**CONFIDENTIAL**

Date Transcribed: 19th May 2021

Interviewer:

Respondent:

P10: It’s just purely about moths. Or is it-

**INT: No. So it’s about, I think you came to me as moth person. But it’s about any type of recording you do really.**

P10: Oh right. Though I do do quite a lot generalist, not just moths. But you’ve got my name through [Name] so-

**INT: Yes, yes.**

P10: Okay.

**INT: So the first question is how did you start recording? And how long have you been recording? And what kind of motivated you to get involved in doing that?**

P10: Right that’s going back a bit. I started in 2004 which is 18 years ago. Long time ago now. And how did I get into it? I don’t know. I have often seen about people who do trap moths and thought might be quite interesting. But I thought I’d just take the plunge and buy a moth trap and once I’d bought a moth trap you’re hooked. And it just snowballs from there really. So I started off in quite a small way in the garden. And then gradually over the years increased. Which I’m guessing is what, you know, most moth recorders do. But I’ve always throughout my life I’ve been interested in wildlife. And when I was a kid I used, I was interested in moths because I used to catch them actually and pin them, which is awful now. But that’s what you used to do in those days.

**INT: Yes. Yes.**

P10: I used to rear them from caterpillars as well. So I’ve always been interested in moths but frustratingly you don’t see them during the day. So I thought, well I’ll buy a trap and see what’s out there. And it just amazed me as soon as I ran it how much there was out there. And that’s people get hooked you know. It’s just very addictive.

**INT: Yes. And so did you start submitting those records straight away? Or did you, was it just kind of-**

P10: I was given [Name]’s name, who I don’t know whether you’ve had anybody say anything about [Name], but he’s absolutely brilliant. He must be one of the best moth recorders going. And he’s a brilliant bloke. Very knowledgeable. And somebody gave me his contact details right at the beginning. So I sort of contacted him. And he sort of mentored me through the first year really, which was again, brilliant, you know. He helped me identify what I was catching. And gradually built up my knowledge.

**INT: That’s amazing. So were you kind of taking photos of what you’d found?**

P10: I was taking photos. I didn’t have a digital camera, so I was getting prints off and I was sending the prints to [Name]. And he was writing on the back what they were.

**INT: [laughs]**

P10: [unclear: 0:02:41] But he was very, very patient with me. And it worked, you know, because I had an actual print that I could look at. And he’d identified it. So I gradually went from there.

**INT: And was he giving you other information about what you’d found that kind of grew your interest as well? Was he, you know, not just the name of the species, was he kind of giving you other bits and pieces of information about life history and things like that?**

P10: Well he does that from time to time. And he’ll say, “Oh that’s interesting. You must have such and such growing near you.” So little snippets like that. But you know, as I was going along and I was reading up about them anyway, so I was quite to learn generally. And just do it through field guides and stuff. You know, you gradually build your knowledge. So that was 18 years ago, long time ago.

**INT: And so then you mentioned that you started in your garden.**

P10: Well yes. I mean my main trap site like most moth recorders is usually the garden. That’s where you start. But the keen guys buy themselves a generator and go out to lots of exciting places. I never took that step. But I’ve always had a mains driven trap which means you’re limited to where the power is. So I basically trapped in my garden for many, many years. And then about 10 years ago I put out some feelers and then found a few other places where people were interested enough to let me in, and went and trapped in their gardens. And then it went from there, gradually built up a little network of sites. I don’t trap extensively away from the garden like many people do. But just you know, in the main peak season I’ll just for variety I’ll go and see what’s in different places. But actually this very year I’ve bought myself a battery powered moth trap for the first time. Which means I can now, literally I’d go anywhere.

**INT: Okay.**

P10: So I’ve not tried that yet. I’ve just bought it. So that it going to open up new possibilities. And [Name]’s already telling me about where I should go.

**INT: Oh really.**

P10: Just to, try and fill in a few black holes, he’s got these black holes in the county, a map of moth records where there’s been very little trapping. He’s always keen to get people targeting on those areas.

**INT: And that appeals to you does it? That kind of- You’re happy to help fill those gaps?**

P10: Yes, yes, yes. So I’m also very interested in local stuff anyway. I’ve started a little, since the lockdown a year ago the first lockdown, I’ve started a little whats app group in the village of people interested in wildlife. And I’ve encouraged them to do a bit of trapping. I lent a trap to them and it’s sort of grown from there. So I’ve got a little network of people in the village now who are interested enough to run a trap for a few nights.

