



# BRERC wildlife

Winter 2006/2007



NVC Saltmarsh training at Walborough Reserve

## Hi Everyone

2006 has been a really busy year at BRERC and we've got lots of news for you. Thousands of wildlife records have been entered onto our species database. A big Thank You for all your recording efforts!

### BRERC Nature Satellite Centres

Not content with moving to bigger offices above the Central Library in Bristol City Centre, BRERC has been spreading its wings further afield. In order to be more accessible to our volunteer base and create a local presence in all four unitary authorities, our aim is to open nature satellite offices in Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. We've been fortunate in finding a secure office location in Yatton, which we will be moving into soon. We will be using the site for meetings, species and habitat data work and hope to increase community involvement with local groups such as Yatton and Congresbury Wildlife Action Group (YACWAG) and North Somerset Wildlife Wardens.

BRERC has also applied for funding to help us establish a base in Norton Radstock which, if successful will enable us to increase our work with groups like Cam Valley Wildlife Group. We would like to use this base particularly for data management training workshops in addition to providing a local resource for all those involved in wildlife recording in that area.

We are still very keen to find premises within South Gloucestershire, so if you are aware of a suitable office space at next to no rent available in this area please contact Daniel Marshall – Assistant Manager, ASAP.

### National Biodiversity Network

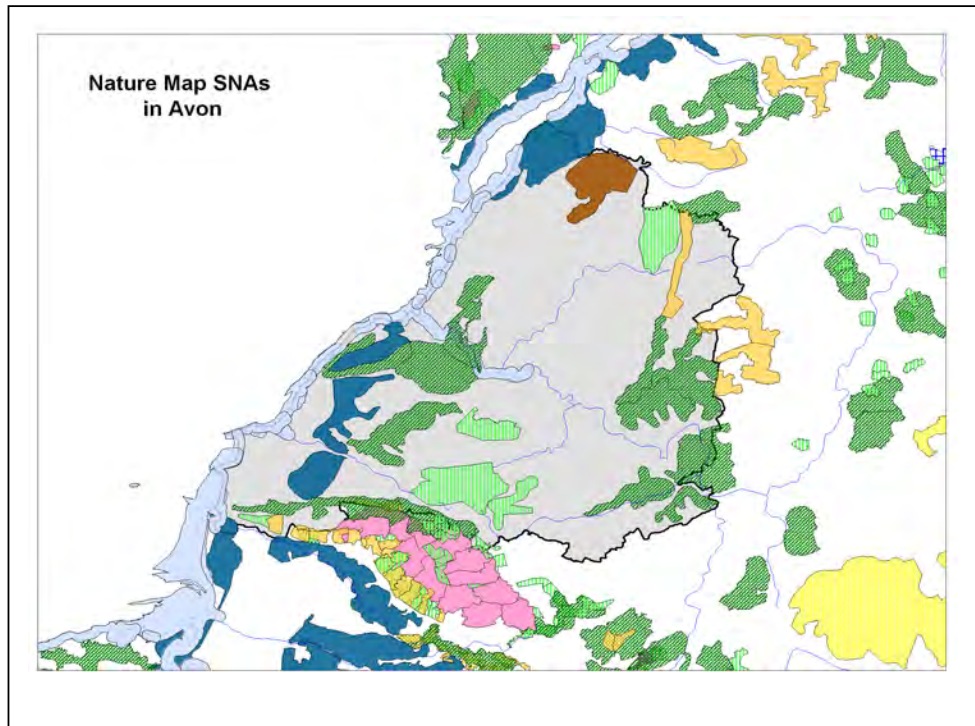
BRERC has taken the initiative to be the first record centre in the South West to put all of their species records onto the National Biodiversity Network. Our talented programmer, Caroline Harrison has developed a totally new tool, which enables us to easily convert our species database into a form that can be incorporated into the NBN Gateway that contains data from all over the UK. From early in the New Year you will be able to log on to the NBN gateway at [www.searchnbn.net](http://www.searchnbn.net) and view mapped data held by BRERC of any species in Avon displayed at a 1km resolution. From early in the new year you will be able to view live distribution maps of popular species directly from the BRERC website [www.brerc.org.uk](http://www.brerc.org.uk). These maps will be updated automatically from the NBN website using our data. Maps will highlight the areas where recording effort needs to be targeted for particular species.

