**CONFIDENTIAL**

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Interviewer(s):

Respondent(s):

**INT: Fab, okay, here we go. So, the first question I have is how long have you been doing any biological recording and how did you start?**

P25: Oh, 50 years [laughs].

**INT: Oh, wow [laughs].**

P25: Roughly, started as a bird recorder with the [wildlife club]oh, must have been, where are we, where are we now, 2020 something. Yes, 55 years ago [laughs] something like that yes, quite a while anyway.

**INT: Yes, and so, it was birds that was your first interest is that right?**

P25: Well, that was where I was raised as it were [laughs].

**INT: Okay, and was that because of family interests or was it you?**

P25: Yes, initially of course yes, won’t say it was beyond that but that's where it started you know, parents taking me to things and me deciding I like that sort of thing, yes.

**INT: And how did you get into?**

P25: But you of course, I’m guessing I know this is quite a tangent here, I’m guessing that you are in the under 21 type category [laughs].

**INT: Oh, I wish [laughs], try the late 30s [laughs].**

P25: Oh, that's still under 21 as far as I’m concerned.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: What you don't know probably and couldn't possibly understand a) because you're too young and B) because you're a girlie. Is that in the 1950s and 1960s all the small boys collected birds eggs and that's how we developed our interest. That's something which is often overlooked because of course, we don't collect birds eggs these days, it’s a bit naughty. But you'll find that almost every small boy of that era has collected birds eggs and that is where the initial interest in wildlife has come. Either from self-discovery or from somebody giving him a clip around the earhole telling him not to do that and do things a different way or whatever. But you'll find that if you actually ask people, you'll find that's a common thread, you'll find they’ve all done that in their youth. Well, not all but most people.

**INT: And then at that stage were you passing your records onto somewhere of what you'd seen or what you'd collected I guess? Were those observations being passed on to someone?**

P25: Well, yes we took, I mean those days, those early days I mean don't forget biological recording only really began in 1960, I’m sure you're aware of that aren’t you?

**INT: Mm hm.**

P25: Do you know why it began in 1960?

**INT: No, you tell me.**

P25: No, I didn’t think you did, sorry I’m being rude.

**INT: That's all right, you can be rude to me [laughs].**

P25: There was no wildlife recording other than maybe birds which is where I started of course, passed the records to the local natural history society.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: But biological recording started in 1960 with [Name] at what which later became the [research station]. And he invented the computer thing that put dots on maps.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: So, until that point that had never happened. And so, in the 1960s [Name] and his biological record centre starting mapping [unclear 00:03:47] and the world suddenly went, “Oh, this is interesting”. And of course, within about five years it had started to spread rapidly to involve moths because that's one of [Name]’s interest. And so, it wasn’t until that period that people were giving their records to anybody.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: So, you know things were being given to their local natural history society mostly well, let’s be honest mostly for a bit of self. You know, “Oh, I saw this the other day” [unclear 00:04:17] you would find [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Well, not at that age but you know what I mean. Or, you know it was for their benefit so they could go and look at it or whatever. But it wasn’t until the early 60s that we had proper biological recordings.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: But yes, I knew [Name] and I knew various people, I was in the crowd, in with the in-crowd shall we say. So, yes I started passing stuff upstairs from a very early age.

**INT: Okay so, you were there at the very beginning.**

P25: Well, yes I’m not claiming any credit for it but I was around at the time shall we say [laughs]?

**INT: [Laughs] and what species groups were you recording at that time then, had you branched out from birds at that point?**

P25: Oh, yes I was [unclear 00:05:00] moths which of course, was the focus of the universe as I’m sure you know [laughs].

**INT: Of course [laughs] and then is it still to this day very much moths that you're primarily interested in? Or have you kind of changed your interests over the years?**

P25: Well, interests you know have been broadened I mean I spent 30, 40 years working as an entomologist.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: So, I covered it all really [laughs], But now I’m retired it’s back to moths which is what I enjoy doing.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: Yes.

**INT: So, do you?**

P25: If you'd asked me 20 years ago I’d have told you, you know every invertebrate.

**INT: Right.**

P25: But invertebrates are my thing.

**INT: Okay, and you submit records on different invertebrate groups do you?**

P25: Yes, indeed yes.

**INT: Yes, and then so, what sort of geographical area do you cover with your recording then? Are you quite localised or do you cover a wider area?**

P25: Well, again that's developed over the years so, I wouldn’t say in parallel with, that's not right. Along with the sort of inception of the biological record centre and dot maps and computers and so on, which in those days was very laborious to produce but that's another story.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: It very rapidly became obvious that you couldn't manage the whole country so maps of you know, the dandelion or the daisy were very heavy on the southeast and there weren't any in [COUNTY]. Well, you thought *oh, hang on that's not right* [laughs]. So, it very quickly devolved through regions to counties and over 30, 40 years we've evolved quite an efficient county recording scheme. And this is where I often have a fight with [wildlife charity] [unclear 00:06:57] why she’s passed me to you [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Most counties, I don't think all these days, but most counties still have something passing as a county natural history society. Sometimes they call it a field club, in the old days they were often called philosophical [s/l 00:07:20] societies [laughs] but every county used to have one. As a complete aside, for your interest but not really for your project, when I was working many, many years ago in a museum in [city], it was the headquarters of the [field club]. And because they exchanged their journal, the [county] Naturalist with everybody else in the world, we had probably one of the biggest collections of county journals ever.

