



## Editorial

*I'd like to introduce myself as the new chair of the GiGL Steering Group. I have been involved with GiGL from the outset, representing the London Boroughs Biodiversity Forum (LBBF) on the Steering Group, as well as contributing my own professional viewpoint as the Biodiversity Manager for Wandsworth. I hope to continue to provide an understanding of all facets of the data requirements of local authorities.*

*I am also pleased to be able to call upon the knowledge and experience of John Swindells from LNHS as my vice chair. We are working to refine the structure of the Steering Group and the specialist advisory groups to maximise our support for the staff at GiGL and to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of all of our partners and customers. Don't forget, if you have an idea for a new product that you'd like to see GiGL develop, please get in touch with Mandy.*

*I would also like to take this opportunity to offer sincere thanks to John Archer for his chairmanship of the GiGL steering group in all its guises for the past 6 years. He has been much more than just a chair at meetings; he has ensured that GiGL has been included from the outset of many projects enabling data management issues to be considered from the beginning. We wish him well in his new endeavours. Indeed, we hope to keep him involved in the development of our new planning screening tool, [introduced on page 3](#), so he hasn't escaped entirely.*

Valerie Selby, GiGL Chair



We are really pleased that the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) has recently become a Community Interest Company – a not for profit company whose income will be reinvested to further expand and raise the profile of records centres across the UK.

After three years of work behind the scenes by a number of biodiversity records centres, including GiGL, ALERC has been set up to represent the interests of local biodiversity and geodiversity records centres in the British Isles, and to promote standards and services in biodiversity and geodiversity data collation and provision.

The Association's stated objectives are:

- To promote and encourage the completion of a UK-wide network of local biodiversity and geodiversity records centres.
- To promote and develop good standards of practice in the collation, management, dissemination and analysis of biological and geological records.
- To promote Local Records Centres regionally, nationally and at a UK level to potential users and suppliers of data.
- To provide full representation of the UK with country specific solutions and equal emphasis on the individual countries requirements.
- To develop and promote accreditation schemes for biodiversity and geodiversity records centres and their staff.
- To encourage and facilitate networking between centres to enable exchange of ideas, collaborative working, developing joint tools and sharing good practice.

GiGL is committed to becoming a member of ALERC and will be represented on its working groups where appropriate.



## Planning for the future

London is a growing and ever-developing city. Aldo Tanca, GiGL's Planning Officer, has a new tool to ease life for London's planners.

Ask Auk

A surprisingly wide variety of species and habitats can be found in London, probably Europe's greenest capital. This life thrives on an inherently fragile and fragmented network of green and brownfield sites ever at risk of development.

While local authorities have a duty to ensure that legally protected species and priority habitats are protected from the adverse effects of development, some in London do not have the in-house ecological expertise to meet this need. Pre-screening of planning applications is an often time-consuming process, even when performed by a biodiversity specialist and supported by sound information.

In partnership with Natural England, GiGL is currently developing an automated tool to screen planning applications for biodiversity interests. The tool is based on

the Association of Local Government Ecologists' existing rule-base for screening planning applications template for biodiversity and geodiversity conservation. It provides tailored evidence and signposting to further relevant advice.

The project aims to screen 100% of applications against the best available information on species, habitats and local wildlife sites. It will also provide planners with case by case information and guidance on their statutory duties and obligations, along with plain-English descriptions, legal references and contact information for relevant individuals and organisations.

The system will be available to the GiGL Partnership, reducing the need for separate consultation with statutory consultees and limiting delays to planning

decisions. The tool will undergo a testing phase with at least two London boroughs until January 2010, after which it will be made available to all local authorities within the GiGL Partnership.

The features of the tool are being defined in consultation with local planning authorities and a steering committee including representatives from Natural England, Association of Local Government Ecologists, the London Boroughs' Biodiversity Forum, London Geodiversity Partnership and local boroughs.