## What is an SNA?

SNA stands for Strategic Nature Area. These are areas, which have been identified in the South West Nature Map

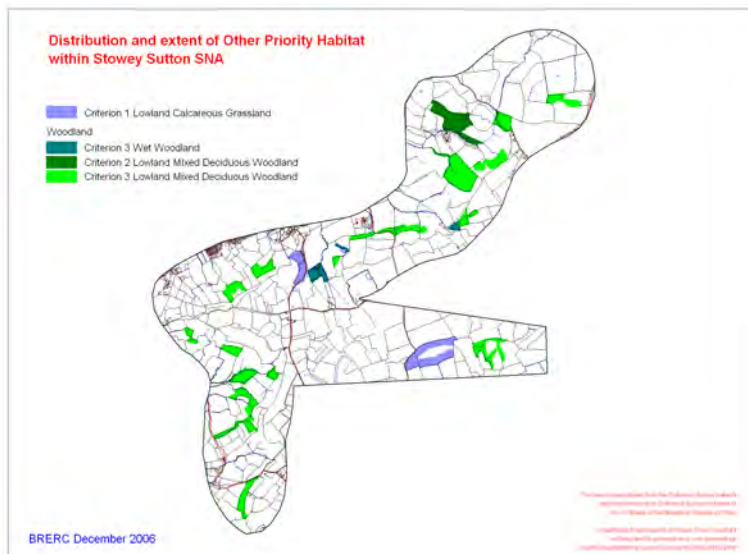
[www.swenvo.org.uk/nature\\_map](http://www.swenvo.org.uk/nature_map) as being the best areas to focus conservation work to improve habitat networks and sustain wildlife. We have approximately 35 SNAs that fall within or partly within our area. They were chosen by local wildlife experts on the basis of their ability to support high quality habitats through natural characteristics like geology and landscape. Each SNA has a main Priority Habitat type eg

Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh and the aim is that within 50 years 30% of each SNA will be restored to its main habitat type. It is hoped that by focusing biodiversity targeting spatially it will be easier for land managers and conservation organisations to focus their efforts in the places likeliest to achieve good results. BRERC have just started work to analyse the SNAs in our area to calculate how much Priority Habitat already exists within them and how much work needs to be done to meet the 50 year targets.



## Identifying UK BAP Priority Habitats

Many of you reading this will already be familiar with the two commonly used habitat classification systems in this country, the Phase I Classification System and the National Vegetation Classification System (NVC). Many of you will have heard of the term Priority Habitats but may be a little unclear what they are and where they have come from. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan has written Habitat Action Plans for 45 natural and semi-natural habitats that occur within Great Britain. Of these, about 20 occur in our area and we have been in the process of accurately mapping them over the past four years. They include coastal habitats like Coastal Vegetated Shingle, farmland habitats like Lowland Meadows and wetland habitats like Reedbeds. For a full list, log on to the UKBAP website at [www.ukbap.org.uk](http://www.ukbap.org.uk).



It cannot be emphasised enough how important it is for us to identify where these quality habitats still exist so that land managers and conservation organisations can focus their efforts to protect and increase this valuable resource for wildlife.

In order for us to map Priority Habitats our surveyors need to be sure that they identify them correctly whilst using the Phase I and NVC systems of surveying. We are currently developing a set of straightforward keys to help all surveyors feel confident about identifying Priority Habitat whilst carrying out traditional types of survey. These will be available on request early in the New Year.