**INT: Right.**

P25: So, you know if you asked me could I look something up in the [ journal] for [unclear 00:08:01] on page 70 I could do that.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Which was quite fun, I’m not there anymore of course but that's another story. So, yes devolved with counties effectively and there's sort of the counties were there first but they were never very efficient. Because of course, in Victorian days it was all about collecting butterflies and impressing the ladies you know with a pretty cabinet full of stuffed hummingbirds or whatever [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Over the years a lot of interest waned and there was no more active county recorders so to speak. Then in about the 1960, 70s coincident with the [NATURE RESERVE] the country recording sort of started up again because it was realised that you know use could be made of the data. Today several counties but by no means all have got thriving natural history societies. Now, the reason I mentioned the conflict with [WILDLIFE CHARITY] is simply that when [WILDLIFE CHARITY] arrived on the scene and decided they would form a national moth recording scheme. They decided it was time that every county had a moth recorder and so, they appointed one. Which pissed off people like me because I said, “Excuse me, I’m already here” [laughs] you follow the train of thought?

**INT: Yes.**

P25: Now, I know this to be true because the meeting at which that was decided was held in my kitchen [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: So, I know exactly what went on. But anyway, that's you know that minor little bit of politics which I think we've got over. But you must remember that the organisation [wildlife charity] does not own biological recording you know. There are county bodies who are very, very keen to keep it for all sorts of reasons, mostly kudos but you know. And so, we have a system now where everybody works in perfect harmony, he says for the benefit of your type [laughs].

**00:10:17**

**INT: [Laughs] yes, I’ll make sure I pass that on [laughs].**

P25: [Laughs] now [unclear 00:10:26] so you can tell her what I said.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: She won’t always agree with me but we agree to differ on a lot of things.

**INT: Well, that's life isn't it, yes?**

P25: Yes. So, I've lost the track a bit but that's background information which will probably help you I’m sure.

**INT: Yes, no that is really useful actually because I don't think I had quite appreciated that history. So, that is very useful because I think you know you talk about politics, there is quite a lot isn't there? And you often hear these asides.**

P25: Oh, god.

**INT: That you don't quite understand [laughs] so it’s useful to have the context.**

P25: Yes, well you don't need to really I mean you know I don't do politics these days, I’m retired. I almost told you to [EXPLETIVE] off on that form you sent me.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: But I thought I’d just fill it in anyway because it’s quicker and easier and it didn’t do much damage.

**INT: Well.**

P25: But I don't do paperwork, my interests, I’m now retired so I you know don't have to impress anybody. But now I’m retired I've gone back to my childhood effectively and I’m enjoying my natural history. I don't answer to anybody, I happen to be a county recorder for a couple of things, I happen to be a national recorder for some things.

**INT: Right.**

P25: But that is married onto my interest and if I don't want to do it I don't bloody well do it you know.

**INT: Yes, so when you do your recording then over the year, say over the course of a year. How are you deciding what you're recording and where you're recording?**

P25: Yes, let’s come back to yes, your burning issue which I know is what you're trying to work around to. Let us look at [unclear 00:12:04] and I know we can talk about national recording because I’m the national recorder for [SPECIES GROUP].

**INT: Okay.**

P25: More useful probably and let’s talk about country recording because I am the county moth recorder for [county] and [county]. Which is two counties of course but effectively it’s [county] and [unclear 00:12:27] okay so, that's my interest. Now, I've always been since birth [laughs] a recorder for that area but we've only really done anything since the year 2000.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: And it’s quite telling really because there are people out there who are very interested but like most people they're sheep, they need a shepherd. You know they record [unclear 00:12:58] read something in the scientific literary review of nature or even the newspaper and go, “Oh, that's interesting. Yes, I've seen that yes, snowdrops are coming out earlier this year” you know. And then they don't put two and two together and work out how the scientists in America who wrote to the paper who know that English snowdrops are coming out two weeks early. You know it’s because people like them have gone out and ticked off snowdrop on a certain date and sent their record in you know. And so, we decided that I mean well, no I decided the [unclear 00:13:30] was a waste of time, should be annihilated, prayed for a virus to come along but apart from that [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Apart from that we adopted the attitude that people were interested and we needed to harness that interest. Some of them were going, “No, I’d rather play football” but others would say, “Yes, I like this”. So, we formed a county moth group, [county] Moth Group we called it because we’re [county]. And we set up a series of field trips, we tried to do every fortnight in the spring and summer. It went absolutely ballistic because on the first outing we had over 50 people.

**INT: Wow.**

P25: It died off of course as it carried on but we, for the first few years, we had a huge turnout. You know we [unclear 00:14:22] anywhere in the county and you could have 20 or 30 people turn up which is bloody good.

**INT: Yes, yes.**

P25: For a natural history society. Now, it’s died off a little bit but the point that I’m making is that none of that would have happened if I hadn’t, not blowing any personal trumpets here. But it’s a fact that it would not have happened if I hadn’t got off my arse and motivated people, yes?

