

# the GiGLer

*The Greenspace Information for Greater London Environmental Recorder*



## Come on GiGL, Light My Fire

Tanya Broadfield, London Fire Brigade  
Environment Adviser

Ask Auk

*GiGL works with the great and the good in London conservation and development. But the services that GiGL provides are of use to more organisations than you might expect. One of GiGL's less obvious partners explains all.*

The London Fire Brigade is the third largest fire fighting organisation in the world with 113 fire stations and over 7,000 staff protecting people and property from fire across the capital. We make London a safer city by minimising the risks of fire and other hazards and their social and economic costs.

Preserving human life and property is our principle aim. Preserving wildlife is not something most people would consider to

be our role, but the London Fire Brigade is a forward thinking organisation and we have made considerable progress in environmental protection and sustainability.

As a public organisation this is required by central and local government directives. The Fire and Rescue Services Act, 2004, provides for the 'Fire and Rescue Authority to take any action it considers appropriate if the event or situation is one that causes or is likely to cause harm to the environment (including the life and health of plants and animals)'.

The Civil Contingencies Act, 2004, notes that at an emergency which threatens serious damage to the environment, the

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role of the fire and rescue services is to 'save life, protect property and protect the environment'.

By partnering with GiGL we go beyond this. The London Fire Brigade aims to encourage and facilitate the protection of the environment at emergency incidents, during training events and as part of day-to-day management of fire stations. And by being environmentally conscientious, we can set an example through local communities.

GiGL data on London's SSSIs, all Sites of Metropolitan Importance and the reasons for their designation is now available in a palatable form on our command system. Should an emergency incident, such as a fire, occur on one of these sites our fire-fighters will have the information necessary to make a decision on how best to respond to the incident. For

example, a controlled burn could be a more appropriate response than using water or fire-fighting foam to extinguish it.

Prior to our partnership work with GiGL, basic information on London's SSSI sites was individually researched and entered onto the command system. This approach was very resource intensive and the London Fire Brigade lacked the expertise to interpret complicated ecological information. Working with GiGL gives us up to date information and the expertise to interpret it.

GiGL data have also helped us to complete ecological surveys of our new build and major refurbishment sites. It is our aim to achieve a minimum of [BRE Environmental Assessment Method](#) 'status of 'excellent' for our new fire stations. We are also producing reports covering a 1km radius from each of our stations to

identify our 'Top 10' sites of biodiversity importance, to facilitate effective emergency planning and incident response, but also to raise awareness and encourage our staff to engage with the issue of biodiversity.

In late 2009, we also joined the London Biodiversity Partnership to further enhance and support our knowledge on biodiversity.

In the future we hope that our partnership with GiGL and with The London Biodiversity Partnership will help us to fulfil our environmental protection duties, understand what we have on our own estate and to promote awareness and action amongst our own staff and local communities.

## Having a ball with moths

Mandy Rudd, GiGL Director

*Data entry and validation are two key but under-utilised services that we provide to our partners in order to help them mobilise their data. GiGL has been able to offer these services free of charge to the voluntary organisations who contribute their data to GiGL.*

For the last couple of years the cost has been covered by core funding generated through service level agreements and income from our data search service. In providing this service, the data available via our services is improved, benefiting all end users.

On one such project, we worked closely with Colin Plant, [London Natural History Society's](#) lepidoptera recorder. Over recent years, Colin has been collating moth records for the vice county of Middlesex sent to him by email, on paper and in bespoke electronic files. Colin uses the popular biological recording software [MapMate](#). He needed to collate and import the Middlesex records into his database in order to verify them

and make them available to us, so we offered to help him with the data entry and validation.

Lyndsey, GiGL's Data Entry Officer has undertaken most of the work using various resources to supply Colin with a useful file of data, including checking species names in the [National Biodiversity Network's \(NBN\) species dictionary](#). The species dictionary is managed on the NBN's behalf by the Natural History Museum.

