

Offsetting What? – The Adequacy of Biological Data Records

Pete Carey

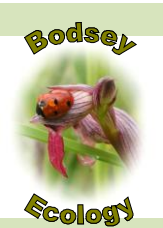


Offsetting what?

- Is the intention to replace what is there directly?
- Is the intention to get as close as possible?
- Is the intention not to lose something of conservation value?

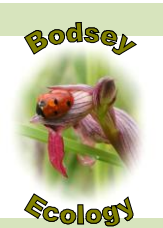
Obviously...

- There is a need to know what species and habitats exist in the area to be offset
- What is the abundance of those species and habitats



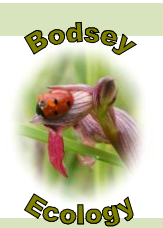
Not so obviously...

- What species have lived in the area to be offset in the recent past
- What species potentially could/should be living in the area to be offset
- What is the potential of the new area.



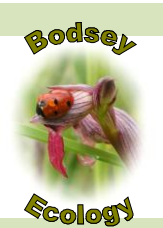
Data provision in the UK

- The UK has an unparalleled coverage of data covering the distribution of species past and present.
- These data have been available from the Biological Records Centre and specialist groups for decades.
- They are now becoming more available through the NBN gateway.



NBN – 24th Sept 2010

- 505 datasets
- 55,445,462 species records
- <http://data.nbn.org.uk/>
- Data can be provided at a range of scales from the ‘old fashioned’ 10km squares to points linked to OS maps on screen.
- Go and explore it



Other data

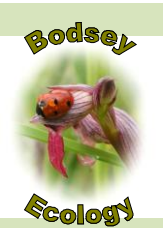
- Landcover map 2007 for Broad Habitats (and some Priority Habitats)
- Natural England, SNH and CCW habitat maps (Phase I, NVC, AE schemes etc) but these are patchy.
- Local knowledge of naturalists.

Funding

- NBN is funded by many government sources – this provides security, but complacency could be a threat – all partners could/will be hit simultaneously, leading to a 25% cut in funding (if cuts occur proportionally).
- Local Records Centres, Wildlife Trusts and Local NE offices are potentially threatened by a shrinking State.
- Other potential data providers will come and go as they always have – there is a need to ensure that records are archived.

However...

- There is an assumption we know everything – do not believe that biodiversity maps are true representations, especially at larger scales.
- Because we have good records we can see there are issues with the data
- We do not have adequate data on the coverage of habitats and especially BAP Priority Habitats
- Although our knowledge of soil biota has increased, we still know little

