volunteers have so far visited their Survey Walk site between October and November and submitted records to iRecord.



IFLI Survey Walk at Fallin Bing, Stirlingshire

### *Workshops*

Paul and Adam have assisted in the preparation and delivery of the majority of FNC workshops during their contracts by gathering details necessary for promotion on the IFLI website, adding events to the IFLI website, taking bookings, e-mailing reminders and being the welcoming face of IFLI by attending events to

introduce IFLI and FNC. This involved duties such as providing simple refreshments and asking attendees to complete evaluation forms but also involved learning about the subject matter on the day.



Distance Bird ID workshop, Blackness, September 2015

### *Other support*

Both Paul and Adam have represented the IFLI team and promoted the FNC project at external events such as the RSPB Volunteers Day or Forth Naturalist & Historian Conference. Stories based on FNC and wildlife recording have been written for each issue of the IFLI e-newsletter and regularly contributed to IFLI's social media channels on Facebook and Twitter. A number of press releases about the project and events were also written, but have had limited take up by local media outlets.

## **Summary of 2015 FNC Workshop Evaluation Forms**

An evaluation form was created in early 2015 and designed to be completed by attendees at the close of each FNC workshop. The form includes questions to capture suggestions for improvements and future sessions, understand the effectiveness of publicity, gather information on audiences participating in the workshops and invite comments that could contribute to FNC project and IFLI programme evaluations.

### Data exclusions and accuracy

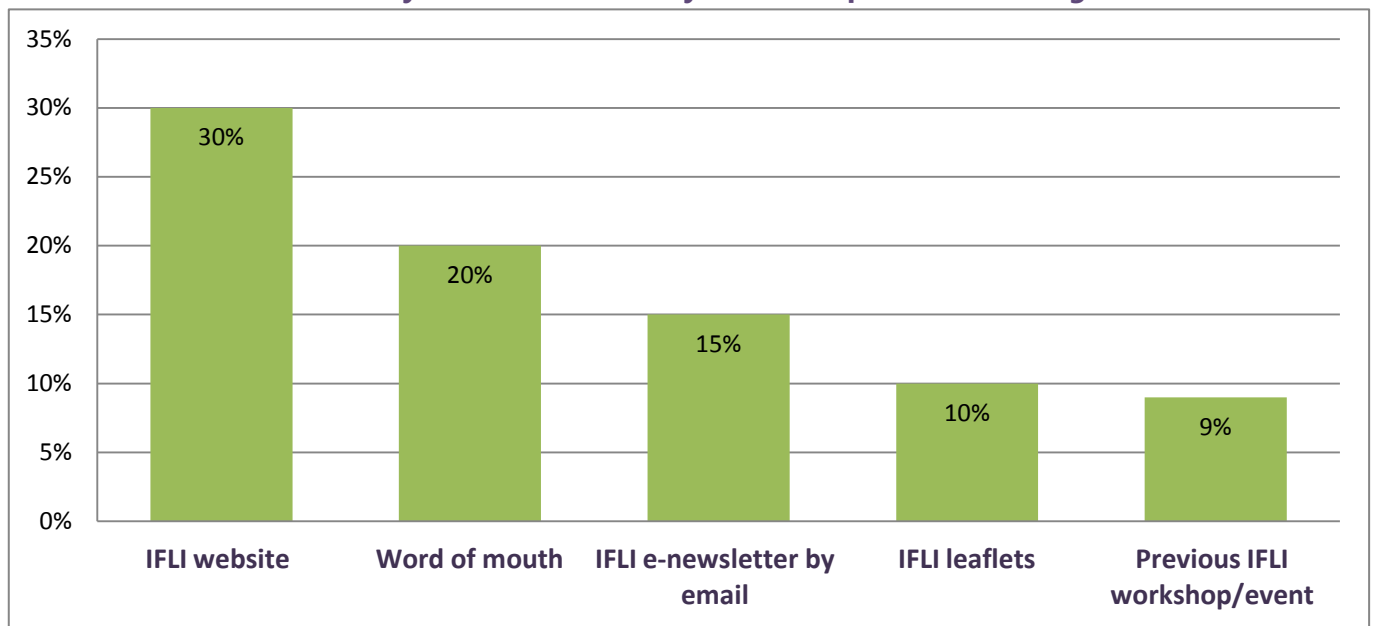
This evaluation was carried out in October 2015 so does not include evaluation forms from the November workshop. It also does not include evaluation forms from the Distance Wading Bird session in January (attendees not asked), British Bats ID session in May (attendees not asked) or Habitat Surveying session in May (no returns). Not all questions were answered by every participant. Percentages are therefore based on the total number of responses to each question.