**INT: Yes.**

P25: So, that's the first thing. There are people out there, you will be able to do your recording in under recorded places but you going to have to motivate people. And the motivation is the hard part and will not always be the same across the board. We then progressed to say, “Right, we’re going to write a book about the county’s moths” and of course, everybody wanted their names in print.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: And then we went one step further and said, “Right, we’d like a photograph of every moth in the county, that's 1,500 species. And what we’d like to do is have one for each of you so, that's 1,500 photographs from 1,500 people please”. And you'd be amazed how many people suddenly found they could take pictures of moths, they're mostly absolute crap.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: [Laughs] but you know we motivated 1,500 people because they thought they might get their pictures in print. Now, obviously, we didn’t use the crap but we have got quite a few, shall we say, less than perfect pictures in the book. Because it was just as important to involve the people as it was to get the moth illustrated. The moth is illustrated in a static guide anyway so, nobody really cared you know. But as long as the picture was sort of ¾ decent we put it in with the person’s name and [unclear 00:16:11]. And so, there is very much an element of motivation, or personal, I’m not sure what the word is, self-importance I suppose by the people involved you know. But that's a mean saying it that way you know we all want to be noticed, we all want to do something, we all want to contribute, it’s that sort of thing. And latching onto that is how I have made the [county] Moth Group work.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: I also, learnt very quickly if you want a job doing you do it yourself. I try and get people involved, I tried a committee, it went flat on its face so, I thought *right, no I run this as a dictatorship*. And the funny thing is [laughs] I mean I would have much preferred to have a committee say, “Oh, what about this, what about that”? But having decided to run it as a dictatorship, I decided that I would do just that you know my middle name is Hitler, this is how it’s done. And the weird thing is that people appreciate it you know and getting your record past me or a record of a moth past me in [county] became a challenge.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Still is a challenge, you can see it on Facebook they say, “I’ll send this to [NAME]” [unclear 00:17:28].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: It’s great, it’s fantastic because of course, we, I emphasize accuracy so, we've got in the Moth [unclear 00:17:39] and if they're going to use [unclear 00:17:41] others. In the moth world we've got a huge [unclear 00:17:45] of converted birdwatchers. And the philosophy behind birdwatching is that you don't touch anything, you leave it alone. You don't go around shooting birds, you don't collect, you just leave them there with birdwatching. Now, these are coming to a world that was dominated by the Edwardian idea that you had to collect everything in order to be able to put a name to it which of course, isn't fully true. So, we had to strike, over the years, I’m, talking over several years now, a compromise has been struck. Whereby, there are all sorts of things I don't personally get involved in, the social media, about people putting up photographs of all sorts, sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly. But there is an underlying philosophy now of, “Oh, this is one of those tricky species, we’d better let a grown up see this”.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: And what that means is they're acknowledging that it has to be killed and dissected.

**INT: Right.**

P25: But there's a reason for it so, you're beginning to get science creeping into a leisure activity you know. And so, I say to people “Right, we’ll you’ve [unclear 00:19:02] blah, blah, blah there's two species, there's a dark [unclear 00:19:07] have you seen that”? “Oo, no I didn’t know it existed” “Right, well there's two things, they look identical, you’ve either got to find me a caterpillar because they're different or you keep going until you get one of each. Which I will name for you by dissecting them. And then at that point you can stop killing them and not worry about it because I've put the dots on the map”. And people find that very attractive because at the end of the day you know they drive their car down the road and kill 1,000 insects do they can go to the shops [laughs] splatted on the windscreen. So, they suddenly start getting things into perspective, they’ll send me the odd moth when there's a scientific purpose for it. And I will dissect it and we will get the accurate record. And then of course, they get their name in print blah, blah, blah full circle. So, all these things are linked in.

**00:19:57**

**INT: And do you think it’s?**

P25: And I like to, sorry go on.

**INT: Do you think it’s the learning opportunities that you're providing people as well then that motivates then?**

P25: Yes, it’s very much so, all the [unclear 00:20:09] learn a great deal or they think they do and that's just as important you know. I think, I mean it’s flavour of the month isn't it, biodiversity conservation let’s be honest. You know [Name], global warming, even Phil the Greek popping off because he was quite a conservationist as well.

**INT: Yes, yes.**

P25: It’s flavour of the month so, if they can feel part of that, that's the critical thing. Instead of just reading that thing in the newspaper about snowdrops flowering early, they can now go, “Hey, I contributed to that” you see what I mean?

**INT: Yes, I do, yes.**

P25: And that is very important if you're going to get recording to work.

**INT: And so.**

P25: Now.

**INT: Sorry, carry on.**

P25: No, go on.

**INT: No, you carry on.**

P25: Well, I was going to just move on and say how this all relates to your primary objective.

**INT: Yes, yes.**

P25: I happen to think and you can ask all sorts of other people who might tell you different. But I happen to think [county] and [county] reporting is extremely efficient along with [COUNTY] who’s also quite efficient, we do pretty damn well. We've you know got I don't know, 350 people on the list which is a huge number of. We call them members but they're not really, they just have to register and they're on my email list for newsletters which means they're yes, a member as far as I’m concerned. So, 350 people is colossal, I mean most counties would be lucky if they muster 50 you know. Again, I think a lot of it is down to my personality, they think I’m an idiot, they like to get stuff past me.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: I take the piss out everybody, I don't care, I swear when I want to. And people tend to go, “Yes, you're right actually” [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: You know what I mean, it’s a sort of [laughs].

**INT: Yes, but I guess it’s the social side of things then as well.**

P25: It is a little bit yes, it’s like you know they know I’m doing this for fun. And well, I’m leaping up and down screaming abuse at people saying, “no you’ve done it wrong, do it this way, I want you to do that”. They will work three times harder. At the back of it they also know that I would just give up if I was them [laughs] and so, they want to please me. It’s an odd thing but, we’re getting way off topic again, but it’s relevant.

**INT: It is, yes.**

P25: Because it’s how it works. People who have an interest in moths who are resident in either [county] or [county] almost certainly know the existence of the group. Possibly of me but that's by the by. So, there's an awareness already and I do my utmost to rein in all these people, they send me an email as they often do you know, “I've seen a hummingbird hawkmoth in the garden”. I say, “Thank you” I always say, “Thank you” I think that's crucial, that's my generation’s thing, I always write thank you letters [laughs]. But you didn’t [unclear 00:23:29] so you’ve obviously got other generation that had to write thank you letters for every birthday present they receive.