The next stage of the project will involve Colin importing the new spreadsheet of over 20,000 records into MapMate where he can validate the work we have undertaken and verify identification of the numerous species within the dataset. Once complete, Colin will supply GiGL with a final version of the Middlesex moths dataset for use by the GiGL partnership.

# Plugging the gap

Matt Davies, GiGL Data Manager

GiGL/Ask Auk

*In the winter 2009 issue of the GiGLer, I shared some novel visualisations of the GiGL database designed to help us all better understand the data we hold, whether they accurately reflect what's on the ground, and where geographic or taxonomic gaps exist. We've been very pleased with the response to this approach. It really seems to have helped us communicate effectively with data contributors and users and engage them with our current data audit.*

In this article I want to look at how we can take this work forward – how we can engender a true sense of partnership working to plug the gaps, by mobilising existing data and reports, engaging with voluntary groups, the general public or commissioning new surveys.

For me, a particular revelation from the audit was the relatively low proportion of species records that come from boroughs

and national agencies (about 10% apiece). These figures disguise the fact that some boroughs and national agencies are much more pro-active than others at mobilising data. However, they do also raise the issue that users of the data have a responsibility to contribute what they can.

Without new data it will be virtually impossible to detect change in relation to CO18, N1197, BAP audits, and other initiatives that involve monitoring species change.

In the last year, GiGL has done some 300 hours (eight and a half weeks) of work free of charge for volunteer organisations, much of which was spent mobilising data – getting existing paper and electronic records into a useable format.

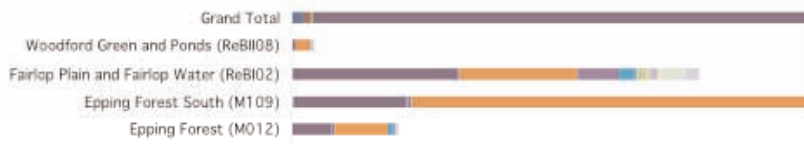
The data that result from this work will be made available to the whole GiGL

partnership, who need access to high quality biodiversity information to inform their work.

No doubt there are already good initiatives in place amongst GiGL's partners to digitise survey reports currently gathering dust in a cupboard. I would like to highlight a couple of recent projects that have helped partners to mobilise existing data, to capture new survey data and ad-hoc records in a format that makes it easy to contribute to GiGL and to identify those data that boroughs assume has been sent to GiGL, but hasn't.

Shortly after we published the GiGLer data audit article, GiGL were approached by London Borough of Redbridge, who wanted to know which surveys had been submitted to GiGL, which surveyors were sending data to GiGL, and which sites

(continued from page 1)



were well recorded. This fitted nicely with our need to localise the species data audit to borough level.

We produced a report, with a liberal scattering of graphical data representations, and invited comments. It was, as Redbridge's Francis Castro noted, 'good fun going through the old records to see what we have and who has been entering data' but, of course, with the positive feedback, came a few constructive pointers to make the report more user friendly.

From now on, in the first data exchange of the year, all boroughs will receive a report of the surveys, reports and species data

known to or held by GiGL, broken down by data provider and site. This will, we hope, help boroughs to keep track of exactly what has been sent to GiGL and what has not. In turn, we hope this will strengthen relationships with local groups and increase effort to mobilise existing records.

In addition to the tools that GiGL have already developed to help mobilise data, (see inset) we will, in light of our work with Redbridge, be implementing some new systems to make it easier to track when a report arrives and when it's added to the database. This should help increase transparency and mean that it's easy to find out what has already been submitted.

- fungus
- moss
- clubmoss
- horsetail
- fern
- conifer
- flowering plant
- flatworm (Turbellaria)
- mollusc
- annelid
- acarine (Acari)
- spider (Araneae)
- harvestman (Opiliones)
- false scorpion (Pseudoscorpiones)
- crustacean
- millipede
- centipede
- insect - mayfly (Ephemeroptera)
- insect - dragonfly (Odonata)
- insect - orthopteran
- insect - earwig (Dermaptera)
- insect - true bug (Hemiptera)
- insect - alderfly (Megaloptera)
- insect - lacewing (Neuroptera)
- insect - beetle (Coleoptera)
- insect - scorpion fly (Mecoptera)



