

LET'S TALK ABOUT DATA

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Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



National
Trust



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH



University of
BRISTOL



WOODLAND
TRUST



BioBlitz

FESTIVAL
OF NATURE





- Introducing people to wildlife and green space
- Introducing people to recording
- Developing skills and knowledge
- Gathering biological data



BREADTH





Where does the data go? Is it useful?

Existing narratives

- **Confident** *Yes, it is all useful because...*
- **Tentative** *Well...it depends...*
- **Detailed** *Here are all the places this data could go and why...*
- **Simple** *This data will go from here and could be used like this...*

Conflicting
narratives

Recorder
identity

Multiple
platforms

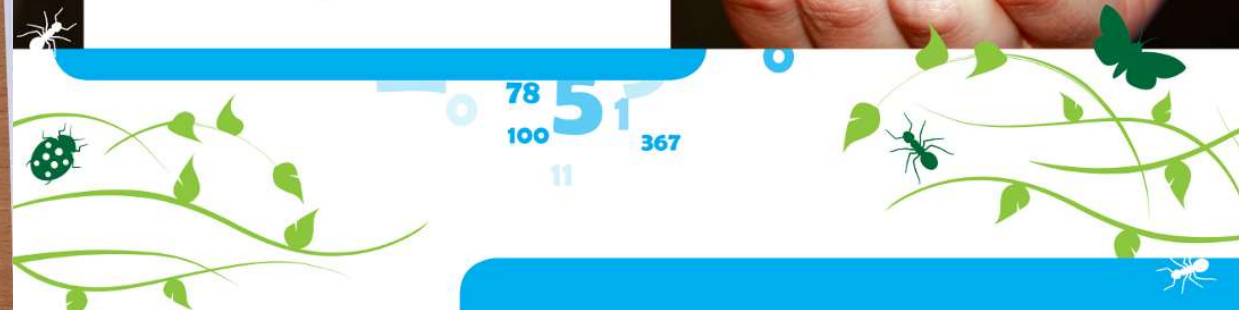
THE NEED

more cohesive communications around data
management and quality



Let's Talk About Data

Communication principles
for the wildlife recording
community



BioBlitz

bioblitzuk.org.uk

Rules of engagement

- **Keep it simple**
- Stay positive
- **Encourage, don't enforce**
- Show me
- **Share stories**

Reframing the story

- **Awareness** – *Look what we do!*
- **Confidence** – *You can do it too! AND we can help you!*
- **Value** – *Look what comes out of it! AND here's how you can make sure your sightings can contribute!*
- **Belonging** – *Look at all these great people doing the same thing!*
- **How** – *Here's how to do it really well! Look at all these helpful gadgets you can use!*

What type of recorder could you be?

THE SPECIALIST



Primarily interested in one or two different taxonomic groups. The Specialist is keen on building up their knowledge and ID skills and could be anywhere along their learning journey from beginner to expert.

Although they have their favourite haunts, The Specialist is keen to observe their chosen group wherever they are and may cover a wide geographic area.

WHERE TO FIND KINDRED SPIRITS

There is a lot of support out there where The Specialist can find like-minded folk only too keen to share specific knowledge and skills. This helps to **build confidence** to identify and record valuable data points.

- Online special interest communities – e.g. [UK Hoverflies on Facebook](#)
- Local naturalists special interest groups – [Find Nature Groups Near You through the Natural History Museum](#)
- Special interest organisations
- Training courses and workshops– [Find a great selection through the Field Studies Council](#)

WHAT TO DO WITH RECORDS

The Specialist may be best suited to recording for a **National Recording Scheme or Society**. These special interest groups host the most in depth knowledge about their chosen taxonomic groups and can offer tailored advice and support.

[Find National Recording Schemes and Societies on the National Biodiversity Network \(NBN\) website.](#)

Many schemes and societies send their data on to the NBN where it contributes to national databases and the NBN Atlas. Make sure you ask your scheme whether they will pass on your data.

YOUR RECORDS MAKE GOOD THINGS HAPPEN

One of the strongest motivators for recorders is a sense of contribution so it is important to highlight specific examples of the amazing outputs that come from people submitting records. The Specialist may be especially keen to contribute towards:

- [Species Atlases](#)
- Specialist research
- [State of Nature Reports](#)



THE LOCAL



The Local devotes their energies to a particular space or region, observing wildlife as another way to engage with their favourite patch.