**INT: [Laughs] my children certainly write thank you letters for everything they receive.**

P25: Too yes, yes I should think so too. But it’s a good, it’s courtesy and I thank people. I always end up the email with saying, “By the way we've got this electronic newsletter, would you like to subscribe to it, it costs nothing and you can stop at any time”. And they usually go, “Oo, yes please” and I probably never hear from them again. But you know you like to think they're getting information and passing it on to somebody else who’s read it over their shoulder or whatever.

So, I have tried to evolve all of the available talent that we have [unclear 00:24:16] but most of it is already signed up. Now, each one of those where they can afford it will want to buy a moth trap and record moths in their garden and it’s most of them. The motivation is that it’s their own garden, they want to know what they’ve got. Of course, in [county] it’s tricky because their garden is probably a window box looking over the High Street. But even so, they’re interested you know [unclear 00:24:46]. So, you’ve got the interest in everybody already and yet, we have these famous blank areas that we are concerned with. And I really don't know how you can, I mean if you want to [unclear 00:25:10] little or no data. Beyond “nature reserves” which are by definition theoretically at least interesting. And your own garden which again, by definition is of interest to you, why should they go to any other area and why would they?

**INT: And do you think that's particular to moths because of the issue of having equipment?**

P25: No, I don't think it is but I can only use moths as an example because you know. I know for instance, I have had great discussions with a chap called [Name] who is a spider recorder for [county]. And he wanted to know why we hadn’t got records from every tetrad in the county, you know what a tetrad is, yes?

**INT: Yes.**

P25: Yes, good I have to ask because some people don’t.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: He wanted to know why we don't have a [unclear 00:26:10] for something for every square of the county. And I said, “Don't be ridiculous you know, to get records I mean apart from occasionally finding a [unclear 00:26:20] you're not going to get much. You’ve got to put traps out, you’ve got to run lights, you’ve got to stay overnight, you go to all this effort”. And of course, he said, “Oh, you know you're not trying hard” what he does is he visits a [unclear 00:26:34], digs half a dozen holes in the ground and sets pitfall traps. Goes away and comes back a month later and he’s got loads and loads of spider records. The botanists don't fully understand it because they go out for a walk in their lunch hour and tick off 200 plant species from their local walk. Next day they go somewhere else and so on. So, with moths there is a lot of effort involved, that may translate to some other groups of course. Even when you come down to other groups of pretty invertebrates let’s say for example, hoverflies for which there is a huge following. You still don't get the same amount of effort required. You can more or less go for a walk on a Saturday afternoon with a net to your local woodland and record all the hoverflies that are out on that date. And tomorrow you can go to a different woodland. The hard part is getting that person to now go and visit a rubbish tip in Central [city] [laughs] because there's only three species there. And he doesn't particularly want to go and record them for you, he or she I should say. Oh, that throws up another issue of course, which is personal safety but that's a pretty separate issue. So, yes there's across the board differences, I can only really speak with authority on moths.

**INT: What about the lacewings then you know?**

P25: Well, it’s pretty much the same actually, there's not a lot to say. Lacewings are a sort of bycatch.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: Very few people go out looking for lacewings, they are caught when you're looking for other things like hoverflies. Or if you're running a light trap they come into the light and they get sent to me.

**INT: I see, okay.**

P25: It’s actually quite difficult to motivate people to go and look for lacewings in different, [unclear 00:28:43] huge gaps because there just isn't much interest. And if they go out in the middle of July which is probably the best month of the year, you're going to find oh, I don't know 25 species if you visit every single habitat in that square. Well, you're not are you, you're not going to do pine trees and oak trees and coastal sand dunes and open grassland all in one trip to one site. So, you're actually saying, “Well, if you go here instead of going here you might get 10 species” but you know what the answer to that is don't you? So, it’s a bycatch, it’s very much a bycatch.

**INT: Yes, I see, okay.**

P25: But it might be relevant you know because if you can make a bycatch into the interesting aspect then maybe that's the way to encourage people. You know I always say to the moth people don't forget lacewings. But I don’t have a following of lacewing recorders, I do have a following of moth recorders. So, yes and I also think it’s different at a national level, there's no way I’m going to drop everything and lead a field trip in Scotland this weekend, it’s not going to happen you know. But I might do a field trip to the local marsh if there's a gap you know.

**00:30:15**

**INT: Yes, so your field trips that you organise throughout the summer, they're based around filling those gaps on the map are they?**

P25: They were, we don't so much these days for a whole variety of reasons which are not particularly relevant for the conversation. But when we were working for the book which was published in 2008 yes, we ended up going out every weekend. And we were [unclear 00:30:40] writing the book, we went for geographical coverage across the county and we went for habitat coverage. So, we made sure we got the marsh and the deciduous and the coniferous and the heathland and whatever all ticked off. So, we had hopefully a complete list of the county's moths and also a good idea of the distribution of those across the county. And of course, you can never get a full distribution, don't forget distribution maps aren’t the end of it all, they are an indication. You know you can divide distribution maps into maybe only three or four different types. There's this moth is ubiquitous but it hasn’t been recorded for every square. You look at the map and you know it’s everywhere but you can’t, you haven't got the data. You’ve also then under that you’ve got widespread species so when you look at the maps for those you think *do you know what it’s giving Central [city] a miss*.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: You know I don’t blame it.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: [Laughs] but I mean you can infer that from the map so t’s not ubiquitous but it is widespread and quite common. And then you’ve got your sort of locally distributed things with dotted everywhere over the map. But they aren’t everywhere because you’ve looked for them you know. And then you’ve got your restricted species which are, these are only found on the chalk or this is only found in the river valleys and so on. There may be a few random rarities but I would suggest those are the only four categories that you are really likely to discover. And you don't need a complete distribution map to identify those categories. What it can do though if we take the last [unclear 00:32:31] river valleys, you can look at the map and say, “Right, we’ll it’s clear we've done enough recording to know that this is representative. What it’s saying to us is river valleys, this is a wetland species”. But, now you can take that a stage further and say, “Right well, in this northeastern sector it’s missing from a whole lot of the rivers”. Now, we can ask why, is that under recording or is that because the rivers are all concrete channels or [unclear 00:33:04] or whatever you know. You can start asking questions then.