Doughnut diagram records per taxon group

Section of a barchart showing total number of each species groups found on each of Redbridge's SINGs

We have also been working with Natural England's London team to mobilise the wealth of surveys they hold, most of which relate to SSSIs. This began a couple of years ago when two volunteers entered all report titles, authors, site names and other basic summary information into GiGL's metadatabase. This has enabled Natural England staff to identify which surveys should be prioritised. Staff have now begun the process of entering the species records into a copy of the GiGL standard data entry spreadsheet, which will make the process of uploading to our Recorder database much faster and easier.

Alongside digitising of existing survey information, Natural England will put in place a system to capture species records from ongoing SSSI monitoring work, by allocating staff to input information to the GiGL standard data entry spreadsheet.

*If this article or the species audit that will accompany your data exchange makes you want to review how you mobilise species records in existing reports, or how you capture new species records, please get in touch with Matt Davies, Data Manager [matt.davies@gigl.org.uk](mailto:matt.davies@gigl.org.uk)*

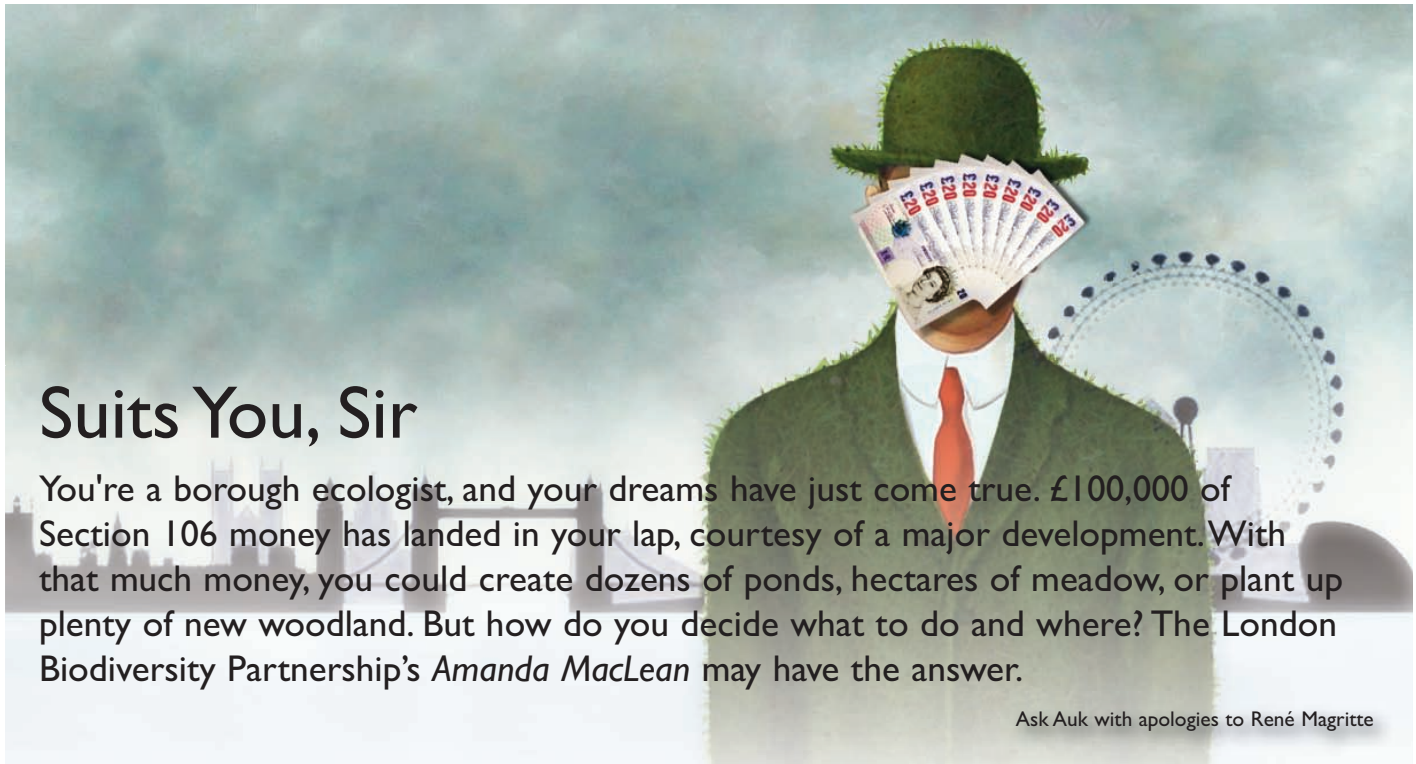
## Raise the standard!