## Regional Work

Over the Summer, on behalf of the South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership BRERC successfully carried out analysis of the distribution of Priority Habitat within the South West. We calculated how much UK BAP Priority Habitat falls within Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Agri-environment Schemes and mapped it on a county-by-county basis. This was a huge piece of work and the resulting report has been received well by the South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership who will be using it at a strategic level to focus conservation efforts.

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## Pondways

September brought the good news that the Pondways Project has received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Pondways is a two-year project proposed by the Avon Biodiversity Partnership, which aims to conserve and enhance pond networks and habitat for Great Crested Newts in Avon. To do this lots of volunteers will be needed to help survey ponds, take part in training and generally learn about ponds and newts in the area. If you would like to get involved, let us know, or contact [lydiarobbins@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:lydiarobbins@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk)



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## Pond Survey Forms

BRERC have designed brand new pond survey forms to be used on the Pondways project and on current pond surveys being carried out in the area by Avon Wildlife Trust. They have been designed to enable the surveyor to collect the data necessary to use something called the Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). The purpose of this is to ascertain whether a pond may be suitable for Great Crested Newts even though they might not be obvious on the day of survey. GCNs can be unpredictable in their habits, some may stay in their pond all year round and some may spend only 1 week back at their breeding pond with the rest of the time spent in terrestrial habitats.

HSI looks at all the factors that may affect whether a pond is suitable for GCN eg. Shading of the pond by trees and the amount of suitable terrestrial habitat within 500m of the pond. It adds all these factors together, does a calculation and gives the pond a score. This can be useful to indicate which ponds are worth revisiting to carry out more detailed newt surveys and helps target time and resources. We've incorporated these factors into our pond GIS layer and are looking forward to generating some really useful pond data.

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## Hedgerows

It is now well recognised how important hedgerows are within the landscape both as a historical cultural record and as a habitat in their own right. They are a primary habitat for at least 47 extant species of conservation concern in



the UK, including 13 globally threatened or rapidly declining ones. They are especially important for butterflies and moths, farmland birds, bats and dormice. Indeed, hedgerows are the most significant wildlife habitat over large stretches of lowland UK and are essential refuge for a great many woodland and farmland plants and animals. Over 600 plant species, 1500 insects, 65 birds and 20 mammals have been recorded at some time living or feeding in hedgerows.

Earlier this year BRERC successfully bid for funding from the Cotswolds Conservation Board to survey the hedgerows in ten parishes within BANES and South Gloucestershire. With help from a team of volunteers these surveys are now complete in the parishes of Doynton, Dyrham and Hinton, Sodbury,

Little Sodbury, Charlecombe, Southstoke, Claverton, Freshford, Combe Hay and Bathampton. Some of the field work

had been carried out by the very successful Field boundaries Project and we have now been able to digitise the species data generated by both of these projects. We have added over 65,000 records to the species database and are currently analysing the data to produce parish maps that identify hedges of particular importance to wildlife.

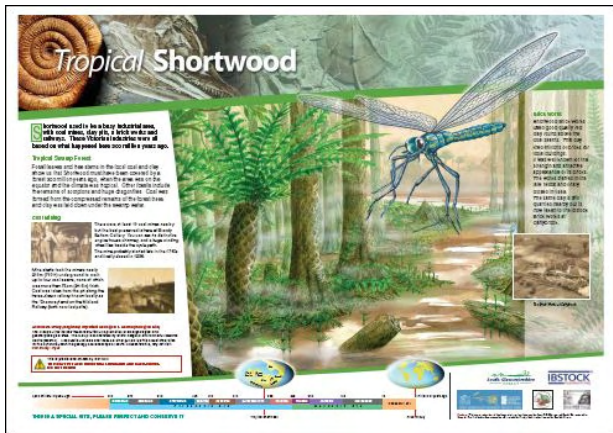
During March 2007 we will be holding a Hedgerow Celebration Event where we will be presenting the finished maps to all members of the communities involved.