The planning tool is being promoted by presenting and circulating information to relevant organisations, such as Royal Town Planning Institute, Association of London Borough Planning Officers and the Boroughs' Biodiversity Forum. An information pack and a questionnaire are about to be circulated to local authorities in London.

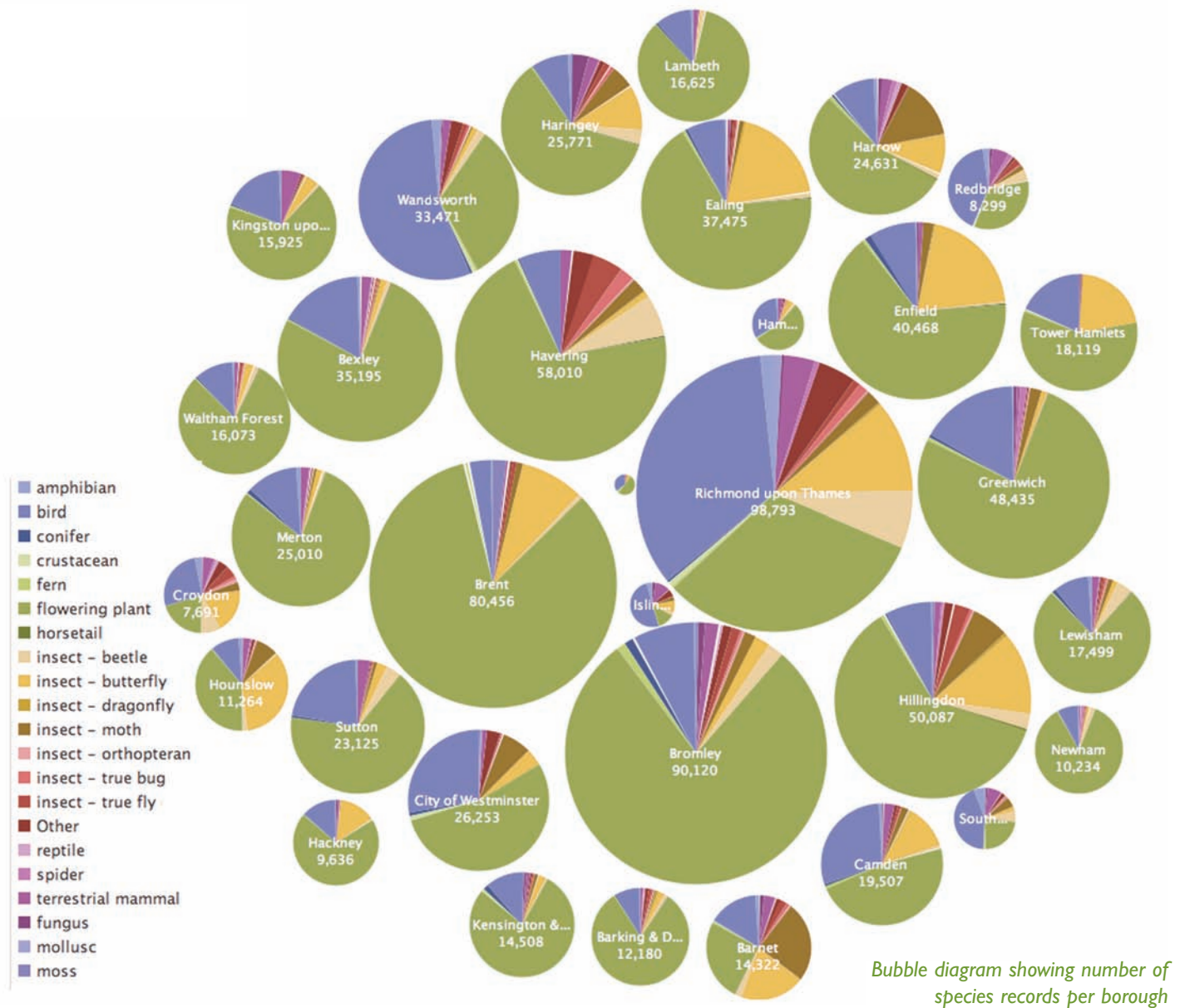
The tool provides organisations and individual data contributors with an excellent opportunity to see their efforts translated into effective day-to-day biodiversity protection.