**INT: And then would, once you’ve done that kind of level of interrogation, do you then think right *well, let’s go and record in these places and see if it is there*?**

P25: Very often yes, but it’s usually just me that does that because you know you're often going to places where well, I mean the reasons for them not being recorded are the same. They're either difficult to access or they're not very interesting but you know I might want to know if the thing is there. But it probably isn't and that's all there is of interest and nobody else really wants to go and look. In some cases, you might have to go and do the old trespass which you can’t do with a public group because you tend to get in trouble if you can’t run fast enough [laughs].

**INT: Yes [laughs].**

P25: That's the problem with moth trapping you see, my mate [NAME] who I mentioned with his spiders and his pitfalls traps. He can nip on almost any private estate and put his pitfall traps in but where would I put whacking great generator and a couple of 125 w lights?

**INT: YEs [laughs] it’s not subtle is it?**

P25: Gamekeepers materialise as if from the Star Trek Enterprise [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs] yes, yes.**

P25: So, yes you know there are all those aspects to consider. As I say other people, people who just wander around with a net catching [unclear 00:34:36], “Oh, don't worry about it, we just go, yes. We have an hour to record our stuff and if the gamekeeper catches us we don’t worry about it” you know. But you can’t do that with moths.

**INT: Yes, so you think you're probably the only person in [county] that would be going around doing that kind of targeted recordings.**

P25: Well, not the only person I mean there's a small core of us of course. You know over the years we have developed a few people that want to do it but it’s yes, it’s only, it’s single figures of people. Compared to 350 members it’s single figures who do the work.

**INT: The vast majority are just recording in their own gardens.**

P25: That is the main thing, yes which itself is quite telling you know it’s what people want to do, you can’t ignore it. What is interesting in the [county] Moth Group is that over the 20 years since we got it going we've kind of people come and go of course, you know. But the original 50 people that turned up on that first ever field trip in April 2000 I think probably about seven or eight are still with us, the rest have moved on. But it’s interesting how people have moved on, some younger people find mates and get married you know and new have the old when the young lads discover football and go off and all that sort of stuff. And then it’s interesting to see some of them come back to it later on. One or two have come to us as, I’m not going to name names because that would be unfair. But they come to us as beginners and gone away as experts and at least one is now a county recorder for another county.

**INT: Yes [laughs].**

P25: So, you know we like to think we've done a reasonable job on the people. We’re way, way away from your main area of interest, I realise.

**INT: No, no.**

P25: Just shout at me and drag me back.

**INT: No, it’s okay [laughs].**

P25: How did I cover your [unclear 00:36:52] areas, I don't know it in answer to that, do you have any ideas?

**INT: No, and I think I've mainly spoken to kind of butterfly recorders and I think that's, like you're saying it’s a lot easier ask of people isn't it?**

P25: Yes.

**INT: To go to a not particularly promising site and just have a quick wonder around and see if they can see anything. That's not taking so much of their time is it?**

P25: Yes, I mean even when we've had, it’s just occurred to me I've had a couple of places in [city] where we have gone to blank areas. One, was, just for the sake of discussion, was the [place] where we were able to run a moth trap from the top of one of the towers there. But health and bloody safety oh my god.

**INT: Yes, yes, yes.**

P25: So, you certainly couldn't stay on there overnight for security reasons apart from anything else in case you killed the Queen you know. But the health and safety of just putting the moth trap on top of the tower, oh my god. So, it’s a one man job he said misogynistically, it’s a one person job, sorry [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs] but you did touch on that issue before as well of safety.**

P25: Sorry say again, I lost you.

**INT: You know and asking people to go to places you can’t yes, I guess there's some level of responsibility isn't there that comes from asking people to go to places.**

P25: There is yes, well I’m afraid I've discovered over the years there is a difference between public outings and recording trips. When I set up, the local nature reserve says, “Oh, can we have a trip” and oh god, “Yes all right” you know. He’s taken up an advertisement in the newspaper and 1,000 turned up and you can’t do your recording. What you can do is get the kiddies interested, the kiddies are fascinated because they like all the moths. They’ll grab hold of the moths and put them in their ears and eat them and things whereas, the parents are standing about 50 years away and screaming in horror.

**INT: [Laughs] oh no.**

P25: I love that part [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: But yes, you get the kids interested but it’s not the same as recording. We do more recording two or three of us, we nip down to the local woods where the owner is just not going to allow a party of 20 people in. But if you say, “Can I come with a mate you know for health and safety reasons need two or three of us” he’ll go, “Yes, no problems” usually. And we get stuff done that way but it’s going to take years to fill in all the blanks in the county. I mean I've not done it but if I was to add up the number of woodlands that we've been into and the number of woodlands that we actually have it probably is quite a frightening discrepancy. Probably more woodlands that we've not been into than there are those which we have. And of course, woodlands is only one habitat you know, how do you record [unclear 00:40:05]. Like yesterday I was driving around purely coincidentally [unclear 00:40:12] a particular moth. And I was looking at isolated veteran oak trees in hedges in the arable desert because the moth feeds on oak tree well, it feeds on the gauze on oak trees. Because it was a pheromone you know you're attracting the males usually quite quickly. So, it was easy enough to do driving around the lanes, stopping near a veteran oak tree, trying to get off the road if you can. Wave the [unclear 00:40:43] for 10-15 minutes, either catch a moth or not and then move on. Now, there's an interest in that because it seems that the moth is preferring young oaks in woodlands rather than mature oaks in hedgerows. But how do you go about anything more complicated than that in a hedgerow in a narrow country lane in what is effectively an arable desert. Surrounded by go faster stripe cars you know [laughs] cars around the lanes at 60, 70 mph because it’s fun you know, you can’t.