**INT: Okay.**

P10: Which again- And then I’m using that to develop like a database for the parish where I live, like a lot of people do. Not just for moths but all types of insects, birds, mammals, you know, the whole thing really. Just to build up a knowledge of the wildlife of the parish.

**INT: Okay. And that’s very much, do you kind of take the parish boundary as your area of interest?**

P10: Yes, yes.

**INT: Okay. And do you do anything, excuse me I’m going to sneeze, [laughs] it’s gone away. Do you do anything with those- So the moth records presumably you pass on to [Name].**

P10: [Name] yes.

**INT: And so do the other people that are moth trapping in their area pass those records on as well?**

P10: Well no I mean you say they’re moth trapping, they’re not really moth trapping. They’re completely beginners. I’m just lending a trap for a few nights for them to discover what’s out there. So they haven’t got a clue what they’re finding. So it usually results in them sending me a picture and I identify it. So I’m doing what [Name] used to do, you know, 18 years ago. It’s helping me because I’m gradually building up a picture of our parish, of the distribution of moths. But for other people it’s just opening their eyes to what’s out there, you know.

**INT: And then in terms of those records that you’re collecting for the parish, are you using them for anything beyond just kind of building your own understanding of what’s in the parish? You know, could you use-**

P10: That’s somebody in my moth group. [laughs] Yes, well yes I send all the records that I collect myself that other people- I send them to [Name] anyway. I put them on a spreadsheet for the parish, so I’ve got like a moths’ database for the parish. And well it’s basically, those are the two ways in which I use them.

**INT: So have you got your eye on, I’m just thinking like- Say if somebody wanted to come and build some houses on a field, or you know, or on a garden and you know that it’s a good site, do you think, is that kind of a motivation for having those records that you might be able to use them in that kind of way, to protect the wildlife that’s in the area?**

P10: Yes possibly. Where I live it’s probably unlikely, it’s a small village so it’s not under a huge amount of development pressure. And the sorts of sites I’m trapping at wouldn’t get developed anyway. I mean one is a ancient woodland site just down the road. And the others are mainly people’s gardens. So they won’t be under pressure, you know. So no it’s coming at it from the, how you use the data point of view, I see it that you feed the data into [Name]. And I don’t know what, how [Name] gets those records into the regional data centre. But I’m assuming somehow they go there. And then the local authorities use that data from that perspective. So I wouldn’t see it, you know, as something that I would be called upon to do. Unless you know, unless word got around that I might have some information that would be useful fighting a development if that ever happened, that I can see people might come to me. But as I say, it’s pretty unlikely I would have thought.

**INT: And so does that, the passing of those records on to be used by local authorities or other organisations, does that- Is that part of the motivation for your recording, knowing that those records are being used for hopefully some greater good along the line?**

P10: Well it would be if I knew that’s what was happening. But I’m just- As I say, I don’t know what [Name] does do, how he feeds into the ecological data centre.

**[0:10:05]**

How that link is made. But I’m assuming there’s the link there somewhere.

**INT: But that’s not necessarily a key motivation for you is it?**

P10: Not for me no.

**INT: It’s just kind of personal interest.**

P10: Yes that’s right yes.

**INT: Yes. And so you mentioned other species groups as well. So you do some recording of other species, non moth.**

P10: Yes I’ve always been interested in butterflies, in fact more so than moths you know. As I was a kid I was very much into butterflies. So I do that within our parish, although it’s a pretty useless parish for butterflies generally. I mean intensive arable, you know, so there’s not much around. So butterflies yes. Birds, I’m a very keen birder. I used to be the [WILDLIFE CHARITY] regional rep for this area.

**INT: Oh wow.**

P10: That drives me, I go on walks you know looking for birds. So and then teaching myself plants. Gradually I’m building up my knowledge of plants and there’s somebody in the village who’s quite a keen botanist, and she helps me with any tricky things I’m not sure about. So as I say, right across the board I’m just trying to build up a knowledge of what’s there. That doesn’t go anywhere. I mean the butterfly records go to [CONSERVATION CHARITY] every year, I send them in. But none of the others do. Whether they should I don’t know.