A number of individuals attended more than one workshops and it is not known whether they completed an evaluation form for all of the sessions that they attended. Completion of multiple evaluation forms by one individual may skew data across a number of questions.

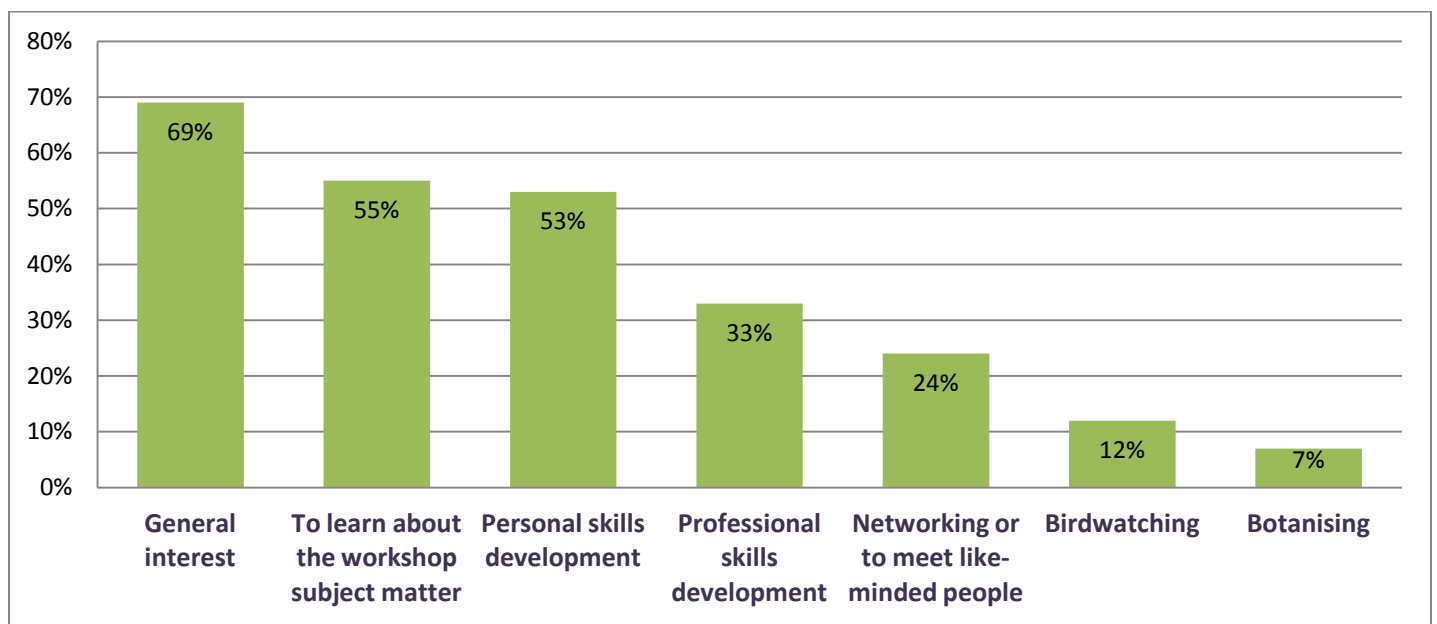
### Summarised results from each evaluation form question

The figures displayed over the following pages are taken from 83 evaluation forms collected from 12 Wildlife ID workshops throughout 2015.

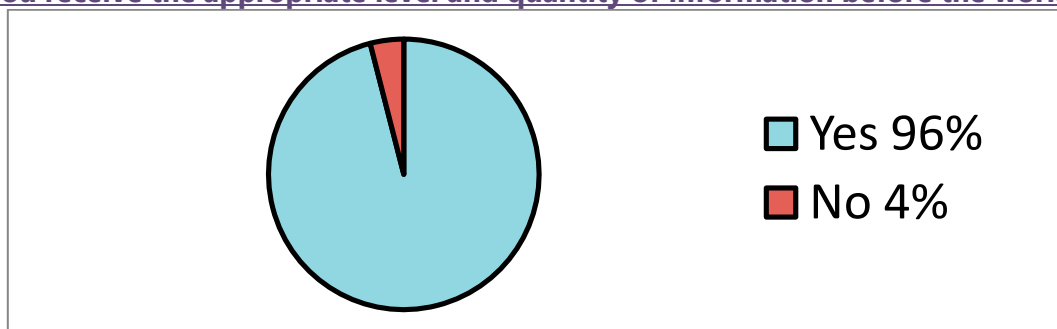
**How did you hear about today's workshop before booking?**