**00:41:25**

**INT: Yes.**

P25: These are some of your more sort of ephemeral blank areas, it’s not necessarily map squares but it’s a whole habitat that's been neglected.

**INT: Yes, yes.**

P25: Sorry to depress you but there's another one to worry about [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs] yes, no these are all good questions and I do not have any answers to them I’m afraid. But it’s interesting to, it’s very interesting to hear what the challenges are.**

P25: [unclear 00:41:56] yes.

**INT: So, in terms of then what you do with the data, so obviously you produce the book and you’ve got your distribution maps. But you’ve talked quite a lot about then thinking about the “why” and using the data to understand a bit more about species’ preferences and things like that.**

P25: Well, that's the theory anyway.

**INT: So, what, are you then you know working with particular groups on those studies or passing on your observations to people?**

P25: What we did with the [county] Moth Club is that we, I say we, I created conservation status categories.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: Trying to suggest which species were worthy of conservation concern [unclear 00:42:47]. Now, I mean that's a fluid situation but we sort of set a baseline and that was published in 2008, records up to the end of 2006. We’re now getting on for 20 years out of date and interestingly enough we've added quite a few extra species for a variety of reasons, not all of which were [unclear 00:43:12]. Most of them are in fact new arrivals in the county, the changing for probably, he says, to do with climate change. And I recently, literally two weeks ago, prepared a paper updating the status of some of these species. And what we've also been able to do at the same time which is relevant to the question you just asked me. Is we've been able to update the conservation status of the county’s moths. Because once you’ve got a database and I should add a significant level of personal experience to interpret that, because that is quite important. You know we can now apply [unclear 00:43:59] conservation categories to the species and we can now say to the [wildlife charity], “Okay, guys where you are. As a minimum you should be doing this on your nature reserves but how [unclear 00:44:10] asks you a question you can ask him a question back and say how many moths of conservation concern have you found”? And it works because of course, we talk to [wildlife charity] because they know that we give them good information. And so, yes they are well, they're a bit slow to catch up with changes [laughs] but they do use our guidance. When on those rare occasions where there actually is a moth risk for a development site they will say to the developer, “Okay, can you analyse this please? How many moths of conservation concern on your site”? And they go, “oh [grumble] with their tails between their legs and commission a survey so it does work.

**INT: Yes, yes and are there other organisations then that you work with in that way or is it mainly the [wildlife charity]?**

P25: It’s mainly the [wildlife charity], in the previous life I was a consultant entomologist, between museum and retirement that's what I did.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: I analysed risks of invertebrates for developers. As I say now I don't do it because I’m retired but I still bully the developers in a different way [laughs].

**INT: Okay.**

P25: I think a lot of counties would aspire to that, don't forget all the county recorders, me included, are amateurs, we don't get paid for it.

**INT: Yes, no.**

P25: Some of the guys, I mean I know most of them, they're good guys, they couldn't tell their arse from their elbow if you came down to a conservation matter you know. They can do pretty maps and they can talk about a rare species but what does it mean?

**INT: Yes, but it stops there.**

P25: It stops there. And it doesn’t matter so much because you know the dataset itself is going to be historically important. You know in 50 years’ time people will look back and say, “Wow, was it really like that then”? But there is so much more they can be doing with it certainly you know.

**INT: Yes, and then does that come into what motivates you then as to why you're doing the recording? Is that what it comes down to for you, you want to see?**

P25: Well, yes for me yes as personal but yes, I am motivated by the conservation aspects of things. Not necessarily individual species you know, I’m not a tree hugger but the loss of a moth indicates some trouble with the habitat. And that is a much wider issue you know. Or loss of groups of moths is even more important so if you suddenly start losing the whole section of moths that are associated with the canopy of birch trees, you go, “Oh, what's happening here”? And you suddenly find that the lovely chaps at the [wildlife charity] have decided that birch trees suddenly they can remove from their woodlands [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Because they have some irrational desire to return all [unclear 00:47:28] types to ground zero. [unclear 00:47:32] there shall be no birch in this woodland [laughs] or they cut it all down. Because it conforms to a standard type we’re trying to conserve which is a problem. Now, that brings another issue to the fore doesn't it, the cross cooperation between groups. I've always had a beef with well, when I used to give talks which I don’t these days because I’m far too bone idle. But scrub clearance versus no clearance you know, the botanists and the entomologists come along and clear all the scrub that's invaded the down land so, butterflies can benefit. And then the birdwatchers [unclear 00:48:14], “Well, you just killed all our nightingales [laughs]”?

**INT: Yes.**

P25: “Please let the downs scrub over”. Now, you know where's your balance? How far back do you take to? Because I mean conservation is entirely artificial.

**INT: Yes [laughs].**

P25: It’s just a case of getting the environment how you think you'd like it.

