

How to make a wildlife record – the basics

Most people enjoy seeing wildlife, but how much do you notice of what you see?

Whether it is the seasonal changes of the flowers when you are out walking, feeding the garden birds, or insects pollinating your garden flowers. Few people keep a note of what they see, and fewer still submit records to be added to the information already held.

It is rewarding and interesting to keep wildlife records and it is important for conservation that we hear about local wildlife. Without it, we simply wouldn't know what wildlife we have and what is special about each place.



There are four ingredients to a useful wildlife record...

What: What have you seen? It is best to use both the Latin name and common name if you know, but don't worry if you don't. Take a photo, if possible, to help with any queries over identification. If in doubt, you can contact one of the Wharfedale Naturalist recorders – email and telephone details are in the summer/winter programme on the events page.



Where: Give as much detail as possible. Grid references are preferred, at least a six-figure, which you can estimate from an Ordnance Survey map. Alternatively, free grid reference apps, such as 'GB Grid' are now available for smart phones, and many naturalists also own hand-held GPS devices.



It is also useful to give a place name, as well as a grid reference. eg: not just SE 985 66, but also 'Grass Wood, near Grassington'.



When: Be specific about the date of your sighting i.e. day, date, month, and year, and in some instances time might be useful.

Who: It is important to provide the details of who took the record with their contact details, so that the recorder can get in touch to obtain further information if necessary.



Other Information: Depending on what you are recording, it might be of value to add further information. The list of possibilities is endless, but here are a few examples. eg:

Birds or Mammals – number, including gender if known, activity at time of recording.

Insects – again number, including gender if known, but also stage in life-cycle egg, larva, pupa, or adult.

Plants – this may require a ten-digit grid reference, if there is just a small isolated colony. It might also be worth adding if the plant was in a vegetative state, flowering or in fruit.

Where to send your records: This will depend upon the type of animal or plant you are recording. eg: birds tend to be recorded on the BTO BirdTrack site, while plants are recorded by our own recorder. If in doubt, contact the appropriate recorder for advice.

Next time you go out for a walk, don't forget your notebook, pencil, binoculars, and hand lens. We would love to hear from you.