BRERC was lucky enough to have the assistance of a great team of volunteers for the Cotswolds Hedgerow project. Some volunteers were existing BRERC volunteers, others joined us specifically to help with this project and yet others brought along their experience from the Field Boundaries Project. BRERC would like to say a very big thank you for all their fantastic efforts, and to express our admiration at the speed in which they took on board so many aspects of the project (particularly the GIS side of it).

**Jo Illsley, Jon Mortin and Nick Hudson** provided training. Big thanks to our volunteer team **Kate Buss, Holly Mitchell-Camp, Šárka Mareková, Susan Siddall and Nikki Terrett**. Also thanks to **Craig Stenson** and **Jenna Buss** from Avon Wildlife Trust.

## ALSF

We are now nearing the end of the South Gloucestershire Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund RIGS Project. This is a partner project involving the Avon RIGS Group, South Gloucestershire Council and BRERC.



“RIGS” are Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites. This project allows for a review of the RIGS in South Gloucestershire and is composed of several elements including a site review where the RIGS sites are being surveyed, their value reassessed and the site boundaries updated where necessary. Upon completion of the project nine sites will have large elements of their geology or geomorphology explained on fixed interpretation boards (picture) and there will be a website and a geology trail leaflet.

## Veteran Trees

Often during the winter there seems less to see in nature. Just lately there has been an upsurge in the recording of veteran trees. Avon Wildlife Trust have completed a survey project in the parishes of Tytherington and Cromhall in South Gloucestershire. BRERC has entered all these records onto our Veteran Tree GIS layer recording data about the form and girth of the tree, whether it is hollow, has holes which might be used by bats or birds, has fungi, ivy or rot is growing etc. Photos which have been taken by the surveyors have been electronically attached to the database of information and are available as part of our enquiry service.

## Butterfly Book

In 2003 BRERC published the second book in the series “Wildlife of the Bristol Region”. This book, The Butterflies of the Bristol Region was a collaboration between BRERC, the Avon Butterfly Group, with contributions from many of the active recorders in our area. The book is still available and BRERC are now offering the book to any of the people who contributed records toward it for £10.00. This is an excellent book, beautifully laid presented and written by local experts. A must for all butterfly enthusiasts.

## Moth Book

The third book in the series “Moths of the Bristol Region” will be published later this year. This book is a collaboration between the Bristol and District Moth Group and BRERC and will be indispensable to all local moth enthusiasts.

## People News

### Good Byes

A sad farewell to our friendly, ace computer programmer **Caroline Harrison** who has made so many of the jobs we do easier by delving deep into software and creating amazing add-ons which allow us ordinary folk to produce stunning results at the click of a mouse. Caroline moves to a post within Sedgemoor Council. All the very best from us all! BRERC would like to extend a big thank you and best wishes to **Pauline Homer** on her retirement. Pauline was the ecologist for North Somerset until last October and worked closely with BRERC to improve data flow between departments in the local authority and BRERC.

**Tim Corner** would like to point out that he and his wife **Lucy Corner** are expecting their first baby in mid January. Lucy is an ecologist for Bath and North East Somerset and Bristol and has recently left on maternity leave. **Karen Renshaw** from Bath and North East Somerset, also expecting the pitter of tiny feet in January has also left on maternity leave at Christmas. Good luck with the new arrivals and we'll miss you whilst you're away.

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### Hellos

Biodiversity Records Officer – **Dr Helen Davies** took over this role on 1st July 2006, temporarily vacated by Daniel Marshall who is covering for Abi Pedlow on maternity leave. Helen first started working at BRERC in January 2006 on the Field Boundaries Project and gradually became involved with the incoming records and the data enquiries side of BRERC. Summer 2006 was particularly hectic, with requests for information from Ecological Consultants and students arriving thick and fast at BRERC, combined with our office move in August.

Helen's background includes a BSc in Zoology and PhD (a spatial study of badgers and tuberculosis) from the University of Bristol. She started her BSc as a mature student and on its completion in 1995, Helen volunteered at BRERC helping with data input for the Avon Flora Project and learning about the GIS software BRERC was using at that time. In May 2005 Helen was taken onto the BRERC call-out staff register, thereby proving that volunteering at BRERC can lead to paid work, even if it does take 10 years! Helen has one clear point to make about working at BRERC and that is, "This is the very best job I've ever had!".