**What were your top three reasons for booking the workshop?**



**Did you receive the appropriate level and quantity of information before the workshop?**





**We welcome your thoughts on the workshop facilities, content and workshop leader.**

***How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Please tick only one box on each line. 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree.***

**The facilities and location were appropriate to the workshop.**

**72.5%** scored a 5

**There were an appropriate number of breaks included.**

**72.3%** scored a 5

**The breaks were of an appropriate length.**

**72.2%** scored a 5

**The indoor session of the workshop was pitched at the right level.**

**72.1%** scored a 5

**The indoor session of the workshop was informative and engaging.**

**71.2%** scored a 5

**The outdoor session of the workshop was pitched at the right level.**

**77.78%** scored a 5

**The outdoor session of the workshop was informative and engaging.**

**82.72%** scored a 5

**The workshop lead was knowledgeable on the subject matter.**

**86.75%** scored a 5

**The workshop lead was approachable and supportive.**

**90.24%** scored a 5

**Improvements**

The most common suggestions for improvements related to the following:

- **access to an indoor area / shelter / toilets at events where none had been offered**
- **longer sessions / more time**

**What difference has attending today's workshop made to you?**

***How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Please tick only one box on each line. 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree.***

**I have gained new skills in wildlife identification and surveying today.**

**67%** scored a 5

I will submit records to the Inner Forth Nature Counts iRecord form.

**26%** scored a **5**

**15.38%** scored a **4**

**25.64%** scored a **3**

**16.67%** scored a **2**

**15.38%** scored a **1**

### Comments

Most responses describe an improvement in knowledge or an increased interest in the workshop subject. The word "confidence" or "confident" appears in 33% of all responses. Examples of responses:

***"Greatly increased my knowledge and a fun morning"***

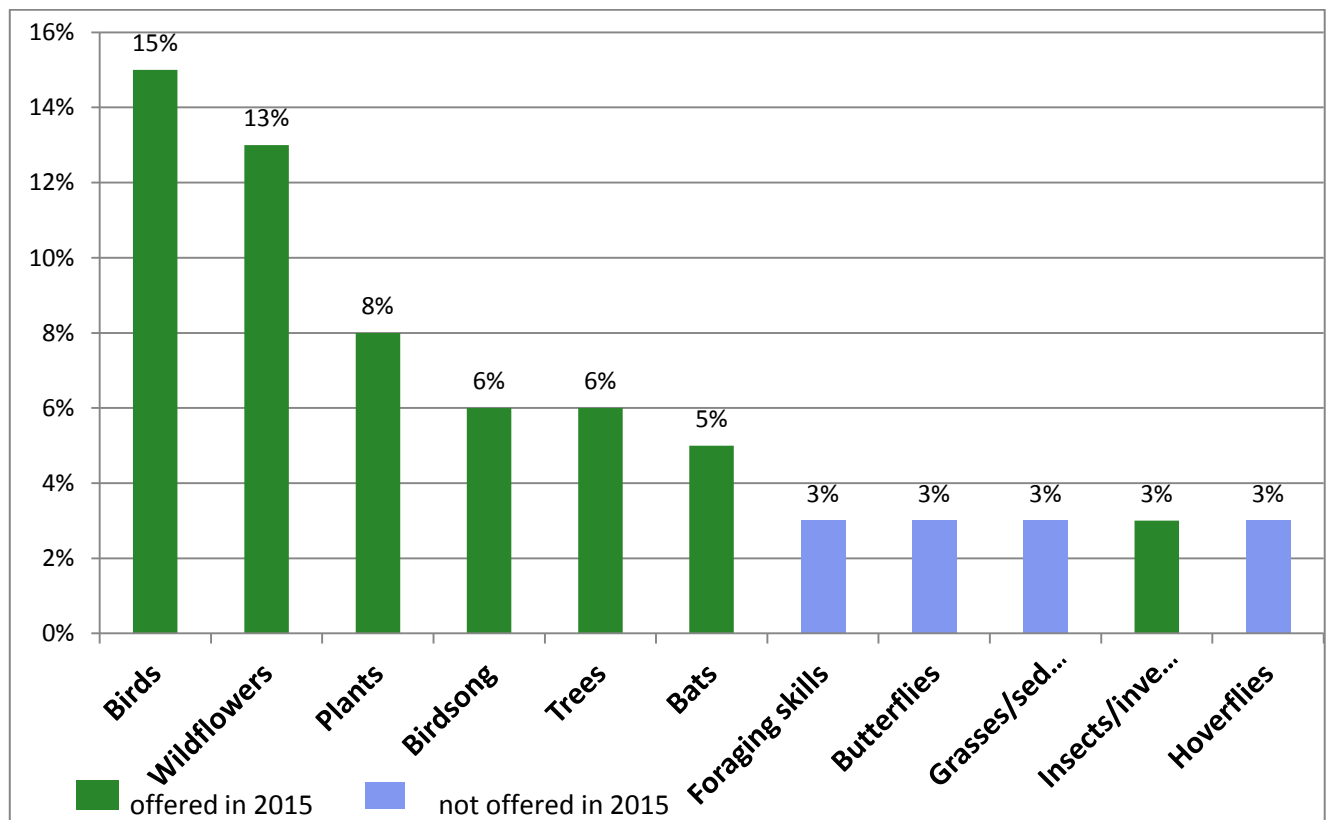
***"Increased knowledge and confidence in the field"***

