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In the September 1976 issue of the B.C.G. newsletter a request was made for examples of the successes and failures of biological recording schemes which could be quoted when describing such schemes to audiences of local naturalists. Liaison with the N.C.C. and planning departments does not appear to be specific enough for the sceptical local naturalists. Below are some examples from the four replies that we received from:- Buckinghamshire County Museum, North East Environmental Records Centre, West Yorkshire Biological Data Bank, and the North Wales Naturalists' Trust.

There were several examples of destruction, or threat to sites due to their being unknown, notably:-

The best exposure of Permian marl slate in County Durham was unknown to the N.C.C. Hence they raised no objection when it was proposed to reclaim the site. The future of the site is now in the balance.

In Buckinghamshire no records were available to show the damage which could be caused to sites of natural history interest by the construction of a gas pipe line. Unfortunately time was very short for consultation and several local naturalists were on holiday. The result was the pipe line went ahead. Only later was it learned from a local natural history society that an orchid site had been destroyed. The society was aware of the biological records centre, but even after this event they still did not name the orchid species involved.

Action being taken to conserve wildlife thanks to data being made available is not uncommon. A most striking example was publicised by the national press during 1975 when the Bewdley by-pass was re-routed by some two hundred yards to avoid a bog with several plants very rare in Hereford and Worcester.

In Tyne and Wear, investigations and the subsequent reports have led to two sites being designated as local nature reserves by the county council.

The North Wales Naturalists' Trust were invited to identify all the important biological sites within the Snowdonia National Park. The outcome so far has been discussions with the Forestry Commission concerning those sites threatened by proposed afforestation. As yet these negotiations are not completed.

Although not able to stop development on a site for open cast coal mining, the West Yorkshire Data Bank has arranged for the transplantation of orchids from the site. Amongst a multitude of activities they have also reported on a number of sites proposed as S.S. S.I.s. and a proposed bird sanctuary. The Yorkshire Naturalists Trust they have located all known stations in West Yorkshire of five species. This is to help with the siting of possible nature reserves.

The setting up of Biological Record Centres would seem to lead to the discovery of new sites and species in the areas concerned within a relatively short space of time.

During the first year of the Oxfordshire scheme an important new site has been located where four species of wading birds, including Ringed Plover (a first record for the county), breed. A particularly surprising discovery was Compressed River Mussel, Pseudoanodonta complanata in the River Evenlode, a tributary of the upper River Thames. The second successive hot dry summer produced records of many new colonies of butterflies, including White Admiral and Wood White. New species of plants for Oxfordshire have also been located and include Bur Medick Medicago minima and the lichen Rinodina bischoffii.

Similar examples come from Tyne and Wear, where a site for Narrow Water-Plantain Alisma lanceolatum has been located. Prior to this the species was thought to be extinct in the county. The only station of Soft Clover Trifolium striatum in the county has also been found. Habitats discovered include an area of calcicolous grassland with Upright Brome Zerma erecta, and a disused railway line where about 200 species of flowering plants were recorded in a single day.

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It is to be expected that the discovery of new sites and species will lead to some being scheduled as S.S.S.I, made into nature reserves, or some conservation activity being taken on their behalf.

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Guidebook for Local Biological Records Centres - a synopsis

The B.C.G. Committee has agreed to support the production of a guidebook for those running, or proposing to run, a local biological records centre. The draft of this will be discussed at the meeting of centres at Monks Wood on 1st and 2nd December and then presented to the A.G.M. of the Curators Group on December 3rd before final printing is sanctioned.

The following is a synopsis of the proposed guide. The Honorary Editor would welcome comments from members.

1. Introduction
2. Area of coverage - reasons for aiming at one centre for each County Council or equivalent local authority area - historical county and vice-county recording - need for national network centred on B.R.C.
3. Types of information and functions - emphasis on site and species information of high quality - relationship with local authority biologists who would concentrate on landscape evaluation? Service, in addition to planning, for research and general public enquiries.
4. Sources of data - Literature, Museum, Field records - BRC, BTO, WFT, etc., and priorities both of sources to abstract and groups to tackle, Terrestrial, Freshwater and Marine.