

# British Ecological Society Mires Research Group (MRG) Report

October 2004

## **Field Visits**

For the last two years the MRG has organised a field visit the day before the BES annual meeting to a site close to the meeting. In 2003 we visited Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses lead by Joan Daniels (EN) and organised by David Gibbons and Jane Bunting. In 2004 we visited Wedholme Flow and Glasson. The visit was lead by Colin Auld and Alasdair Brock (EN assistant site managers to Frank Mawby). Feedback from fieldtrip participants was very positive, both from active MRG members and from other ecologists. The idea of continuing to have a field trip linked to future BES meetings was strongly supported. The numbers of participants has not been high (17 and 11) but the exchanges have been worthwhile.

## **The MRG at the BES**

Mire ecology/paleoecology were well represented at the BES Annual Meeting in 2003 with a full day thematic topic session on 'The past as the key to the present? Temporal scales in wetland ecology', a half day on Mire and Paleoecology and a full poster session. The thematic topic had produced a full day of interesting and thought-provoking papers, and had attracted reasonable audiences. In 2002 and 2004 good presentations were given in the mire ecology session but the audiences were small in comparison to most other sessions at the BES. We proposed to change the name of the mire ecology session to the wetland ecology session in the hope of increasing the audience. Over the last three years the AGM meetings have been well attended and dynamic. At the 2003 meeting I was elected to continue as secretary (with help from other MRG members as necessary) and my aim to make the MRG both a Research Forum and a source of information was generally accepted.

## **INTECOL Wetlands conference**

The MRG approached the BES for support for graduate attendance at the 7<sup>th</sup> INTECOL International Wetlands Conference, Utrecht, 25-31 July 2004. The support enabled several students to go to the meeting and MRG e-mails sent to the membership definitely triggered off at least one symposium 'Palaeoecology and long-term wetland function dynamics' organised by Jane Bunting and Nicki Whitehouse which will be published as a special issue of 'Biodiversity and Conservation' in mid-2005, plus a book chapter for the INTECOL meeting proceedings volume. Jane and Nicki were too late to submit for BES support for their symposium.

## **Integrating Wetland Hydrology and Ecology in the UK**

The MRG(BES) was co-organiser (with the British Hydrological Society) of the following meeting held at the Institution of Civil Engineers, London on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004: *Integrating Wetland Hydrology and Ecology in the UK*. The meeting was attended by over 170 delegates from academia, nature conservations agencies (particularly EN and the RSPB), environmental consultants, and the Environment Agency. The day was divided into three sessions, (i) Plants, Insects and Birds, (ii) Wetland Processes, (iii) Applied Studies, with three papers being given in each. Two of the papers were given by members of the MRG (BES): “Hydro-ecology: Holy Grail or Wholly Pointless” (Bryan Wheeler, University of Sheffield) and “Piezometers and Protocols: Improving the Ways of Characterising Groundwater Flow in Wetlands” (Andy Baird, University of Sheffield). Feedback via a questionnaire revealed that the meeting was very well received by those that attended. Further details of all of the papers can be found by following the link at: [http://ewre-www.cv.ic.ac.uk/bhs/BHS\\_past\\_meetings.html](http://ewre-www.cv.ic.ac.uk/bhs/BHS_past_meetings.html) or by contacting the principal organiser, Dr Mike Acreman at [man@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:man@ceh.ac.uk).

## **Mail-base and Web page**

The bes-mires mail base is continuing. It is mainly used to advertise subject specific PhD studentships, post-doctoral positions, conferences and for e.g. new journals but there is also exchange of expertise and I use it a lot to communicate with the membership. The Web pages have been updated although I want to do more with them. The problem is getting people to submit articles/comments.

## **Future events**

The SWS (Society of Wetland Scientists) is starting up a European Chapter and Jane Bunting is hosting the first chapter meeting in Hull next year and wants to see MRG involvement with that. The MRG believe that if SWS is going to do anything useful in Europe it has to act as more of a forum for all the national groups and interests to get together and exchange information, not try and duplicate everyone else's work.

Andrew Baird has offered to run a fieldtrip to the floodplain fens of the Norfolk Broads before next summer. It is hoped that the trip will combine wetland hydrology, palaeoecology, and conservation. Andrew will be exploring the possibility of combining the organisation of the trip with the newly-formed European Chapter of the Society of Wetland Scientists, in particular with Dr Jane Bunting of the University of Hull, who has done palaeoecological work in the area.

At the MRG AGM at the BES it was proposed that we have a field visit in the near future on *Sphagnum* identification and perhaps mire insect i.d. lead by experienced members of the group e.g. Prof Clymo and Val Standen as they appear to have much better i.d. skills than the next generation of MRG members. We shall also have a field visit before the BES annual meetings in Hatfield (to be decided) and Oxford (a valley mire in Snelsmore and a rich fen in Cothill).

The MRG had decided to submit a Thematic Topic every 2-3 years but this was not discussed at the last AGM. I am confident that we will be proposing one for the 2006 BES.

The topic of a more regular newsletter comes up at virtually every AGM, and Jane Bunting has offered to try to get something going for the next year, circulated mostly via email but with the option to send paper copies to those who prefer this method. Lisa Belyea has the current version of the email list available, and a notice could be placed in the Bulletin to encourage people to renew their membership.

There has been a request to place MRG members contact and expertise on the Web pages. Is this possible?

### **Budget request 2005**

Organisation and transport for the Norfolk Broads visit	£300
Organisation and transport for the identification workshop/field visit	£300
Organisation and transport for visit preceding the BES meeting in Hatfield	£300
My registration accommodation and travel to the BES in Hatfield	£250

Deborah Pearce 27<sup>th</sup> September 04.