***"Provided greater confidence in the ID of the species for the Forth Nature Counts"***

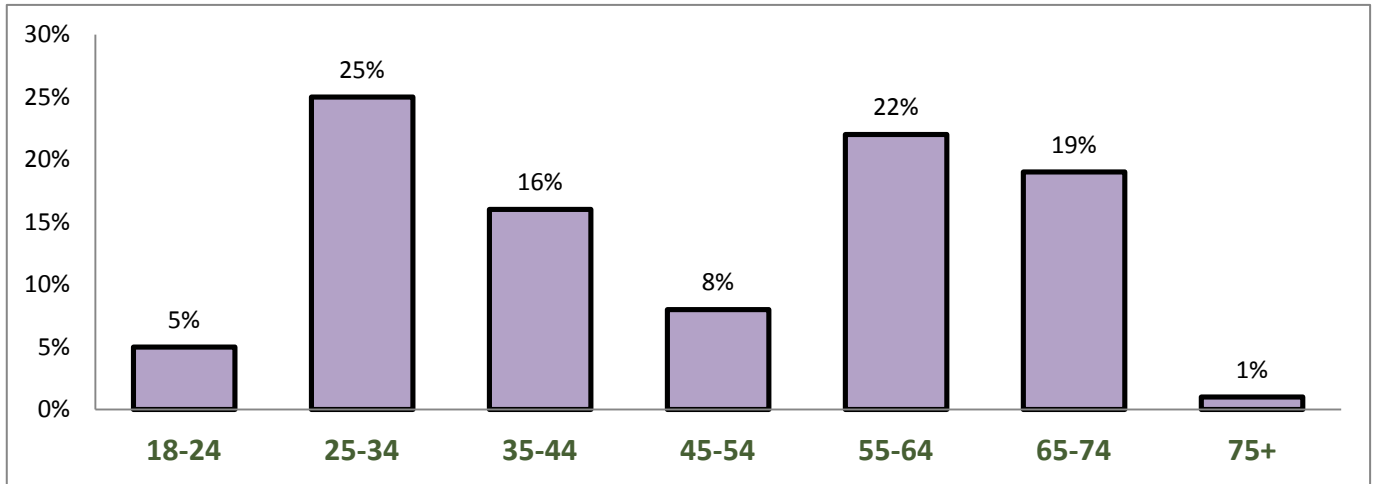
***"Stimulated interest & improved basic knowledge"***

***"Learned new skills and how to pass these on to my children"***

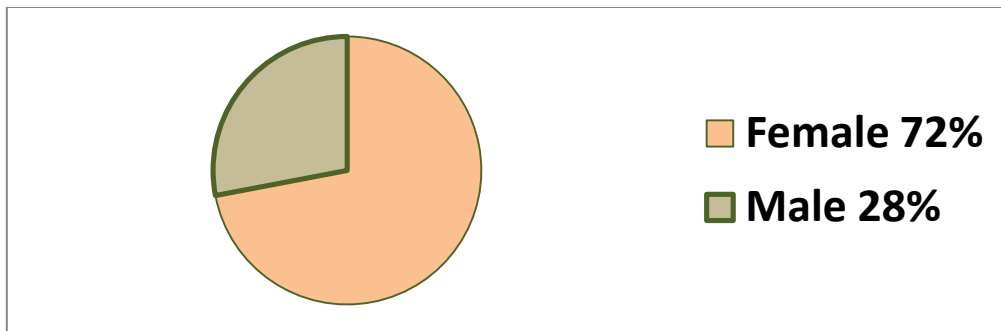
### What other workshop topics related to wildlife identification and survey skills would you be interested in attending?