The standard data entry spreadsheet can be [downloaded from the GiGL website](#). Species records from survey reports, new surveys or ad hoc sightings can be entered into it (a new record on each row) and the spreadsheet can then simply be emailed to GiGL. The format is very simple to use and information received in this format can be uploaded, with minimal user supervision, to the Recorder database.

The metadatabase is essentially a catalogue of surveys known to GiGL, from which species information can be extracted. It gives summary information of each survey, such as title, date, author, site and type of species surveyed. The species information from some of the surveys have already been entered onto GiGL's Recorder database, others are in-process. A copy can be requested from GiGL, and soon will be available on-line.

Survey_Held in GiGL Recorder	Survey_Title	Survey_Originator	
YES	OAKS LANE ALDBOROUGH HATCH ILFORD Fern reco	Chris Gannaway	Record of Hart's Tongue
Yes	Amphibia survey of Valentines Park	London Borough of Redbridge/Martin Plumb	
Yes	Birds sighted in Valentines Park since 2001	London Borough of Redbridge/Peter Hopkins	
Yes	Claybury Bird Survey 2002	London Borough of Redbridge/Dusty Gedge	
Yes	Claybury Bird Walk	London Borough of Redbridge/Adam Rochester	
YES	CLAYBURY HOSPITAL ornithological survey	Dusty Gedge	This report at Claybury H
YES	CLAYBURY HOSPITAL reptile survey	Alan Scott Ecological services - Charlotte Aboyes	Reptile survey of Claybury
YES	CLAYBURY WOOD National Yellow Neck Mouse survey	Brian Eacott	National Yellow-Necked M
Yes	Dragonfly & Damselfly survey of Valentines Park	London Borough of Redbridge/Martin Plumb	
Yes	Fairlop & Hainault Vertebrate Survey	London Borough of Redbridge/Edward Milner	
Waiting to be input	GiGL data entry spreadsheet Redbridge bats 2009		
Waiting to be input	GiGL data entry spreadsheet Redbridge bats 2009		
Waiting to be input	GiGL data entry spreadsheet birds Dec 09		
Waiting to be input	Birdwatching records May 09 - nov 09		
No - surevy not held by GGL	Botanical Survey of Hainault Lodge Reserve	London Borough of Redbridge	
No - surevy not held by GGL	Breeding Birds Hainault Forest 2005	M.Dennis	
No - surevy not held by GGL	Breeding Birds of Hainault Forest 1990	The Essex Birdwatching Society-M.K.Dennis	
No - surevy not held by GGL	CLAYBURY HOSPITAL Bat survey	John Dobson	This survey looks for evid
No - surevy not held by GGL	CLAYBURY HOSPITAL Ecological survey	John Kelsey	These are bird records of
No - surevy not held by GGL	CLAYBURY HOSPITAL Plots 1,2,5 & 6	Denis J Vickers	This survey identifies all th
No - surevy not held by GGL	CLAYBURY HOSPITAL record of bird species	John Kelsey Associates	Bird species list for Clayb
No - surevy not held by GGL	CLAYBURY WOODLANDS habitat survey	not known	This survey using land pa
No - surevy not held by GGL	FAIRLOP WATERS COUNTRY PARK	Clive Herbert	This is an amphibian survi
No - surevy not held by GGL	FOREST HOUSE (Claybury Woods )	Colin W Plant	This survey looks at inver

Section of a spreadsheet showing which of the surveys undertaken in Redbridge have been submitted to GiGL's metadatabase



## Suits You, Sir

You're a borough ecologist, and your dreams have just come true. £100,000 of Section 106 money has landed in your lap, courtesy of a major development. With that much money, you could create dozens of ponds, hectares of meadow, or plant up plenty of new woodland. But how do you decide what to do and where? The London Biodiversity Partnership's *Amanda MacLean* may have the answer.

