

MAVES – 2015 Survey Results Summary

Our group of professional and amateur surveyors have been exploring the area with landowners' kind permission and support and have come up with a respectable list of species which adds to / supports former knowledge of the area. The focus here is on protected/rare species, though additionally diversity of habitat/species and high numbers of species in a given area is also very important.

Mammals

Bats

Paul Stevens (Arundel Wetland Centre) surveyed for bats last year and found 8 species, an additional 2 species to records so far. There is a real lack of bat data and information on how they use the landscape. Additionally, Barbastelles, which are an Annex II species (European level protection), have been recorded just to the north of the area and therefore could be using the MAVES landscape.

Badger

Badger setts are frequent anywhere where the ground is higher, drier and not ploughed. Foraging signs are numerous and populations appear to be doing reasonably well.

Brown Hare

There is plenty of habitat for this BAP species – though not spotted yet.....please keep your eyes peeled!

Dormice

Ian Powell is tirelessly monitoring Dormice in Binsted Woods and is observing the impact that changing weather conditions, such as mild wet winters and cold springs, is having on population dynamics. Such factors have caused fluctuations in numbers (seemingly negative) by such means as impacting upon breeding (too late in the year), and body mass (too low in juveniles at hibernation time).

Ian is preparing more boxes for Binsted and Tortington this year and so we will be able to see how this species is using the wider landscape. There is a previous recording of a Dormouse in one of the hedgerows in a field between Binsted Rife and Walberton, which implies that this species disperses quite freely and therefore is likely to be outside the woods. Some of the species rich

hedgerows in the area have the potential to and may well support populations of Dormice.



Dozing Dormouse 2015

Harvest Mouse

The wide field edges, grassy/reedy areas and hedgerow corridors are likely to support Harvest Mouse. George Bain has seen this species just south of the survey area last year and so it is likely to be present within the MAVES area.

Hedgehog

There was just one sighting of a Hedgehog last year (Paul Stevens) crossing the road at Priory Lane near housing within the woodland. George Bain has seen Hedgehogs just south of the survey area last year. Please report any sightings.

Water Voles

Fran Southgate (Sussex Wetlands Officer) and myself found signs of Water Vole along Binsted Rife (feeding remains and latrines). I found a latrine adjacent to one of the reservoirs at the southern end of Binsted Rife and the banks, in places, had burrow entrances that looked like they belonged to Water Vole. I also heard a characteristic 'plop' of a Water Vole at Lake Copse although no definitive evidence was found. It is likely that they are throughout the area.

Invertebrates

There have been some good surveys in the past with historical records for groups such as beetles, moths and butterflies – a good number of which are uncommon.

General sweep

Last year Natalie Guerlain (former Sussex University student and now hoverfly specialist) spent 2 half days collecting samples from Binsted Rife and produced a more than respectable list of 130 different species including approximately 29 hoverflies, 29 bugs, 18 beetles and a variety of other groups such as gall flies, bumblebees and bush crickets. One species of beetle is Nationally Scarce and two of the hoverflies are Nationally Notable.



Burnet moth caterpillar spinning cocoon along Binsted Rife 2015

Butterflies

Historically, there have been some rare butterflies recorded in Binsted Woods (in SNCI citation), though some species may have gone due to the lack of management such as coppicing.

The Elphicks recorded a very respectable 16 species in and around their patch in 2015 including two Red-listed species – Wood White and White Admiral, and of course, there was much excitement about the Purple Emperors in Binsted Woods. Formerly, 30 butterfly species have been recorded in the area.

Moths

Stephen Pegler sampled moths at Kent's Cottage in 2015 and found 19 species. Hopefully, Stephen and others will find time to collate more moth data this year.

Odonata - Dragonflies and Damselflies

David Sadler had a look in 5 locations around the area for dragonflies and damselflies. He found just 4 species (very weather dependant). It is very likely that this list can be increased – please take photographs and we can send them to him.

Mike Edwards will be completing an invertebrate survey in 2016 and Natalie Guerlain will hopefully allow me to persuade her to undertake one or two more surveys around the area.

Reptiles

It appears that reptiles are throughout the area. There have been reports of Adders from Binsted Woods and around Kent's Cottage. Please send in any sightings – especially Adder.



Slow Worm with Brighton University student 2015

Amphibians

Common Toad

Madonna Pond - Paul Stevens noted that in 2015 there were possibly 200,000 tadpoles in the pond – a good year for this species.