**INT: So the birds and the plants you don’t send anywhere.**

P10: Oh no, birds is a really hard one. The [COUNTY] Recorder covers the whole of Yorkshire. And I used to send my records in because I knew the recorder who lived locally. But the current recorder lives way over the other side in [Town] I think. And I’ve sort of stopped sending bird records in. You know, bird records seem to be very much focused on the key sites that everybody goes to, the key hotspots you know, the nature reserves and the sites on the coast. And the stuff like I’m collecting out in the sticks just in fairly ordinary bits of countryside, you know, they don’t seem to need that sort of information as much. That’s the impression I get anyway.

**INT: And is that just because you feel like you don’t necessarily get any feedback that says thank you this was really useful?**

P10: Yes. Yes I mean I shouldn’t say it, but when I knew the country recorder, he was a very friendly sort of guy and I had a good relationship with him. So he’d ask me for stuff and I’d send him records every year. But I’ve never developed that with the new guy. Who is, as I say, quite remote. He’s the other side of the Pennines. And there’s never been any attempt I’m aware of for them to reach out and ask for the records. So it’s just sort of fallen by the wayside unfortunately. But yes perhaps I- I think well, a lot of people do. But they put bird records in through the [WILDLIFE CHARITY] website BirdTrack. Which then go to the recorder. That’s probably how most people do it. But again, I’ve never got into the habit of doing that I’m afraid with birds. But yes, most of the bird recording I do is local within the parish. It’s pretty mundane stuff. So you know it’s [s/l common and 0:13:25] garden stuff really.

**INT: And that’s the same for the butterflies is it? You kind of focus on the parish again?**

P10: Butterflies yes, I do that for the parish. But the system of vice-county recorders, you know the different vice-counties have their own vice-country recorder. And depending on the individuals, they’ll ask you to try and get more records on a particular area. They’re very keen on encouraging more records. One of them, one is less so, you know. One does a really useful annual feedback report on what people have found and where he needs more information, which is very, very good. But the other guy, for the other vice-county, because we’ve got two vice-counties in our parish, the other guy does nothing of that so I never get any feedback. So again, a lot depends on the keenness of the local recorder really as to how much data gets put in I think.

**INT: Yes, because if you’re just submitting it and feeling like you’re not getting anything back then it’s, I imagine quite demotivating.**

P10: Yes. Well not only that, I actually put in quite an interesting record of a clouded yellow, which is pretty unheard of in these parts. And I put that record in last year. And it transpired it got lost, it didn’t get into the annual report. So I queried it and he just admitted, “Oh I’m sorry got lost.” Which you know, doesn’t inspire confidence really. So I mean don’t think that normally happens. But with [CONSERVATION CHARITY], you have this problem of overlapping recording scheme, because all my garden records I used to put into the [RECORDING SCHEME] assuming they’d then go to [CONSERVATION CHARITY] nationally or regionally. But then I found out no they didn’t, the local recorder said, “Well I don’t normally get those.” So I’d spent several years of putting in garden butterfly records, and a lot of them didn’t get used. Which was very frustrating. So I’ve stopped doing that now. Now I just send all my records once a year as a spreadsheet. And then I know he’s got them, you know.

**INT: And do you do that butterfly recording in any sort of systematic way? Or is it just things that you see when you’re in your garden? Or out and about around the parish?**

P10: The garden stuff yes, I try and log everything I see in the garden and do counts as far as I can. The stuff out and about in the parish, yes, I’m trying to you know, do it on a one kilometre square basis throughout the parish. So I’m trying to fill in black holes in different species that I haven’t recorded there. So if I haven’t seen a skipper in a particular square I’d maybe target that and try and find a skipper. And yes, last year I found white-letter hairstreak for the first time in the parish despite thinking where they might be, and going and looking at the right time of the year. So I’m doing a bit of that. But it’s not particularly systematic. It’s just you know, what strikes as being valuable to do really.

**INT: So it’s kind of targeting specific species often then is it? Rather than thinking, I’m going to go to this site and make a full list of all the species that I’ve seen?**

P10: Yes, I do both I think. When I’m out if I think a particular one kilometre square in the parish is unrecorded I’ll go for a walk through that square, and then just record everything I find for that square. That’s how your [CONSERVATION CHARITY] records go in, it’s on a kilometre square basis. But if there’s something missing, like the white-letter hairstreak, I’ve always thought they must be here somewhere. But you know, they live in the tops of trees and you’ve got to be there in the right conditions at the right time of the year to actually find them. So I’ve actually targeted that. And I’m going to be doing the same for purple hairstreak, which again I think must be here. But I’ve never actually specifically looked for it so I’ll have a crack at that this year. So it’s a bit of both really. Nobody is encouraging me to do it particularly, it’s just something I’m interested in doing.