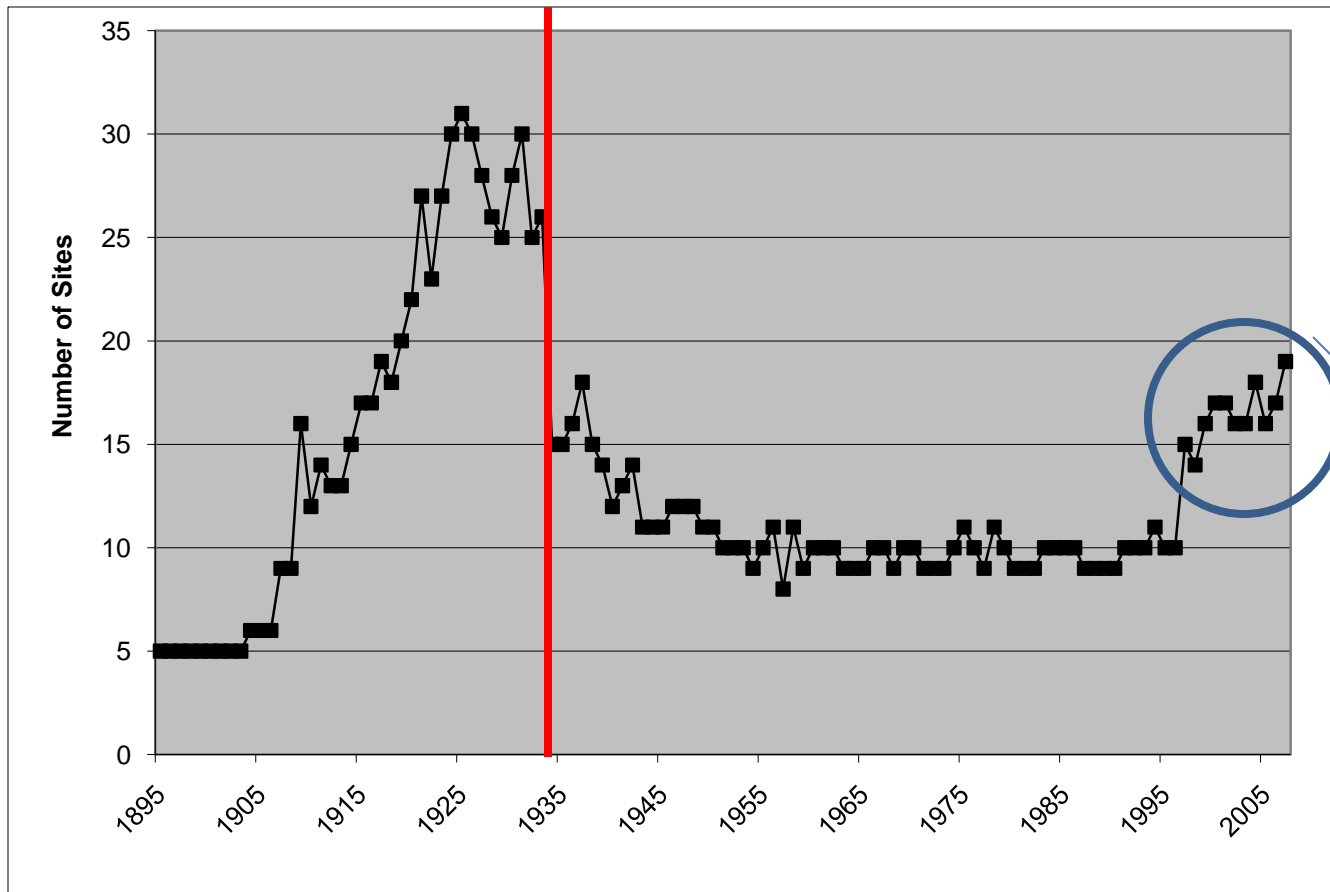


Temporal issues

- There is often a lag between records being collected and their appearance on the NBN.
- The abundance of species is seldom recorded and is inherently variable.

Temporal variation

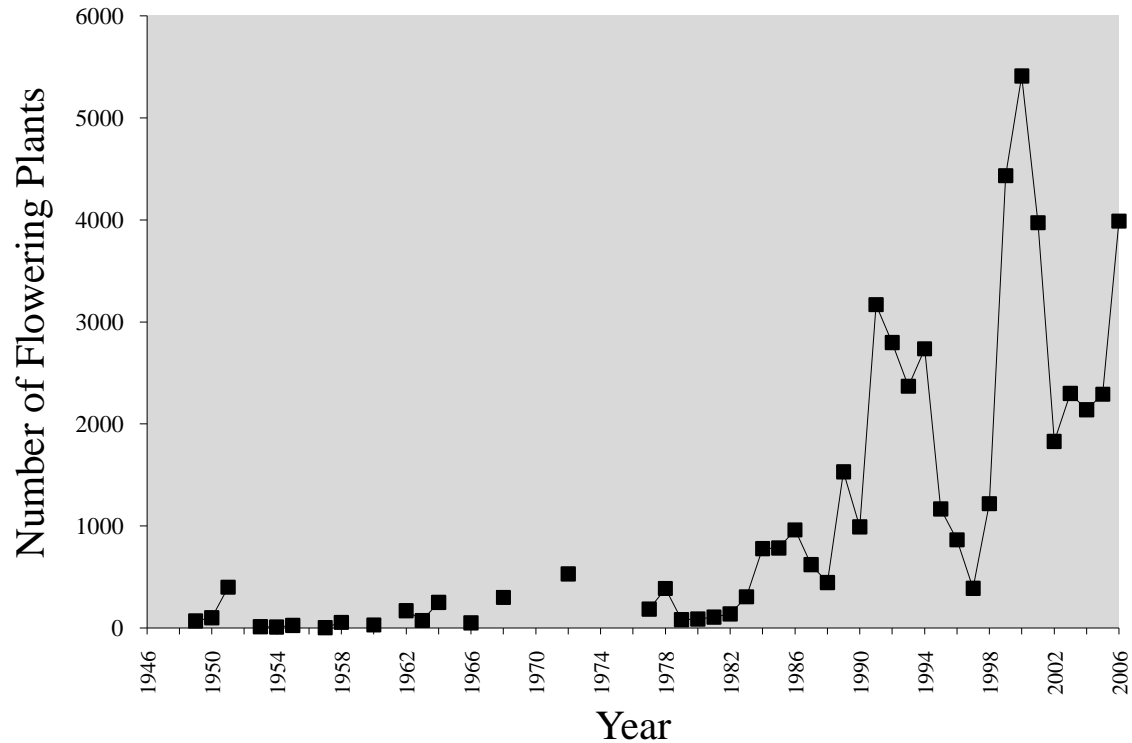
Lizard Orchid in England



Not on NBN

Temporal Variation

Lizard Orchids at Sandwich



Record Validation

- Date of record is vital
- Quality of recorder is required
- Spatial accuracy of record is needed
- NBN are aware of this and moving ahead to improve the 'quality stamp' for records.

Suggested Approach

- EIA is vital.
- Use current biological records data as a guide to the potential of an area.
- Be aware of the spatial and temporal variation of the species of interest and take this into account.
- Validate the known data by a detailed survey (at least of habitats).
- Done properly the Farm Environment Plan for HLS agreements of Environmental Stewardship in England is an excellent format.
- Habitat mapping, vegetation, soil and freshwater sampling as carried out by Countryside Survey would be the 'Gold Standard'.