### What is your age bracket?

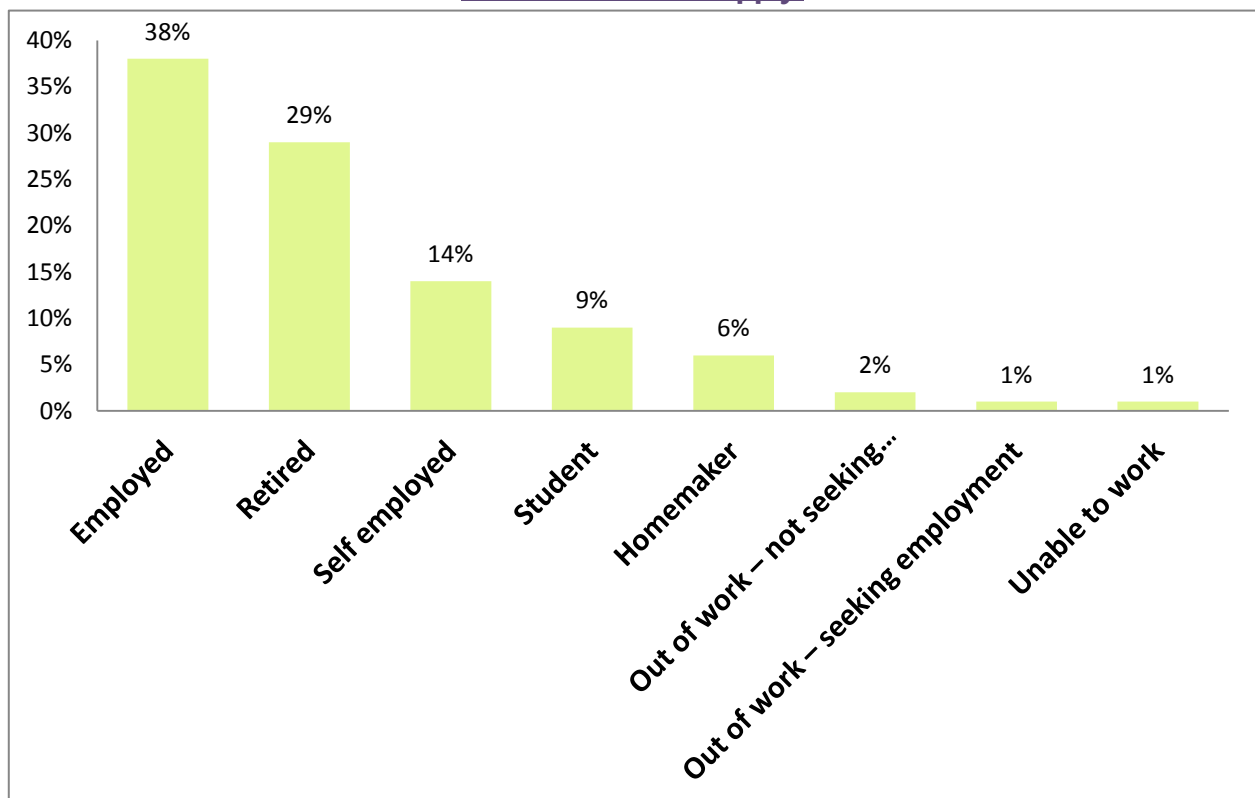


### What is your gender?