However, results will only be as good as the data coverage available. Thanks to our partners, coverage of certain species groups is excellent and sufficient to alert planners to potential impacts. Records for other species groups, notably reptiles and amphibians, are more scarce and therefore the protection the tool will afford to those species is unfortunately limited.

Our current data audit (see [Matt Davies' article page 1](#)), is helping to highlight these gaps within our data holdings.

*For more information about the project, please contact Aldo Tanca, GiGL Planning Officer ([aldo.tanca@gigl.org.uk](mailto:aldo.tanca@gigl.org.uk)).*

(continued from page 1)



### Geographic Coverage

It is clear from even the briefest glance at the bubble diagram that the geographic coverage of the database varies considerably from borough to borough, which I think probably reflects differences in recorder effort, rather than actual differences in biodiversity. Richmond and Greenwich are two of the better recorded boroughs, which is largely due to The Royal Parks mobilising data via the GiGL Royal Parks Officer:

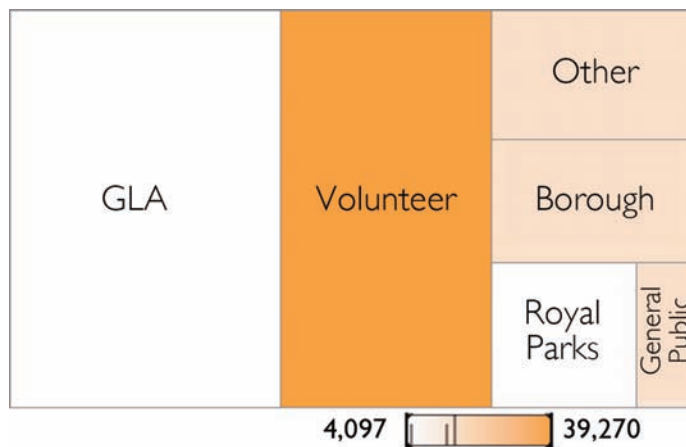
### Taxonomic Coverage

On closer inspection, the bubble diagram also reveals that the taxonomic breakdown for each borough varies considerably. The dataset for the majority of boroughs is dominated by plant records, thanks to the GLA habitat survey. This is particularly evident in Brent, where the Barn Hill Conservation Group have submitted an incredible 59,540 records from meadow surveys. In contrast, Wandsworth, Richmond and Camden all have significant amount of records for other taxonomic groups, reflecting the effort from borough and Royal Parks staff.

The relatively high proportion of butterfly records in north west London boroughs is thanks to the Middlesex branch of Butterfly Conservation. Variations in taxonomic coverage are also due to only some of the London Natural History Society recorders (including those recording plants, birds, fungi, lichen, lepidoptera) having so far contributed data to GiGL.

### Protected Species & Data Ownership

GiGL data continue to be used by consultants and planners assessing planning applications. Of particular interest are protected species that carry weight in the planning system. Protected species account for 7.5% of the overall database, some 94,455 records. The treemap shows that these are provided to GiGL in varying quantities by each group of data providers. While the GLA is the largest data provider overall, contributing 505,056 records, less than 1% of those records are of protected species. Comparing this with data from volunteer sources, which total 392,777 records, 10% of which are protected species, clearly reflects the original motivation for the surveys conducted by the two groups. The data we hold has been collected for many purposes, which often differ from its current uses.



