



General ecological field surveys

Our countryside is home to some amazing plants, animals and habitats, and many of them are protected by law. Knowing exactly where they are is vital to making sure we can take steps to avoid them or keep any impact to a minimum. We use qualified ecologists to survey potential habitats, feeding or breeding areas. This includes looking across an extended area; to identify any potential wider repercussions of our work, or any opportunities to enhance conservation value where we can.

Surveys need to be done at the right time of day (or night) and the right time of year, depending on what we're looking for. Our ecologists work in pairs, on foot and are licensed and practised at carrying out surveys and handling wildlife. Great care is taken so that species are not harmed, but we occasionally trap animals humanely before releasing them back into the wild. Some species

are so rare they're protected by law so we need to do specific surveys for each one.

Surveying vegetation

These general non-intrusive surveys help us identify and record plant species and areas of key interest. They are carried out on foot during the summer months, where possible before the hay is cut in June/July.

Specific species surveys

Badgers: Badgers are nocturnal mammals and are rarely seen during the day. They live below ground in tunnels and chambers called setts although they venture out at night in search of food such as insects, worms, grain and fruit. Surveys can be carried out throughout the year, but are best done in winter when there is less vegetation. They involve walking along field boundaries and hedgerows to identify setts, latrines, paths between setts and feeding areas, scratching posts, hair traces and footprints.

Dormice: Dormice are small nocturnal mammals, which live in woodlands and hedgerows. They forage on nuts, flowers, fruit and insects and hibernate in the winter when food is scarce. Our surveys will involve installing nest tubes in hedgerows and woodlands and monitoring them once a month between April and November. As a European Protected Species, these surveys are carried out by licenced ecologist.

Bats: Bats are flying mammals which roost individually or in colonies during the day and feed

at night. Bats roost in buildings, bridges, trees and caves and feed in places like woodland, scrub, farmland, hedgerows, waterways and gardens. Before we can carry out any bat monitoring we need to find out where they roost and forage by inspecting trees and buildings closely for their bat roost potential. This is usually done during the day using ladders, an endoscopes and a powerful torch. Very tall trees will be climbed by specially trained ecologists. We also assess whether bats forage on farmland during the night. The surveys take place during dusk and dawn, from May through to August or September and involves ecologists watching for bats moving to and from buildings and trees. Bat surveys will also involve catching bats with nets for radio-tracking to identify where they are flying. Many of these surveys (such as roost inspections) are carried out by licenced ecologists due to the fact that bats are a European protected species

Birds: All birds are protected during their breeding season, and surveys are carried out to identify those locations. These surveys involve walking around relevant areas between March and July to look for bird breeding activity. Certain areas are also important for wintering birds, and therefore wintering bird surveys are also carried out between October and March to identify these areas. A barn owl survey may also be carried out by surveying buildings and trees during the day.

Reptiles: Reptiles are protected under UK law and inhabit a variety of habitats, particularly rough grassland and moorland. They are active through the summer months (April – October) and then hibernate in mammal burrows, stone walls or log piles during the winter. They are cold blooded animals and as such use the sun's warmth to heat up. Surveys exploit this need with the aid of

artificial refugia (an area in which a population of organisms can survive through a period of unfavourable conditions) these are placed in appropriate sunny locations and checked regularly by experienced surveyors.

Data collected through the variety of surveys is used to identify the presence or absence of a species within the survey area. If a protected species is found to be present, appropriate further survey or mitigation will be recommended in line with best practise.

Badger Set



Badger Paw print



Adder - Reptile

Dormouse



Lizard - Reptile