

iRecord verifiers' newsletter July 2019

Dear iRecord verifier,

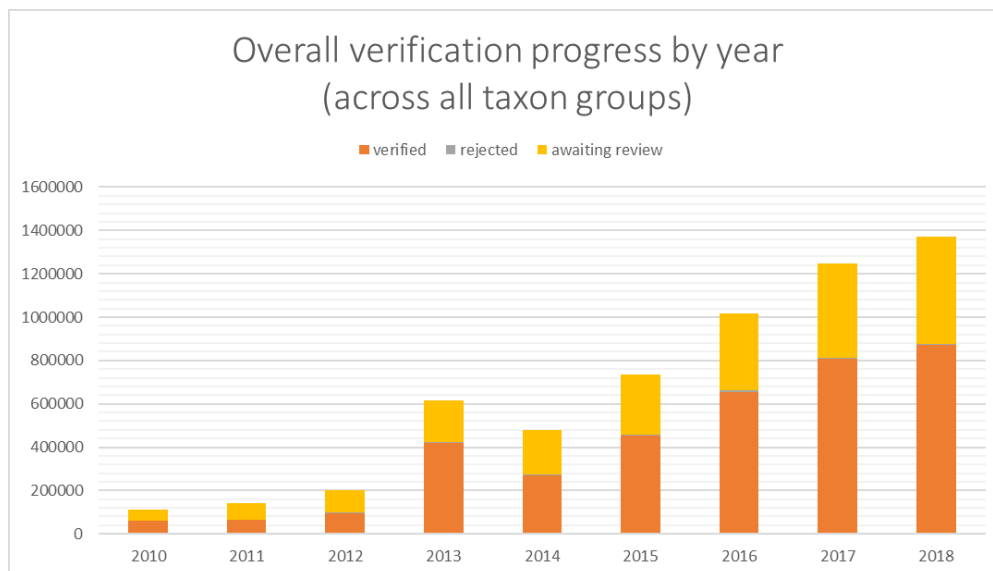
This email is being sent to everyone who currently has a verification role linked to their account on the iRecord website (<https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/>). It contains updates on recent iRecord developments.

I'm afraid this is a rather long email! We will try to send out more regular but slightly shorter ones in future – let us know if there is anything you would like to see included in the next one. Read on for:

- Overall verification progress
- iRecord technical developments
- BRC recording schemes meeting
- iNaturalist records
- Sharing data with the NBN Atlas
- New iRecord user guide
- Communication reminders

Overall verification progress

The first thing to say is a very big thank you to everyone who has contributed to verifying records on iRecord. The numbers of records being submitted, checked, incorporated into recording scheme datasets and shared via the NBN Atlas are all increasing.



Within the “awaiting review” category are all the records for species groups that do not currently have a recording scheme at all, which means that those schemes that are active on iRecord are achieving a very high proportion of checked records.

The increasing number of records is welcome and has the potential to improve our knowledge of species distributions and trends, but can also mean an increasing workload in terms of verification. Various options exist or are being investigated to support the verification process, many of which were discussed at the BRC recording scheme meeting last March. These include: how to share verification among teams; how 'record-cleaner' rules can be used to automate parts of the process; what role there might be for image recognition.

Overall the numbers of records being reviewed is very impressive, and behind the raw statistics of records being accepted there is also an enormous amount of feedback and mentoring to the recorders concerned.

iRecord technical development

iRecord is supported by a small team of developers within Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) and externally. Resources are of course limited, but there is continuous work to maintain the existing infrastructure and provide enhancements where possible. Recent work has included:

- Background work on performance – we're aware that iRecord has run slowly at times over the last six months. Performance is constantly under review and important improvements have been made to keep up with the increasing demand.
- Work has been completed to prepare the way for new reporting tools based on "elasticsearch" technology. This promises to greatly increase the performance of various reports on iRecord, and has so far been implemented in a new verification page (see below).
- It's now possible to 'drag and drop' photos into the data entry forms, as an alternative to clicking through to find folders and files.
- Changes to mapping: Google has recently changed the way that it charges for map use, and we've had to implement changes in the map layers and place name searches we use on iRecord to avoid costs getting out of hand.
- New and revised boundaries (see below).
- And as usual there have been a variety of new projects making use of the iRecord tools to bring species data together in one place for recording schemes and local environmental records centres to access it, as well as building systems for other types of environmental data. Recent project work has included the [CEH National Honey Monitoring Scheme](#), data-sharing functions for the National Trust, updates to the Pantheon invertebrate habitat system, plus work on new sites including for Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust and the European Butterfly Monitoring project ([ABLE](#)).

Elasticsearch verification page

Earlier in the year a test version of a new verification page was made available, via a link on the main iRecord menu bar: "Verification – new". This has been developed by John van Breda of BiodiversIT and uses new elasticsearch technology to search and filter the records. Initial tests indicate that this is much faster than our previous systems.