Arun and Rother Connections (ARC) have been in contact with MAVES, and are keen to add the local lanes to their Toad Watch programme for next year.

Great Crested Newt

We have yet to find Great Crested Newt in the area, though there are historical records of it breeding just outside the area in Lazy W Pond. There is no good reason why it would not have dispersed across the suitable terrestrial landscape to the rifes or ponds in the area – though it does not tend to breed in water-bodies with fish.

Birds

There is a good amount of historical bird data, especially the Church Farm surveys, which demonstrates the stability of the numbers of species in the area over time (compared to falling numbers elsewhere in the countryside). Historical data from the Binsted area was poor, however Heather and David Hart surveyed for birds in 2015 and on 6 visits managed to increase the Sussex Records Centre total of 19 species to 63. Their list includes 17 Amber, 8 Red and 2 Schedule 1 species.

Some information on Snipe and Woodcock in the area is to come from Paul Foster-John shortly.



Barn Owl (these are nesting in Binsted)

Plants

Frances Abraham and Nick Sturt (botanists and county recorders) have been doing a sterling job surveying plants and have produced extensive plant lists from the MAVES survey area. Of particular interest some less common species:

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- Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* - (Red List VU) was found in the Binsted B.
- Ivy-leaved Crowfoot *Ranunculus hederaceus* – (Sussex Scarce) found along the east side of the Binsted Rife.
- Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* (Sussex Scarce) found in damp places along the Binsted Rife.
- Whorl Grass *Catabrosa aquatica* - (Sussex Scarce) was found in 2 places along the Binsted Rife.
- Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* - (Sussex Scarce) was found along both the west and east sides of the Binsted Rife.
- Marsh-mallow *Althaea officinalis* – (Red List NS) found along the banks of the Arun.
- Bluebell - *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* – this Schedule 8 plant is abundant in places in Binsted Woods.

- Orpine *Sedum telephium* – Several patches in Binsted Woods – it is an uncommon ancient woodland indicator, though no longer classified as Nationally Scarce as it was in 1992.
- Butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus* - (Binsted Woods) is a Habitat Directive Annex 5 plant of community importance.
- Southern Wood-rush *Luzula forsteri* - found in Binsted Woods and near the east end of Church Lane is a less common species only occurring in the south.
- *Luzula forsteri* x *pilosa* = L. x *borreri* – not common – Tortington Common.

Bryophytes

Tom Otterly (bryophyte expert) and myself went mossing in Binsted Woods, Lake Copse and Binsted Rife concentrating on the watercourses. We found 98 species including two that, although not listed as scarce in the county, aren't very common at all - *Hygroamblystegium varium* and *Oxyrrhynchium speciosum*.

Habitats

Much of the area is already known to be Priority Habitat as follows: -

- Floodplain grazing marsh. Binsted Rife hadn't been surveyed properly before and is a mixture of floodplain, swamp and fen. This is the most diverse open habitat in the survey area and forms an important mosaic of communities.
- Ancient deciduous woodland – parts of the Binsted Wood complex.
- Orchard.
- Hedgerows – the definition of Priority Habitat has now changed to include all hedgerows with a least one native woody species. 57 hedgerows have been recorded so far, of which 19 are either species rich or would be classified as 'important' under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. Many have a good number of species though patchily distributed and averaging 4 per 30 m section (require 5 to be classified as species rich).

Binsted Woods Complex (SNCI)

An assessment report in 1992 by Pat O'Sullivan, a county surveyor, noted that the woods held between 150 and 170 plant species and the whole complex including heathland and meadow may hold in excess of 250 species. The lists from Nick and Frances have, so far, revealed that there are indeed at least 252 species in this area (recorded in 2015). This means that this area is extremely species rich and therefore of great conservation significance.

Ancient Woodland Indicator Species (AWI's)

Nick and Frances recorded 50 AWI's from the area in 2015 (52 recorded historically). However, it must be noted that the 2015 surveys were been completed later in the year and so more are likely to be found.

Ancient Trees

Binsted Woods is known to have ancient trees within – but notable, veteran and ancient trees extend throughout the landscape. About 100 have been recorded so far and Karen Whitehouse (local resident) will be taking over and recording as soon as the trees are in leaf again.

University Projects

We are awaiting the results of projects soon to be completed by a Brighton and a Sussex University student.