**INT: And you mentioned that [Name] and one of the butterfly VC recorders potentially asks you to fill in black holes.**

P10: Yes.

**INT: Are there other people that- Or, okay so first question is, are there limits to what you’re willing to do in terms of particular sites that you wouldn’t necessarily want to go to? Or distances away from home that you wouldn’t want to travel?**

P10: Yes. It’s primarily travel distances really. So when I got, I knew I was getting this battery powered trap and I could go a bit further afield, then I’ll ask [Name] where he thought I ought to do some records. And he immediately pointed- immediately north, the 10 kilometre square to the north of us. There’s no macro-moth records at all. So that’s an obvious one. So I said I’d go and have a word with the local squire, see when I could go and drop the trap in his garden, in his park should I say for a few nights. So you know, that’s specific targeting that [Name] directed me to. But you know, [Name] is very good. He’s been doing this for many years. And I think by and large he’s evening out the county coverage pretty well. We used to have big holes where nobody covered down in [place], to the north of [CITY]. And for a couple of years he really targeted effort down there. And I think now they are, they are pretty much filled in. So you know, he’s a real driver of that sort of approach.

**INT: Yes.**

P10: So if he said to me, well I don’t think he would but if he said to me there’s a site 30 miles south of you, could do with a few records, it’s probably too far. But if it was, you know, 10, 15 miles it’s doable. Because the trouble is you’ve got to take your trap there, set it up, drop it off, run it overnight and pick it up in the morning. So wherever you go you’ve got to go twice. That’s the difficulty. So I wouldn’t want to travel huge distances. And I guess most people are the same. They tend to just trap near where they live.

**INT: Yes. And you’ve got to make sure you’re leaving it somewhere where it’s not going to get stolen-**

**[0:20:00]**

P10: Vandalised yes.

**INT: -or something yes.**

P10: Yes, yes, that’s why you’ll always go for, well I’ll always look primarily for somebody who could let me run it off their mains, because that is by far the best way to do it, because you pull in more moths using a mains trap. But now I’ve got the battery powered trap, I’ll be looking for sites where I know they’re safe basically. And that’s why quite often you tend to go the landed gentry, you know, somebody who lives in a hall, say who’s got a nice big private park with lots of oak trees and stuff where a) you know it will be good habitat, and b) you know it would be safe, and then you can leave it overnight.

**INT: And is good habitat important? So if [Name] asks you to go a 10 kilometre square that was just arable, and you’re not going to particularly find anything of interest, would you say, oh no thanks actually. Or would you be willing to do it to fill in the gap?**

P10: No I’m stupid, I’ll do it to fill in the gap. [laughs]

**INT: [laughs]**

P10: I mean the butterfly recorder for [VICE COUNTY] did that last year actually. He gave a list of 10 kilometre squares where he had very few records throughout the vice-country, you know, covering way up into [NATIONAL PARK]. And he said, you know, I’d be really interested to have any records for any of these sites. So there’s me, I looked at the map and thought, yes I could do that. There were some quite a long way away. Because all it needs is just to drive around and look for interesting habitat and just park up and have a walk around, that’s all it involved. So that’s no great problem. So we had that all set up and then of course we had the lockdown. So it all collapsed and never happened. But I’m quite happy to do that sort of recording where you’re just, you know, driving to an area to look for something to help fill in a hole. That seems a very useful sort of thing to do. But that’s okay for butterflies. But as I say, if you do it for moths then you’re doing double journeys all the time.

**INT: Yes.**

P10: A bit more tricky.

**INT: Yes.**

P10: And also with moth trapping you tend to- It’s always best if you can get to the trap early in the morning. So if you’re trapping peak season early in the morning equals, you know, 5 o’clock, 6 o’clock in the morning. And if it’s a long way away, you know, immediately there’s a bit of an issue there.

**INT: Yes.**

P10: Some of the keen guys will actually sleep overnight in the back of the car. But I’ve never done that.

**INT: No. But it is that extra layer of logistics isn’t it.**

P10: Yes, it just makes it, well rather than enjoyable it’s something that you have to grit your teeth and do it, you know. But I’m guessing most people just do things that are more enjoyable.

**END ABRUPTLY**

**Audio ends: [0:22:50]**