Ask Auk with apologies to René Magritte

You're a developer wanting to build a new shopping and housing complex on a piece of wasteland. You need to ensure that your development will result in a net gain for biodiversity. It's a big development, so there is plenty of room for a wildlife area – but what should go in it?

You're a council planner producing the spatial plans for your borough's Local Development Framework. You know that your LDF should identify areas for the restoration or creation of new habitats – but which habitats, and where should they go?

In the past, choices like these have largely been made on an ad hoc basis – on what 'seems right'. Now, a new GiGL product will allow a much more rigorous approach, and will give the ecologist, the developer and the planner confidence that their decisions are based on the best available information. After a two-year incubation period, 'habitat suitability maps' are now available to GiGL partners and data users.

The maps show the open spaces in London where habitat creation would be of the greatest benefit to biodiversity – areas where existing habitat could be expanded without a negative impact on other important habitats. There are maps for each of nine of London's priority habitats – those that are most under threat and in need of conservation effort, as identified in

London's Biodiversity Action Plan. The London Biodiversity Partnership sees the maps as a key tool to identify areas where our partners can focus their work efforts. This will give a head start to our partners in the London boroughs, and the London-wide habitat action plan (HAP) groups, in delivering on London's targets to increase the extent of priority habitats.

LBP has been working with GiGL on the development of these maps for the last two years. For most of that time, they were called 'opportunity maps', so why the new identity? During a recent consultation with partner organisations, it became apparent that the name was causing a lot of confusion. Many of our partners could not see how some of the 'opportunity' areas on the maps could ever present real opportunities on the ground. A reasonable objection when considering, for instance, how much real-life opportunity there is to turn a working cemetery into a floodplain grazing marsh. In fact, the maps identify areas that are ecologically suitable to support the habitat, no matter what the area's current use.

Because they do not incorporate land use, it's important that the maps are always used in conjunction with datasets on land use and other relevant factors, and GiGL will be happy to work on such refinements at the request of its SLA partners.

Developing the maps has been a complex process, with several cycles of criteria selection, number-crunching, and ground-truthing. The first stage of the process, habitat condition assessment, involved the HAP groups drawing up a suite of indicator species and habitat features that, when considered together, indicate habitat quality. For instance, salad burnet, orchids and kidney vetch are indicators of good quality chalk grassland habitat, and their presence increases the quality score. But, extensive coverage of forbs and sedges, as indicators of poor quality chalk grassland, result in a lower score. GiGL interrogated their extensive database using these criteria and produced draft maps of habitat quality, which the HAP groups checked against reality in a series of field visits.

After these visits, the maps were amended. The resulting maps show the location of poor quality habitat that could be restored, and areas where acceptable or good quality habitat might serve as a 'seed' for habitat creation.

Next, the HAP groups drew up a list of criteria to identify which of these locations were also suitable for the creation of new habitat. There had to be room for new habitat, without replacing other important habitats. And there also had to be suitable ecological conditions. Again, chalk grassland provides a

straightforward example – it needs an underlying chalk geology, which places strict limitations on suitable locations.

Once the first drafts of the maps were drawn up, they were put out to consultation. First the HAP groups, and then the council officers belonging to the London Boroughs Biodiversity Forum, were asked to comment on how well the information on the maps tallied with their on-the-ground knowledge. There was a tremendous response from the biodiversity forum, with nearly two thirds of the boroughs sending in feedback.