**INT: Yes, but as a bit more of a generalist then do you think you’ve got a better kind of understanding?**

P25: [unclear 00:48:42] balance I mean if you go back far enough in time, Britain was covered in forest. And the only clearings [unclear 00:48:53] were when trees fell down or there was a fire well, that's not going to happen these days. And if you take it back beyond that period [unclear 00:49:05] period you know [unclear 00:49:09] half the forest down and built ships to go and kill the French [laughs]. You know you started to get heathland appearing, fantastic open expanses of heath like Hounslow Heath and the Heathrow where they opened the airport [laughs].

**00:49:30**

**INT: [Laughs] yes.**

P25: Which is one of the most interesting [unclear 00:49:37]. And of course, I don't know how well you know [city] but the Hammersmith marshes were the places [unclear 00:49:46] swallowtails.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: [Laughs] yes quite, now it's a bloody great flyover [laughs] and they’ve even closed down the Odeon. Saw many a rock group at the Hammersmith Odeon but neverminded, they’ll call me a [unclear 00:50:01] or something. So, you're taking it back to wherever you feel comfortable really so, that's almost always a balance.

**INT: Yes, yes.**

P25: So, I’d like to see the chalk down lands in northwest [county] back again but then again, all the scrub habitats that we did have in the south have gone anyway. Because you know people keep chopping them down and clearing them.

**INT: Right.**

P25: Burning them and whatever. Of course, burning [unclear 00:50:32] dead wood should be left where it is but everyone likes a bonfire including the conservation lot.

**INT: [Laughs] yes.**

P25: Yes, farmers want nice, neat square hedges, we want big, raggedy hedges that invade the fields full of blackberry. Which you know farmers cut out because it kills their [unclear 00:50:56] fungal infections of wheat.

**INT: Right.**

P25: So, you know there's no simple answer.

**INT: No.**

P25: In an area the size of the county you can try within reason to make sure there's a balance of all the different habits which should be there. But you can’t do it all again, I don't know if you know [county], you probably don't.

**INT: I used to live in [Town] actually.**

P25: Did you?

**INT: Yes.**

P25: Well, there you go well, you probably know that the entire northeast of [county] is a complete desert. It’s a rolling hillside area of arable nothingness.

**INT: Yes.**

P25: But then you ask yourself *hang on, the rolling hillside area what does that mean? Oh, gosh it was chalk down land, it’s chalk down land that's been ploughed up*. It’s what the South Downs will look like in 100 years’ time [laughs].

**INT: Oh, gosh [laughs] yes and then go somewhere like [Nature Reserve] and you think *well, this is what it would have been like I guess.***

P25: Yes, this is what it would have been like, yes you see the pasque flowers on [NATURE RESERVE] in April and you think *wow, yes this is nice*. [Laughs] is [NATURE RESERVE] a big enough patch? I don't think it is but.

**INT: No.**

P25: You’ve got [unclear 00:52:25] but they're not joined up.

**INT: No, no.**

P25: No, so my interest is in yes, the conservation side but I've always said you’ve got to have the data to be able to make decisions, you can’t second guess things.

**INT: And then do you get any sort of feedback about how your county’s data are used once they get passed onto the national scheme then?**

P25: Well, sometimes you hear, you just have to trust in those cases.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: [Laughs] you know I mean sometimes it goes to the wider picture. I mean [unclear 00:53:11] aware of.

**INT: Yes, I've got my granddad’s name in it a couple of times.**

P25: Excellent.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: No, the point is that was done in a particular way, pleased it was done in a particular way. Because it was decided early on that records would only be accepted for that if they came in the via the county moth recorder.

**INT: Right.**

P25: So, there was a deliberate policy of not bypassing us.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: It was also a cheap way of getting records validated because you wouldn’t send dodgy records [laughs] but it works. And of course, all the records for [county] and [county] that are in that book, they're not mine but they're via me. And so, yes you know we know we are contributing and the foot soldiers know because you tell them, that's what newsletters are for. You point out that this is possible because of their contribution. And whilst you can’t have 2.5 million names in the back of the book you know, they should know that their data was sent in against their name and has been used. And people do like that, it’s a nice feeling you know.

**INT: Yes, yes definitely and do you feel like you're at capacity with the verification side of things? Does it take up a significant portion of your time?**

P25: Oh, well [laughs] capacity, what's capacity [laughs]?

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: It’s a full time job let’s put it like that [laughs]. [Pause] I have well, yes there’s a whole range of things I've got, the top two or three guys and girls who kind of know what they're doing and I might ask them a question sometimes. Down to the private second class [unclear 00:55:07] who will send me 100 dirty little bits of dirt from the bottom of her moth trap. Half of which might be micro moths, the rest might be woodlice or spiders. And she’s say, “I can’t name these, can you name them for me” [laughs]?

**INT: Right, yes.**

P25: Yes [laughs] that is a pain in the proverbial. So, you look at them and you think *oh, really dr, der, der oh hang on, oh what's that one oh, bugger I’d better look* [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: And yes, I mean I just sent that particular perron a batch last week but it was from, when was it two years ago now, 19, yes. So, it’s taken me that long to get around to it because yes, those things [unclear 00:56:04] dissection because they’ve got no [unclear 00:56:06] left to look at. And so, you know it takes you an average I suppose of 15 minutes for each one so if she’s sent you 100 it’s a whole day, yes. So, you don't always feel like it when you get up in the morning, you don't go, “Oh, I’ll do her moths today” [laughs].

**INT: Yes, yes.**

P25: [Laughs] you start off and then you do something different because you get bored. So, I feel I’m wandering again, sorry.

