

The NBN Gateway and the Freshwater Biological Association – working together to help recorders

The Freshwater Biological Association (FBA) is creating stronger links with the NBN through a number of collaborative ventures. In the last edition of NBN News the appointment of Dr Michael Dobson as the new FBA Director was announced and in this follow-up article we aim to expand on the FBA's complimentary role to NBN in supporting freshwater recorders and enthusiasts.

As a membership organisation the FBA has always promoted freshwater science through support for members, enthusiasts and the naturalist community with training courses, expert advice, its renowned freshwater library and the publication of authoritative identification keys. In 2001, the *FreshwaterLife* initiative was launched. *FreshwaterLife* uses modern technology and the internet to build on the traditional strengths of the FBA (www.freshwaterlife.org). The website connects a user to a wealth of information about freshwater animals and plants, their habitats and ecology, images and a vast array of data sources, whilst electronic keys take advantage of multimedia and technology to create a more natural learning experience. As a collaborative venture *FreshwaterLife* welcomes information sharing and is a channel for experts and enthusiasts from the global freshwater community to post information and data and communicate ideas.

In late 2005, with the encouragement of the NBN, the Association determined to develop a specific programme to provide assistance to freshwater recorders. After a successful proposal to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, a two year project started in July 2006. The project helps to sustain and extend existing schemes and active recorders, and encourage new ones, through the provision of support tools, workshops and training. The FBA's dedicated facilities at Windermere in the Lake District and on the River Frome in Dorset have provided the ideal settings for invertebrate identification courses. In addition the FBA is continuing to develop identification keys, specialist publications and quick guides especially tailored to the needs of recorders. There will also be provision for further training in communications and fundraising aimed to support recording schemes and coordinators. Shortly the FBA will be announcing a fund to make small grants available to help recorders with the expense of visits, fieldwork and equipment.

An important part of the remit to support freshwater recorders is to look at the flow of data from individual recorders to the NBN gateway. Working with individual recording schemes, the Biological Records Centre, Local Records Centres and the NBN Gateway itself, the FBA are exploring the possibilities of simplified data recording for volunteers, with the potential for collaborating to develop online recording. This builds on the FBA's historic custodian role of maintaining and archiving freshwater data sets.

Recently, there has been a welcomed increase in direct liaison between the NBN and the FBA. An FBA representative now sits on the NBN Trust Council and technical links are well developed with visits and exchanges between

FBA and JNCC/NBN staff. One of the facets of this work has developed through working with the NBN Technical Liaison Officer, leading to more sophisticated links between the FBA's information systems and data and NBN data. The aim of linking these complementary systems is to supplement the diverse freshwater information on *FreshwaterLife* with live NBN maps displaying wildlife data and to enhance NBN maps with contextual freshwater ecological information.

New initiatives bring fresh enthusiastic support into focus. The FBA is a partner in one such project, the Riverfly Partnership, which taps into the wealth of knowledge and energy of the angling community, and its concern about the flylife on British rivers. The intention is to build on the success of the Riverfly Partnership by extending this model to cover the stillwaters of this country.

Freshwaters are vitally important. With climate change, ever increasing exploitation and other impacts threatening rivers lakes and ponds throughout the world, we need data to help us manage these systems. Established recording schemes and individuals have already provided a great deal of valuable information. The new recorders and schemes programme intends to assist recorders in making an even bigger contribution, so that our environment can be more effectively managed for the future.

The Freshwater Biological Association

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FreshwaterLife Species Collection



Coregonus albula, (Linnaeus, 1758)


Synonyms

- *Coregonus albula*,
- *Coregonus vandesius*, Richardson, 1836
- *Vendace*,

UK Distribution Map for Vendace (*Coregonus albula*)

provided by Biological Records Centre

[Database for the Atlas of Freshwater Fishes](#)



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A screenshot from FwL displaying the NBN maps



Experts making good use of the jetty, on the Recorders course at Windermere



L Miles, FBA

Examining organisms on the lake shore on an identification training course



M Fletcher, FBA

Using novel equipment (as fashioned by Ian Wallace) to observe stream life