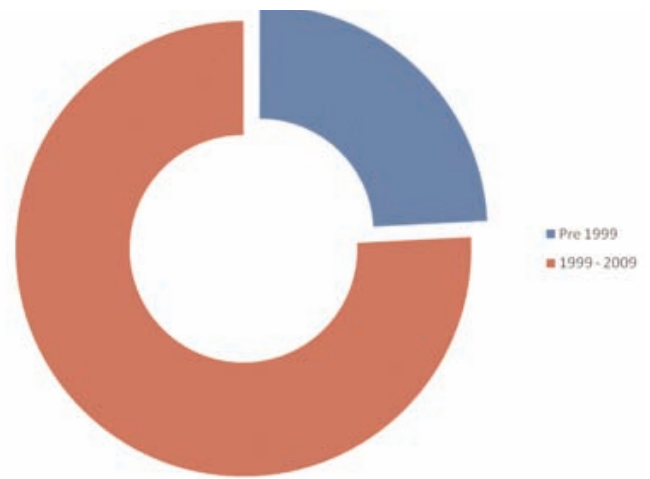
treemap showing proportion of records provided by each contributor and the number of which are protected species records

Another noteworthy fact shown by the treemap is the relatively small size of the 'other' category, given that it includes all records from Natural England, The Environment Agency and London Wildlife Trust, amongst others. Data provided by boroughs only makes up 9% of the overall database but this masks the fact that some boroughs, such as Wandsworth, are much more pro-active at mobilising records than others. It also masks the fact that some datasets provided by boroughs originate from local nature enthusiasts or volunteers. However, the majority of the records

from the general public have been collected via surveys run by London Wildlife Trust, People's Trust for Endangered Species and some of the boroughs.

### Temporal Coverage

The doughnut diagram shows that 78% of records are from the last 10 years. While this is good for creating a baseline of biodiversity in London, it's not so useful for longer term trend analysis. It is, none the less, interesting to note that 724 records are pre-1900, many of which were recorded by Charles Darwin.



doughnut diagram showing date of GiGL's records

We need to be aware of the data resource that informs routine planning application reports and more complex uses of data, such as habitat condition assessment. Some of the limits of our data are already evident from this brief overview. I hope this has stimulated your thoughts about how accurately GiGL data reflects biodiversity in your area, taxonomic group, or timescale of interest and how the GiGL Partnership might plug the holes. I also hope that new data visualisation techniques demonstrated here will allow us to communicate more effectively to all data contributors and that all in the GiGL Partnership will engage with the data audit to help improve the overall resource.

If you would like to discuss mobilising your data please contact Matt, GiGL Data Manager, [matt@gigl.org.uk](mailto:matt@gigl.org.uk)



## Web of life

Helen Babbs, London Wildlife Trust's Communications Officer, introduces some of the ways the Trust links to the GiGL website. Mandy Rudd, GiGL Director, flags another way for partners to make use of GiGL's website.

Ask Auk

London Wildlife Trust's website excites visitors about London's wildlife and encourages them to get involved, whether by getting stuck into some practical conservation work or by supporting us as an armchair member.

The website is the space where the Trust shares news and views, where we offer information and advice, and where we list our

upcoming events and volunteering opportunities. It's also where we tell people about our many nature reserves.

Our online nature reserves map shows Trust sites all over Greater London. When visitors click into each one they're given information about the types of habitats and creatures they're likely to see at each reserve using GiGL's WIMBY (what's in my back yard) tool.

The screenshot shows the London Wildlife Trust website interface. At the top, there is a green header with the London Wildlife Trust logo and the tagline "Protecting London's wildlife for the future". Navigation buttons for "Donate Now", "Join Us", and "Contact us" are visible. A sidebar on the left contains a menu with items like Home, About us, News, Support us, Campaigns, Nature reserves, Habitats and species, Projects, Events - get involved, Volunteering, Education, and More guides. The main content area features a photograph of a path through a lush green field. To the right of the photo is a small icon of a wheelchair and text indicating "Limited wheelchair access" at Cheswick Park, with a map reference Q201706 and a Visitor Centre. Below the photo, there is a short history of the reserve, a section titled "The reserve" describing its development, and lists for "Habitats you'll see" (Woodland, meadow, marsh and pond) and "Species you might spot" (Hedgehogs, pipistrelle and noctule bat; ramshorn snail; brown-banded carder bee).