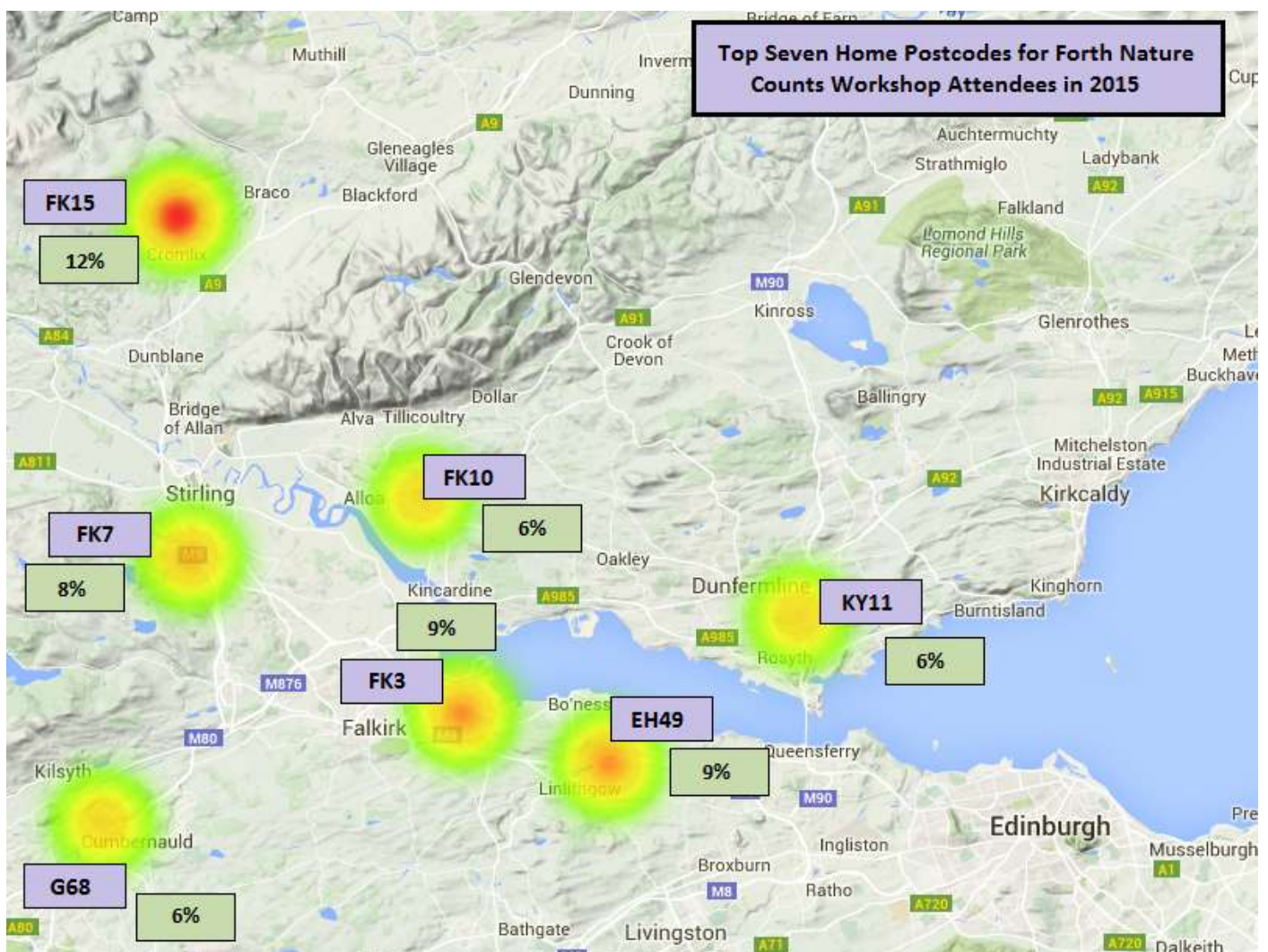
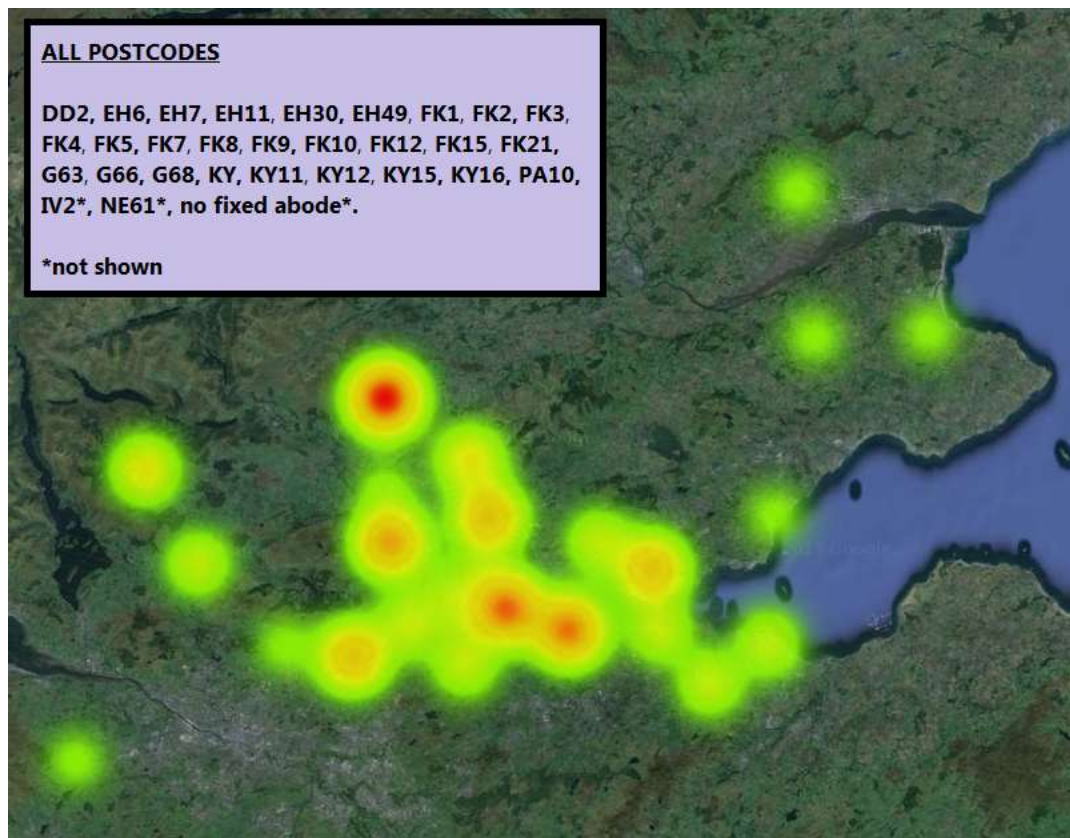