Welcome **Dan Merrett** as ecologist for Bath and North East Somerset. Dan will be covering for Lucy and Karen whilst they are away on maternity leave. Dan has been project officer for the brilliantly

successful Batscapes project for the last three years. Batscapes finished in December and all Dan's previous experience from the project will be carried over into his new position.

We're expecting **Abi Pedlow**, BRERC's Assistant Manager back from maternity leave sometime in the new year. It just hasn't been the same without her and we look forward to her settling into the new offices.

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### New Volunteers

We have been lucky enough to gain several new volunteers – We would like to welcome **Susan Siddall, Holly Mitchell-Camp, Šárka Mareková** and **Lynne Davies**. Susan is studying Environmental Biology at Bath Spa University. Holly has come to us from Portsmouth University studying Marine Biology. Šárka Mareková has a Masters in Landscape Engineering from the Czech Republic and is visiting England to improve her already excellent English.

### Training BRERC Survey Skills

In April of this year BRERC ran a surveyors training day at Knowle Wood. This was open to all the staff and volunteers at BRERC and we were joined by two staff from the Somerset Environmental Records Centre. The objective of the training was to give everyone an overview and understanding of the why's, where's and how's of surveys in general and BRERC surveys in particular. The site surveyed was an area of Ancient Woodland in North Somerset on the limestone on the western end of the Mendip Hills. The training was divided into three parts:

**Day one - Office Overview** – Tim Corner started the training off by explained the principles and objectives of surveying, why BRERC might be asked to carry out a survey and how to prepare maps and supporting data for the field visit.

**Day two - Field Surveying** - We were lucky to have excellent weather for the actual survey. The woodland itself proved to be a lovely example of Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland with evidence of old and current coppice management. Working in groups helps share field identification skills. Thank you to the landowners for allowing us to descend upon them and for providing us with parking, and the foresters for sharing their knowledge of the wood.

**Day three – Data Processing** The third session was held back in the BRERC offices. Staff and volunteers were shown the data entry process and how it integrates into the BRERC systems. All were encouraged to submit information that they thought relevant for the report and were later furnished with a final edited copy to see how the information is best presented in a report.

## NVC Saltmarsh

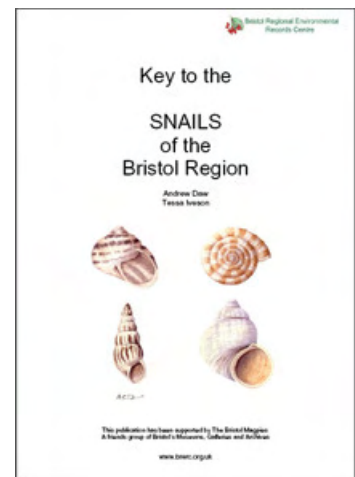
Jenny Dowell lead a NVC Saltmarsh training day for BRERC at the Avon Wildlife Trust reserve at Walborough on what must have been the hottest day of the year! It was a well presented day which, judging from the excellent feedback went down very well. During the first part of the day Jenny explained the history and methodology behind the National Vegetation Classification to an attentive audience sat in the shade of umbrellas! That done, she then took us out on to the marsh to look in more detail at the variation and zonation of the saltmarsh found here. Following on from this we were shown the practicalities of identifying our target areas using the NVC system and then we were given quadrats to survey. This practical exercise reinforced the theory from the morning and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day.

## Mosses

Early on in the year BRERC's Nick Hudson lead a training day "An introduction to Mosses." The aim of this day was to dispel the fear of "green fuzz". This was attended by eight BRERC members and volunteers and was mainly classroom based although there was a trip out into the grounds of Ashton Court to see the mosses in their home environment.

