

OPAL Yorkshire and the Humber: What we've been up to!

We can't quite believe it but we've been working on the OPAL project for over 5 years now! As this phase of OPAL is coming to an end this month (May 2013), we've put this short document together to highlight some of the key things we've been up to on the project at the Stockholm Environment Institute at the University of York.



OPAL Surveys

We have helped develop all 7 OPAL Surveys, which focus on Soil and Earthworms, Air quality and lichens, Water quality, Biodiversity of hedgerows, Climate and weather, Invertebrates (Bugs Count) and our latest, Tree Health. Survey packs for all these can be downloaded from the OPAL website www.OPALexplorenature.org, and you can still upload your results which will feed into information about the distribution of species. Alison has been working very hard to develop the Tree Health survey, so it's exciting to see the results coming in!



At the time of writing, you can request Tree Health Survey packs from OPAL website. If you'd like survey training before the end of August contact Alison on opalproject@york.ac.uk



Education packs

We made a series of 15 education packs aimed at helping primary school children learn about the environment in a fun way. The series includes a pack for each season, so there's no excuse for getting out and exploring, whatever the weather! These can be downloaded from www.opalexplorenature.org/education-packs.

We suggest laminating them so they are weather proof and reusable.



BioBlitzes

We've run several BioBlitzes in the region with various partners, and have written a guide to share the lessons that we learned along the way. This can be found on the OPAL website. Hopefully it will be useful if you are running a BioBlitz of your own.

Participatory mapping

We've done lots of participatory mapping (or participatory GIS) to understand how people view their local environment. A presentation on this work, complete with videos featuring Steve, can be found [here](#).



OPAL PhD and Masters Research

Sal Hobbs completed her PhD looking at community participation in monitoring schemes, she spent a lot of time with fabulous volunteers in Hull, looking at the movements of hedgehogs across the urban landscape.

Sarah West hasn't quite finished her PhD yet, which has been researching the evaluation of environmental education projects, but she's looking forward to handing it in soon!



Kevin Rich and Mike Ridealgh both passed their Masters looking at regeneration of coalfield sites in West Yorkshire, and helped residents around the sites gain a better understanding of how the history of the sites has affected the plants and animals that live there.

If you are interested in the outputs from any of our research, then please get in touch with one of us.

Species identification and recording

We have run free species identification courses, which aimed to introduce people to some of the amazing wildlife found in the UK, from molluscs to fungi. These have mainly been taught by members of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union www.ynu.org.uk, an organisation dedicated to recording wildlife in the region. If you want to learn how to identify species, then you can't do much better than join up as a member and attend their field meetings.



As part of OPAL, the Big Lottery Fund also funded the creation of iSpot www.ispot.org.uk, a website where you can upload pictures of organisms and the online community will help identify them for you! Data from iSpot are now feeding through into national wildlife recording schemes.

We've set up a wildlife recording website for the University of York campus, using Indicia, see www.indicia.org.uk for details of how to make your own recording website. If you'd prefer just to record the occasional species, then have a look at iRecord www.brc.ac.uk/iRecord/, which aims to make wildlife sightings easier to share and record.

We'd like to say thank you to all the people we've met or worked with on this project (over 17,000!!), and a very big thank you to the Big Lottery Fund for making it all possible!



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[Stockholm Environment Institute](http://StockholmEnvironmentInstitute) at the University of York