### How do you define your current employment status?

Please tick all that apply.



## What is the first part of your postcode?

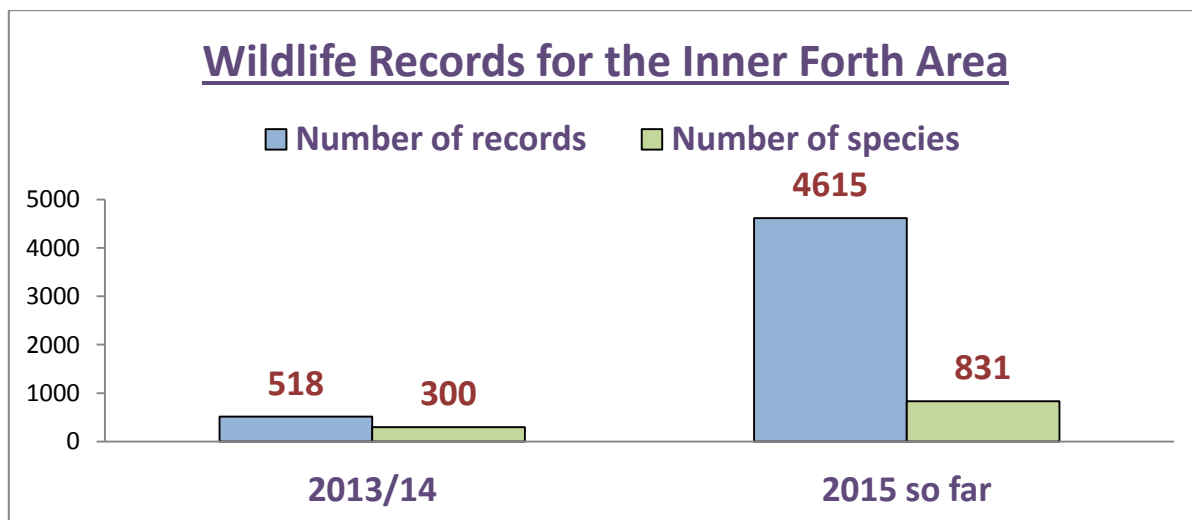




## iRecord Successes From 2015

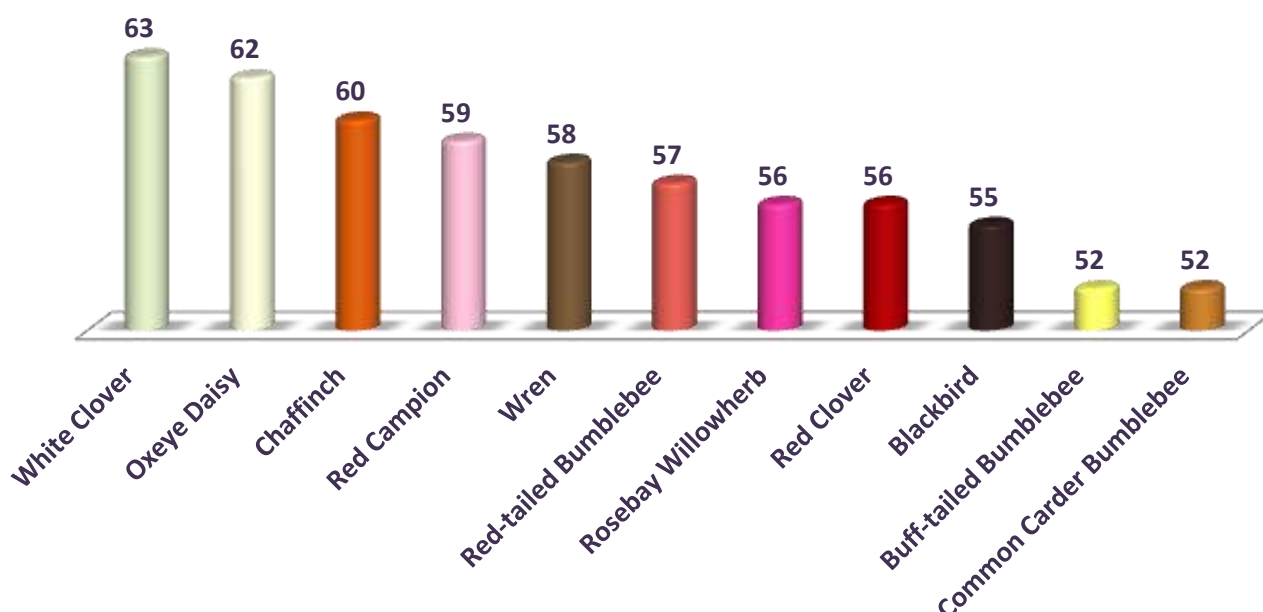
The Inner Forth Nature Counts form on iRecord went live in September 2014. These details cover the first 12 months as the data was originally gathered for a FNC talk within the IFLI Festival in September 2015.

- We have seen a 7.5 fold increase in wildlife records for the Inner Forth Area input on iRecord



- 79.7% of the records were added to iRecord using the Forth Nature Counts form
- 71.2% of the species were recorded on iRecord using the Forth Nature Counts form
- Lots of new records for under-recorded sites and under-recorded species

## **Most Commonly Recorded Species for Inner Forth Area**



### **Some Recorded Highlights**

- Lesser Treble-bar moth (Skinflats Reserve). This was a first record for Vice County 86 Stirlingshire and was recorded by Professor David Bryant.
- Gypsy Cuckoo Bumblebee (Balallan House, Stirling). This is an under-recorded species.

- Red-horned Nomad Bee (Gartmorn Dam). This is an under-recorded species.
- Hairy Snail (Jupiter, Grangemouth). This is an under-recorded species.
- Triple-stripe Piercer Moth (Kinneil Local Nature Reserve). This is an under-recorded species.

## **Forth Nature Counts in 2016 and beyond**

As in 2015, a series of species ID workshops are being planned for 2016. These will again be run in partnership with IFLI partners and other external agencies with the specialist and experience to design and deliver high quality sessions. A member of the IFLI staff team will continue to attend these to widen awareness of the initiative and other events, volunteering opportunities and projects that may be of interest.

Focused species recording sessions are also being planned for 2016 with the aim of making new records for sites and locating target species in various locations around the landscape. This will be supported by Buglife Scotland and other NGO, community groups and volunteers will be invited to participate.