The new page doesn't yet have all the functionality of the old one, but it does provide most of the key tools to allow 'real' verification decisions to be applied. For more information see this post in the verifiers forum:

<https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/node/7647>

Map boundary updates

We've recently completed some work on location boundaries to fix a number of problems. This has included:

- Undertaking a general review of vice-county (VC boundaries), chiefly adding missing islands including many around the Outer Hebrides, Ailsa Craig and Lady Island in Ayrshire, Grassholm and The Smalls in Pembrokeshire and the Scilly Isle for Cornwall. BRC has undertaken the ongoing maintenance of the VC layers from the NBN, via an open source [repository](#).
- Updating the Local Environmental Records Centres boundaries to pick up on recent changes to LERC operations.
- Updating the Butterfly Conservation local branch boundaries.
- Adding a 3 nautical mile seaward extension to Eire and NI and country boundaries to be consistent with the GB countries.
- Fixing some boundary problems around the Derry/Londonderry area of NI.
- Adding a country-level boundary for Isle of Man.

BRC recording schemes meeting

Thanks to all recording scheme representatives and verifiers who were able to attend this meeting on 23 March 2019, it was great to have such a large and enthusiastic attendance. A varied programme included links between recording, conservation and research, presentations on recent projects from several recording schemes, use of acoustic technologies for bat monitoring, and how recording contributes to the latest State of Nature report.

Workshop sessions addressed data modelling, digital tools for recording, and verification. Input from participants was wide-ranging and very welcome, and is being fed in to development plans for relevant projects at BRC and with partners.

The presentations and workshop reports are available to download here:

<https://www.brc.ac.uk/brc-scheme-meeting-2019>

Or you can straight to the verification workshop report:

https://www.brc.ac.uk/sites/www.brc.ac.uk/files/verification%20workshop_report_FINAL%20for%20circulation.pdf

Following on from that workshop we intend to hold an autumn meeting specifically addressing verification, probably at CEH's offices within Lancaster University and probably on a weekday in October or November. More details will be circulated soon.

One request that many people put forward during the workshop was for a list of all the people who are active as verifiers on iRecord. This can only be done with your consent, and we will circulate a separate message to address this.

iNaturalist records

iNaturalist is a global online system for collecting wildlife observations, which allows members of the public to upload records with photos of the wildlife they have found, and receive help with identifications. It is widely used around the world but, in contrast to iRecord, iNaturalist is not

tailored to biological recording in the UK, and does not link very easily to the recording schemes and records centres.

At the end of April a series of city-based bioblitz events were held under the “City Nature Challenge” banner, coordinated in the UK by the Bristol Natural History Consortium, as part of a global project. Records from these events worldwide are being collected via the iNaturalist website and app.

iRecord was asked to play a role in mobilising the iNaturalist records for recording schemes and records centres in connection with the “City Nature Challenge”, coordinated in the UK by the Bristol Natural History Consortium, as part of a global project. After an initial trial in 2018 we are now bringing in iNaturalist records from the City Nature Challenge events, and from elsewhere in the UK. Some filtering is being applied to these records; for more information see this post in the verifiers’ forum:

<https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/node/7662>

We’re aware that there are some difficulties with some of the iNaturalist records, some of which have been highlighted in the discussion in the above forum post. We’ll be reviewing this process after six months to see what we should do next. If you have any comments on this please let us know via the forums or in reply to this email.

If you find that the iNaturalist records are unmanageable for your purposes, we can set your verification filters to exclude them, or we can put the iNaturalist records into their own filter so that you can deal with them separately from the normal iRecord records.

Sharing data with the NBN Atlas

Recording schemes and projects that make use of iRecord can choose to send their data direct from iRecord to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas. We can now supply updates to the NBN Atlas on a regular (usually monthly) basis using an automated export process.

A number of schemes have opted to use this facility, and to date over 800,000 records have been shared directly from iRecord to the NBN Atlas – for details see:

<https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/nbn-sharing>

Not all recording schemes and projects choose to send data direct to the NBN Atlas from iRecord, as some prefer to manage iRecord data via their own databases, sharing data from there to the NBN Atlas.

If your recording scheme or project would like to make use of the regular updates from iRecord to the NBN Atlas please contact us via irecord@ceh.ac.uk

New iRecord user guide

Many thanks to Steve Garland for compiling and updating a new guide to using iRecord. This builds on a document produced several years ago and adds a lot of new information, covering all aspects of iRecord that are relevant to recorders wishing to add their records.

The new guide was developed for the [Tanyptera Trust's project](#) that is developing invertebrate recording in north-west England, supported by National Museums Liverpool. We are very grateful to Steve for making this available, and it can be downloaded from the iRecord Help pages: <https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/user-guide>

Communication reminders

- Don't forget that there are discussion forums for all things iRecord-related, including a forum that is available only to verifiers that can be used to discuss verification issues: <https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/forum>
- The forums are great for seeking a wider range of opinions, but for requests for new verifiers to be set up, or for more urgent issues and reports of things not working, you can email us at irecord@ceh.ac.uk.