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Entomology - MOD

The Ministry of Defence owns about 600,000 acres of land on well over 200 different sites around the country. Much of this land remains undisturbed by people and is often in a semi-wild state, and thus is extremely rich in wildlife. A number of sites contain habitat types that are fast disappearing from the rest of the British countryside and most have rare or endangered species on them.

Over 170 of these sites now have 'Conservation Groups' on them, composed of a mixture of local naturalists, foresters, NCC representatives and service personnel who have an interest in preserving their local areas. The task of each Group is to (i) record all the wildlife, habitats and sites of historical and scientific interest and to monitor these records
(ii) produce vegetation, archaeological and sensitivity maps to pinpoint the areas which need most protection
(iii) prepare management proposals and implement those which are accepted.

With most plant and animal groups this is a reasonably simple brief, but the recording of invertebrates poses special problems. Firstly there is the difficulty of finding enough entomologists to work on the sites, and secondly there is the problem of getting specimens identified. Most entomologists have a good knowledge of one or two insect groups but are unable to identify any other specimens they may catch. It is in both these areas that I hope the local museums may be able to help. It would be very useful if entomologists working in museums could help to identify specimens and then to undertake the curation of any voucher specimens. This would I believe benefit both parties concerned - the museums would increase their collections (and their knowledge of the local fauna), and the Conservation Groups would be able to produce more data on the invertebrates and hence be in a better position to protect them.

If you would be interested in either collecting insects on MOD land, or in curating specimens, please write to Mr A M Walker

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