## PSYM (Predictive System for Multimetrics)

In August two members of BRERC staff attended training days held in Oxford and North Wales, run by the Pond Conservation Trust. The training was on the PSYM methodology – This is a standard method which provides an assessment of the ecological quality of a site by comparing it to a national standard. It measures basic environmental information including pH and an audit of the plant and invertebrate species found at the site. The comparison assessment can be carried out via the website [www.pondstrust.org.uk](http://www.pondstrust.org.uk) and data is added to the National Ponds Database.

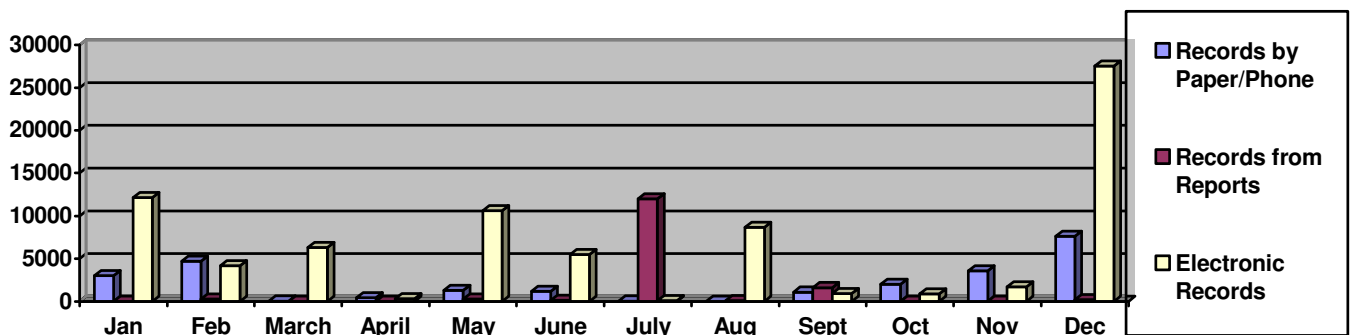


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## Other News

A Key to the Snails of the Bristol Region has been produced and is available directly from BRERC for a small cost, or for free download from the BRERC website.

## Your Records



During 2006 BRERC received over 119,000 wildlife records from individual recorders, wildlife groups and consultants. As you can see from the chart above the majority of these records are now being contributed in electronic format by email, spreadsheets and GIS. Downloadable spreadsheets are available from our website at [www.brerc.org.uk](http://www.brerc.org.uk). All the records received by BRERC directly contribute towards the conservation of species and habitats and the understanding of their distribution in the area. If you or your group would like help in storing and submitting your records in an electronic format, please do not hesitate to contact us here at BRERC. We are able to give advice and guidance on all aspects of data management and would like to thank you for contributions.

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Records provided to BRERC are deemed to be made available for BRERC to use in accordance with its role as a Local Records Centre. As such records may be distributed by BRERC to third parties, in a variety of formats, such as through the National Biodiversity Network Gateway and other websites. Personal information is not supplied by BRERC to data enquirers and names are blanked out on copies of records and reports sent to them. Names and addresses may also be used by BRERC when mailing newsletters, recording forms and other information or publicity material. More details of BRERC policies can be found at [www.brerc.org.uk](http://www.brerc.org.uk)

## Harlequin Ladybird

Jon Mortin

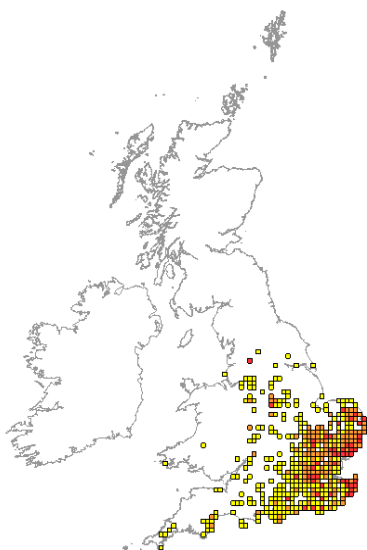
Ladybirds are a very distinctive group of beetles which are relatively easy to identify and record. Many people are familiar with common species such as the 2-spot, 7-spot and Cream-spot ladybirds. Identification can sometimes be tricky as some species such as the 2-spot and 10-spot exist in a variety of forms with differing colour patterns on their wing cases (elytra). But a relatively new addition to the U.K. Fauna is the Harlequin Ladybird, *Harmonia axyridis*. This species only arrived in the U.K. in 2004 and consequently is not found in most insect field guides and ladybird identification charts.