Being able to offer people the chance to both explore the latest data from our reserves and submit their own wildlife sightings to GiGL is a valuable addition to our website – encouraging visitors to interact with us and to engage with their local nature reserve.

Elsewhere on London Wildlife Trust's site there is a [spotted page](#), where we occasionally post interesting sightings from our reserves. This page also links to GiGL and encourages people to submit their own wildlife sightings.

Linking website visitors to GiGL's website is a really important public example of how we work together. Adding reciprocal links from one website to another is simple and adds enormous value if those links are relevant and engaging. It also demonstrates how we are working successfully with other organisations for the benefit of people and wildlife.

## Public Surveys

GiGL creates and hosts several successful online public surveys. From engaging Harrow's school kids in recording in their school grounds and local open spaces, to detailed surveys of Redbridge's private gardens, GiGL is working with many partners to engage Londoners in recording and using their local knowledge.

GiGL partners use their own websites to give the background to the surveys and links to other resources, but host their survey form on GiGL's website. Survey forms can be built using service level agreement time, and are branded to ensure ownership of the survey is clear. The forms can also be accessible to all website users or restricted to specific participants using password-protection.

Data submitted come straight to GiGL, are processed in-house and given back to our partners as part of our standard data products. They are always identified within our data holdings as records that have come in from a public survey and where necessary, they will be verified by London's species experts as part of our data verification process. The data can also be analysed by the GiGL team to provide statistics based on the survey results.

With our partners' permission, all data generated via public surveys are submitted to the National Biodiversity Network and are available for viewing via the NBN Gateway and GiGL's WIMBY tool. The results are displayed at full resolution in keeping with [GiGL's Accessing Data Policy](#), except where doing so may have a detrimental impact on species. This provides useful feedback to survey participants showing their contribution in practical use.



## GiGL news

### GiGL's new partners ...

Four new London boroughs joined the GiGL partnership at the start of the current financial year. A further three are considering signing up to service level agreements. If successful, this would bring the total number of London boroughs in the GiGL partnership to 30 out of a possible 33. These new partners were also joined by the London Development Agency and London Fire Brigade, both of which require access to data on London's green infrastructure and protected species to inform their work.

### ... and a new publication

The new Defra-funded Darwin Guide to Recording Wildlife was launched by the National Biodiversity Network at their annual conference, held at the Royal Institution of Great Britain on the 20th November. Aimed at getting more people involved in recording wildlife, this publication was produced in partnership by the NBN, The Charles Darwin Trust, LB Bromley and GiGL.

The publication can be downloaded at <http://www.nbn.org.uk/Useful-things/Publications.aspx#Darwin>

### National Indicator 197 (Biodiversity)

Local authorities now have a statutory duty to report to central government on a suite of 198 national indicators. In London, National Indicator 197 measures the proportion local wildlife sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented. GiGL was contracted to work with the London boroughs on collating and verifying the

supporting information in order to establish the first year's baseline information, which will now be maintained and updated centrally in collaboration with our borough partners and London's new Local Wildlife Sites Partnership.

Indicators of positive conservation management include:

- An active management plan covering the habitat or species for which the wildlife site was designated.
- The site having a target within a relevant biodiversity or geodiversity action plan.
- Proof of appropriate management advice being given to the land owner by the local authority.

The final results were submitted by the London boroughs to the Department for Communities and Local Government, and GiGL hopes to incorporate the NI197 information into a new database for London's local wildlife sites.

## GiGL Partners

A complete list can be found online at <http://www.gigl.org.uk/About/Partners/tabid/56/Default.aspx>

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