**INT: No, it’s okay I mean I think I have, we've covered everything that's on my list in terms of topics. But is there anything that you want to say about how you record or why you record or anything else that you’ve not had a chance to say?**

P25: Not really, my only desires, I mean I get a lot of “students” asking me questions and I’m always well, not always rather usually happy to help. What I always say to every one of them is, “Do try and get a little bit of field experience before you write your report”. I've no idea where you're based, are you [COUNTY], no?

**INT: No, I’m in [city].**

P25: Oh, yes so you're still miles from me. Well, get in touch with [Name].

**INT: Yes, I've spoken to [Name], yes.**

P25: Yes, well get [Name] to invite you on a couple of field trips and meet the guys and see what sort of people are involved. And you can just see, leave your notepad at home, just take yourself. Have a chat, have a natter, have a drink just you know get to meet people and know then. You'll find out lots of subtle little things that you wouldn’t find out by interviewing people you know. I mean we could go on the rest of the day and for the next day you'd hear nothing new. And then suddenly at 15:00 you go, “oo, hang on that's interesting” you know but that isn't really cost effective. You need to get out there and make sure you’ve at least you know got some experience of the physical world. Rather than just writing a book, so many students and I’m not accusing you because I don't know you.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: So many students just sit there and they think they can write it, [unclear 00:58:33] oh I’m clever you know. And sadly, levels of scrutiny on theses these days it seems to be lower than it was a few years ago [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Mainly because I think they're taking copies that their tutors don't know anything about. But no, I just make the point you know you can make a useful contribution here, don't spoil it by just doing it on paper is all I would say.

**INT: Yes, well I mean our intention was to do a lot more in person and obviously, the pandemic has put.**

P25: That badgered things up completely hasn’t it, yes?

**INT: Yes, so we had got a whole series of workshops and you know in person workshops and things planned. And kind of, and it was actually the intention that we would do some of these interviews in the field rather than [laughs] obviously over Zoom.**

P25: Yes.

**00:59:31**

**INT: So, yes the situation is not helped with that. But I mean I did used to sit on the [wildlife charity] Committee and I used to work for the [wildlife charity]. And I have set up a transect so I am like slightly embedded in the real world as well [laughs].**

P25: Yes, yes well no I’m not criticising this at all as I say but just make sure you don't fall into that trap is all I'm saying. Because people do, admittedly most of them are a bit younger than you.

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Still sort of you know the undergraduates are the worst [laughs]. But you know the younger ones who don't have any sort of life experience are the ones who think they know it all usually. Of course, they don't.

**INT: No [laughs].**

P25: [Laughs] and of course, you can’t tell them because their lack of life experience means they don't understand, it’s a vicious circle. But you I’m sure know what I’m talking about so yes.

**INT: Yes, well thank you so much for your time, I really do appreciate it.**

P25: That's no problem, if you're down this way visiting [TOWN] or whatever you're welcome to drop in.

**INT: Yes, so I used to, I was conservation officer for the [wildlife charity] in [county] for a while.**

P25: Oh, right well there you go.

**INT: Yes, and so, that's when I was living in [TOWN], I was working up in [county]. But my sister is in [city] actually, she is in [Neighborhood] so we do go down there quite a lot.**

P25: That's not very far away really, [Neighborhood] of course, is [county] and so, I shall expect lots of moth records from her garden [laughs].

**INT: Well, her, do you know what I was just thinking as we were talking because her little boy, her son he is nearly six and he is just absolutely into anything wildlife related.**

P25: Oh, right.

**INT: And I was thinking actually, I should just get them a cheap moth trap that they could run in the garden. And you know when you were saying about children seeing moths up close like that, actually, that would be a really good thing to get him into that I think.**

P25: Well, give me a ring, you’ve got my number obviously because you're on it. What's her name?

**INT: My sister’s name is [Name].**

P25: [Name], I’ll try and remember it but I’ll probably forget, get her to give me a ring and ask me about moth traps. I might be able to help her out with something.

**INT: Yes, okay, I don't know what it’s like because she lives on the [neighbourhood] so obviously well, like anywhere in [city] it’s all densely populated. So, I don't know about the light traps, whether they're, I guess they're.**

P25: Well, she’ll need a [unclear 01:02:20] trap not a big light trap. There are other people trapping in [Neighborhood].

**INT: Okay.**

P25: Including, you mentioned [city], including a Prof from the University of [city].

**INT: Oh, right okay.**

P25: Who lives in [Neighborhood], name has gone from me, [Name].

**INT: Okay.**

P25: [Name], Professor of something, something ephemeral like geography or something [laughs]. But yes, I mean get her to give me a ring no problems.

**INT: Okay.**

P25: Afternoons or early evenings, definitely not first thing in the morning. And I can probably, I say probably because I haven't checked, but I could probably sort her out some sort of cheap equipment to yes, on loan sort of thing. If he decides he likes they can get, if not they can give it back to me.

**INT: Yes, that would be lovely, thank you so much, that's really appreciated. Because I think they would absolutely love that, yes.**

P25: Well, yes I mean I don't, when she phones she needs to remind me who she is.

**INT: Yes, I will let her know, yes.**

P25: You know your sister because I do get a lot of people phoning me up [unclear 01:03:38] sorry I can’t help because I spent some money. But just occasionally I break the rules, I try and be nice to people [laughs].

**INT: [Laughs].**

P25: Doesn't happen very often but you know, hey.

**INT: Thank you, that is much appreciated, I will let her know.**

P25: Right you are, okay well I’ll leave you to write up your notes or whatever.

**INT: Yes, okay.**

P25: Equally, if you’ve got any more queries give me another ring.

**INT: Okay, lovely.**

P25: All right?

**INT: That's great, thank you so much.**

P25: Yes, cheers bye now.

**INT: Okay then, bye bye.**

**[Audio ends: 1:04:11]**