New Survey Walk locations are being scoped out and will be launched with a new series of 'Come and Try Wildlife Recording' sessions in the Spring. Other opportunities to tie-into local and national events related to species, habitats and citizen science will no doubt be explored and take up, when resources allow, throughout the year.

Evaluation results from 2015 workshops clearly showed that attendees were not leaving sessions intending to enter records onto iRecord. This could be because they use other ways to share species records, or that the system needs a better introduction at the sessions. For 2016, we plan to allocate a little more time to promoting the Inner Forth Nature Counts from on iRecord at sessions, and see if the results for this question of the evaluation form alter.

The evaluation also picked up that no bookings were made after seeing the workshop advertised in local media. This was listed on the evaluation form, but is not listed in the figures above due to the null return. Media releases were written and distributed for workshops had had at least three spaces remaining, two weeks prior to the date. It is hard to track uptake without purchasing local newspapers as not all publications include all news articles on their websites.

Small changes noted in the evaluations, such as asking for toilets to be opened at locations visited, will be taken on board where possible to make sessions more welcoming. Lastly, from the evaluations it appears that the workshops were a positive experience for attendees and arranged in a suitable manner. We hope to build on this success in 2016 and involve many more participants and volunteers in the Forth Nature Counts project.

## **Further information**

To find out more about the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative, including programme aims, how to get involved in projects events and volunteering opportunities please visit [www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk](http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk)

The project team can be contacted on 01324 831 568 or [info@innerforthlandscape.co.uk](mailto:info@innerforthlandscape.co.uk)