

Nature monitoring

About this guide

Traditionally, most biological records come from highly expert and dedicated naturalists who spend a large amount of time surveying and identifying a wide range of plant and animal species. However, the rise of citizen science has led to the ever-increasing development of smart phone apps that help identify and record nature.

Using these will help anyone with no matter what levels of identification skills they have to observe and record what is in their area and build a picture of any changes in species and abundance.



Ways to monitor nature

Smartphone apps:

There are dedicated apps and websites for all types of wildlife spotting, whether it's birds, trees, plants, or insects. If you encounter something interesting – a bird, a beetle, or a wildflower, take a photo on your camera phone. Today, most smartphones will automatically capture the date and exact location. Apps like [Merlin](#) record audio of bird songs for easier bird identification. The [UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology](#) offers an extensive list of the apps available.

Use google lens:

Google Lens compares objects in your picture with searchable images. Another easy way to identify what you've spotted.

Install a trail camera:

If you have a large garden or grounds, you may want to consider adding trail cameras. This record 24/7 capturing those sometimes-surprising wildlife visits that happen when you're not around.

Ways to record nature

Keep a wildlife record:

Apps like [inaturalist](#) and [irecord](#) are an easy way to monitor and record the wildlife you see. You can include species, location, time, weather conditions, abundance and gender. Every upload provides valuable data that helps build a picture of the state of nature in the UK today.

Join a count:

There are county recording organisations all over the UK and Ireland, and a quick web search will put you in contact with your nearest one. The Natural History Museum, in London alongside many regional museums and nature charities, such as the RSPB, BTO, Plant life, Bug life and the Mammal Society also ask the public to take part in annual surveys and counts. The [National Biodiversity Network](#) website allows you to search for wildlife surveys and biological recording schemes.

Measure the change:

Don't forget to keep a note of your conservation activities so you can see what's making the greatest difference.