The Local may have a preference for certain taxonomic groups but is generally keen to observe anything that shows up on their territory and develop a wide generalist knowledge over time.

WHERE TO FIND KINDRED SPIRITS

There is a lot of support out there where The Local can find like-minded folk only too keen to share knowledge and skills. This helps to build confidence to identify and record valuable data points.

- Local naturalists special interest groups – [Find Nature Groups Near You through the Natural History Museum](#)
- Local Wildlife Trust – [Find yours here](#)
- Local museum collections – [Find a museum](#)
- Training courses and workshops – [Find a great selection through the Field Studies Council](#)

WHAT TO DO WITH RECORDS

The Local may be best suited to recording for a **Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC)**. These regional institutions collect species and habitat data for a specific area and hold the most detailed local knowledge. They are often well connected locally and can offer tailored advice and support.

[Find your Local Environmental Records Centre through ALERC.](#)

Many records centres send their data on to the NBN where it contributes to national databases and the NBN Atlas. Makes sure you ask your LERC whether they will pass on your data.

YOUR RECORDS MAKE GOOD THINGS HAPPEN

One of the strongest motivators for recorders is a sense of contribution so it is important to highlight specific examples of the amazing outputs that come from people submitting records. The Local may be especially keen to contribute towards:

- Local planning policy and decision making
- Site management and conservation designations (SNCI, LNR, etc.)
- Habitat mapping
- Systematic recording and long term monitoring



THE PSL (Pan Species Lister)



The Pan Species Lister (or PSL) is an example of the all-round naturalist and competitive recorder. Keen to build their life list of species and annual records count, The PSL goes above and beyond to identify and record everything they see.

The PSL may lean towards certain taxonomic groups and likely have their favourite stomping grounds, but is keen to observe anything, anywhere from mountaintops to car parks. Although The PSL may or may not be highly expert, the intensity of Pan Species Listing helps develop a strong generalist knowledge bank over time.

WHERE TO FIND KINDRED SPIRITS

There is a lot of support out there where The PSL can find like-minded folk only too keen to share knowledge and skills alongside a dose of healthy competition. This helps to build confidence to identify and record valuable data points.

- Competitive recorder communities – [Find out more](#)
- Online communities – e.g. [iSpot communities](#)
- Training courses and workshops – [Find a great selection through the Field Studies Council](#)

WHAT TO DO WITH RECORDS

The Pan Species Lister may find **online platforms** (e.g. iRecord) the best way to database their records. These platforms offer a valuable data management tool and a useful catch-all for records, but your data may not be immediately available to end users.

Find out more about iRecord at: www.brc.ac.uk/irecord
If not using iRecord, be sure to check that your chosen platform sends all verified data on to the NBN where it contributes to national databases and the NBN Atlas.

YOUR RECORDS MAKE GOOD THINGS HAPPEN

As well as building their own personal lists, one of the strongest motivators for recorders is a sense of contribution, so it is important to highlight specific examples of the amazing outputs that come from people submitting records. The PSL may be especially keen to contribute towards:

- [Species Atlases](#)
- [Specialist research](#)
- [State of Nature Reports](#)
- Systematic recording and long term monitoring



THE GENERALIST



The Generalist is specifically non-specific, dipping into lots of different taxonomic groups without going into too much detail. Keen to build knowledge and skills at their own pace and follow wherever their interest takes them, The Generalist may shun the label of 'expert' and be very aware of what they do not know as much as what they do know.

Tending to favour more 'visible' or highlight species from a variety of taxonomic groups, the experience of being in nature may be more important to The Generalist than the act of recording itself.

WHERE TO FIND KINDRED SPIRITS

There is a lot of support out there where The Generalist can find like-minded folk only too keen to share knowledge and skills. This helps to build confidence to identify and record valuable data points. The Generalist may or may not wish to dip in and out of special interest groups or make local connections to give their activities more structured context.