The Harlequin ladybird arrived in the Bristol region last year and there are now a dozen or so records from the BRERC area.

So how do you know if you've found a Harlequin ladybird? They are similar in size to the 7-spot ladybird (5-8mm) but are highly variable in colour and patterning. The elytra can be yellow or orange and unspotted or red with anything from zero to 21 spots. There are also black (melanic) forms with either 2 or 4 orange or red spots. The pronotum is usually white with black spots sometimes fused into an M-shaped mark. There is a very good article with illustrations in the August 2005 edition of *British Wildlife* (vol.16 no.6).

Please keep an eye out for this new species and send us your records. If you think you have found one and would like the identification verified, staff at the City of Bristol Museum will be able to help by appointment. There are also 2 relevant websites – one for specific monitoring of the harlequin ladybird ([www.harlequin-survey.org](http://www.harlequin-survey.org)) and another for recording ladybirds generally ([www.ladybird-survey.org](http://www.ladybird-survey.org)).



10km squares with records for *Harmonia axyridis* (Harlequin Ladybird) in Great Britain and Ireland (map and data taken from NBN Gateway searchnbn.net © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved NERC 100017897 2004)

### 10km square legend

- 2004 to 2004 (top)
- 2005 to 2005 (middle)
- 2006 to 2006 (bottom)

**Note:** the most recent (top most) dates will overlay the earlier records in more than one date class.

## How to Find Us



BRERC is now found on the  
Third Floor,  
Bristol Central Library,  
College Green,  
Bristol,  
BS1 5TL

Tel: 0117934 9833  
Fax: 0117927 3918  
Email: [info@brerc.org.uk](mailto:info@brerc.org.uk)  
[www.brerc.org.uk](http://www.brerc.org.uk)

Please remember to ring in advance  
if you are planning to visit the office.  
Thanks!

BRERC receives funding and  
support from Bath and North  
East Somerset Council, Bristol  
City Council, North Somerset  
Council, South Gloucestershire  
Council, Natural England,  
Environment Agency and Avon  
Wildlife Trust.

## Volunteer Opportunities

### Electronic Data Officer

We are looking for a volunteer to ensure a regular and efficient flow of electronic records into our main database. You will need to have a sound knowledge of computer systems, in particular working with spreadsheets, plus have a careful and methodical approach to your work. The systems for this work are already in place and the procedure is fully documented. This position is currently based at our main office and probably requires a minimum input of one day a fortnight.

### BRERC Volunteers at Yatton, North Somerset

- Do you have an interest in the wildlife around you?
- Do you have a good eye for detail and the initiative to work without supervision?
- Are you familiar with entering information into databases?
- Would you like to gain experience of the operation of an Environmental Records Centre?
- Do you have one or more days per week to spare for a period of three months or more?

If the answer to most or all of the above is 'yes', then BRERC will shortly have an opportunity for you to volunteer in Yatton.

### Hoverfly Group Coordinator.

We are looking to re-launch the Hoverfly Group, to stimulate interest in Hoverflies and increase their recording.

In particular we wish to increase the training opportunities, establish field events and have a Group presence at various natural history events. We are looking for a volunteer to help initiate this and to co-ordinate the Group's activities. This will include liaising between BRERC, the City Museum and Art Gallery and other groups.

**There are more volunteer opportunities advertised on our website. If you are interested in any position please contact the Assistant Manager, Daniel Marshall, by e-mail or by phone.**