We were delighted with the response for a number of reasons. First of all it was clear that the criteria we had used were broadly successful in identifying suitable areas, and only a few minor changes were needed to produce the final versions. This gives us confidence that the maps reflect conditions on the ground as accurately as they can – taking into account the limitations of the available data – and will be a robust and reliable tool for LBP and its partners. Secondly, the consultation raised some issues with the presentation and interpretation of the maps, which we were then able to improve. And finally, such an enthusiastic response suggests that the maps will be well used now that they are available. In the coming years, London's biodiversity should be all the better for it.

## Heaven's above **Dusty Gedge, Living Roofs**

*GiGL is being asked on a regular basis for details of green roof installations, especially by planners who need to demonstrate how they are meeting Mayoral targets on green roofs. This is a relatively difficult thing to provide, as green roof developments are not routinely logged and are not visible to the causal observer or surveyor.*

A joint project between GiGL and LivingRoofs.org hopes to map London's green roofs, creating a new dataset that will be managed by GiGL.

Living Roofs has now agreed with its sponsor green roof members that they will provide annual data on installations they have done. So far we have managed

to gather data for the period 2004 –2008. This has been analysed and used as a MSc project by Ben Moat at the [Centre for Alternative Technology](#). Ben worked closely with GiGL and Living Roofs and, although the location of green roofs is often vague, he established that over 420,000m<sup>2</sup> of green roofs have been installed in the GLA area during that period. We estimate that this is probably about 80% of the total area covered by green roofs in London.

Living Roofs aims to work with GiGL to collect green roof data on an annual basis. However, hassling contractors and companies for this information is a huge task. To cover the cost of gathering this

information, Living Roofs have been asking boroughs to become members of [livingroofs.org Ltd](#).

For a nominal fee of £250 boroughs will be able, through GiGL, to access the data. In the opinion of Living Roofs, and in keeping with planners' needs to meet green roof targets, this money should come from planning budgets, not nature conservation budgets. Living Roofs, in association with GiGL, will aim to write an annual review of the data and release that data to the GLA, which has already signed up to the process, and to participating boroughs.

This green roof data will only be available to members of both GiGL and Living Roofs.

## GiGL news

### Tim's Departure

We were sad to see Tim Hogg depart for the sandier climes of Devon at the end of April. Tim started out as a GiGL volunteer but quickly became a member of staff and worked in a couple of different roles before becoming GiGL's Senior Information Officer. During his time with us, Tim did a fantastic job of developing an audience for our regional open space and green infrastructure dataset. He also successfully set up GiGL's new Open Space Data Advisory Group. We hope to keep Tim involved in GiGL's work, albeit remotely, and wish him and his family well in their relocation adventure.

### Open Space Data Advisory Group

As previously mentioned, GiGL recently established an open space data advisory group. The remit of the group includes helping the team develop the audience for our open space and green infrastructure based services, and to develop policies that will ensure the draft regional open space database becomes a reliable and up-to-date dataset that can inform regional and local green infrastructure projects.

Members of the new group include CABE Space, London Parks and Green Spaces Forum, Natural England, Environment Agency, Transport for London, Design for London, and the Greater London Authority.

### Ensuring biodiversity is considered during the planning process

Aldo Tanca, GiGL's Planning Officer, recently analysed the London region's development control statistics. During the period of October 2008 to September 2009, over 69,000\* planning applications

were made. During the same period, GiGL undertook just over 380 data searches to inform planning applications in London. Of course not all planning applications will affect biodiversity on site and further afield, but there's still a huge disparity between the two figures.

So how can we improve the situation? One of the conditions of data supply to GiGL partners is that enquiries must be passed on to the GiGL team who will deal with them accordingly. Our partners gain access to data and associated services for their geographic remit at full resolution. Enquiries from outside the partnership will gain access to exactly the same data, but interpreted to meet their requirements. This data are presented at a resolution that is in accordance with our [accessing data policy](#). The fee that we charge for the service covers the time taken to deliver the report and makes a contribution to the costs of data management.

If you work for a local authority in London, we will soon be offering access to the planning application screening tool as part of the suite of data services we provide under our service level agreements. For further information on this work, please see p3 of the [7th edition of the GiGLer](#)

*\* These figures are based on applications submitted. Not all were granted permission.*

## 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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