- **BioBlitz events** – public engagement events where new recorders can get a taste of different recording techniques and different taxonomic groups
- Online special interest communities – e.g. [UK Hoverflies on Facebook](#)
- Training courses and workshops – [Find a great selection through the Field Studies Council](#)

WHAT TO DO WITH RECORDS

If most of their recording is confined to a particular region, The Generalist may find recording for a **Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC)** the most directly rewarding data pathway. For records outside their usual stomping grounds they may find **online platforms** (e.g. iRecord) useful as a catch-all.

[Find your Local Environmental Records Centre through ALERC.](#)

Find out more about iRecord at: www.brc.ac.uk/irecord

Be sure to check that your chosen platform will pass your data on to the NBN where it contributes to national databases and the NBN Atlas.

YOUR RECORDS MAKE GOOD THINGS HAPPEN

One of the strongest motivators for recorders is a sense of contribution, so it is important to highlight specific examples of the amazing outputs that come from people submitting records. The Generalist may be especially keen to contribute towards:

- The national overview of species and habitats ([NBN Atlas](#))
- Engaging others in biological recording through public activities and education
- Local planning policy and decision making
- Site management and conservation designations (SNCI, LNR, etc.)



THE NEWBY



The Newby is just starting their recording journey and yet to decide what kind of recording they would like to take part in. With, at most, a rudimentary knowledge of how to record effectively, this is a key point to set in good habits for collecting, submitting and managing their records.

Whether they go on to become a Specialist, Local, PSL or Generalist, The Newby will need support and encouragement to build their confidence and sense of value in the records that they contribute.

WHERE TO FIND KINDRED SPIRITS

There is a lot of support out there where The Newby can find like-minded folk only too keen to share knowledge and skills. This helps to build confidence to identify and record valuable data points. The Newby may want to dip into any of the support networks for the other 4 profiles but may particularly benefit from:

- **BioBlitz events** – public engagement events where new recorders can get a taste of different recording techniques and different taxonomic groups
- Online communities – e.g. **iSpot communities**
- Training courses and workshops – **Find a great selection through the Field Studies Council**

WHAT TO DO WITH RECORDS

Helping The Newby identify the kind of recording they are most interested in will guide which data pathways will work best for them. **Test out the 4 profiles and see what would work best for you.**

Find National Recording Schemes and Societies on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) website.

Find your Local Environmental Records Centre through ALERC.

Find out more about iRecord at: www.brc.ac.uk/irecord

Be sure to check that your chosen platform will pass your data on to the NBN where it contributes to national databases and the NBN Atlas.

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One of the strongest motivators for recorders is a sense of contribution, so it is important to highlight specific examples of the amazing outputs that come from people submitting records. The Newby may be especially keen to contribute towards:

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FAQs and how to handle them

So what is a wildlife record? - When you see, hear or find positive evidence of a species presence in a particular place – that is a ‘wildlife sighting’. We want to convert those sightings into viable wildlife records that are entered into an appropriate database. To do that we need:

- WHO - A record of who made the sighting (so we can check back with them if needs be)
- WHAT - A positive species identification (perhaps backed up with a photo)
- WHERE - The location of the sighting (usually in the form of a grid reference or GPS point)
- WHEN - The date of the sighting

Once this data is entered into a database in the Local Environmental Records Centre or National Recording Scheme it becomes an official ‘wildlife record’. Until the data reaches this point it has very limited value to the scientific and conservation community so it is really important that we follow the full process and not just leave our sightings in a draw somewhere.

Sorry, I’m no expert – There’s no shame in that! We are all learning and with thousands of species in the UK alone, nobody knows everything! The important thing is to try your best and you’ll pick up so much over time. There is a big, supportive community of fellow recorders out there very willing to help.



What if I’m wrong? – Some species are very difficult to distinguish and everyone makes mistakes. That is how we learn and build confidence in our ID and data collection skills. There is lots of help out there and Local Records Centres and National Recording Schemes sense check your records to make sure they are valid (have all the right info) and verified (likely to have the correct species ID).

What If I’m not sure? – The best way to build your knowledge is taking the time to confirm your sighting either by researching independently or with the help of fellow recorders. What’s really important is not to guess or go for the picture that looks closest in the field guide. For many groups there are lots of species that superficially look very similar and an incorrect record should be screened out in data verification (see [what if I’m wrong?](#)).



THE FEEDBACK

- What jumps out as most useful/ interesting?
- What is missing?
- What positive outcomes can you see?

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/82X77HG>

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