



Great Somerset Wildlife Count

Introduction

Reports of wildlife loss, such as the 2020 Living Planet released by the WWF, continue to highlight the perils our natural world is experiencing. Combined with extreme climatic events as a result of anthropogenic global warming, the species and ecosystems on this planet face unprecedented pressures from a human-caused extinction event. But it's not just the loss of individual species that are a problem, it's also the loss of abundance within a wide range of species and degradation of ecosystems as a whole.

Here at SERC, we currently hold over 3 million data records. However, the majority of these are focused on protected or rare species. We have a lack of knowledge about the more common species in Somerset and so are not able to monitor trends in numbers or geographical spread. At the moment, we can't tell what is happening to hedgehogs, blackbirds, bumblebees etc because these species are not focused on and not in areas outside of Somerset's best habitats.

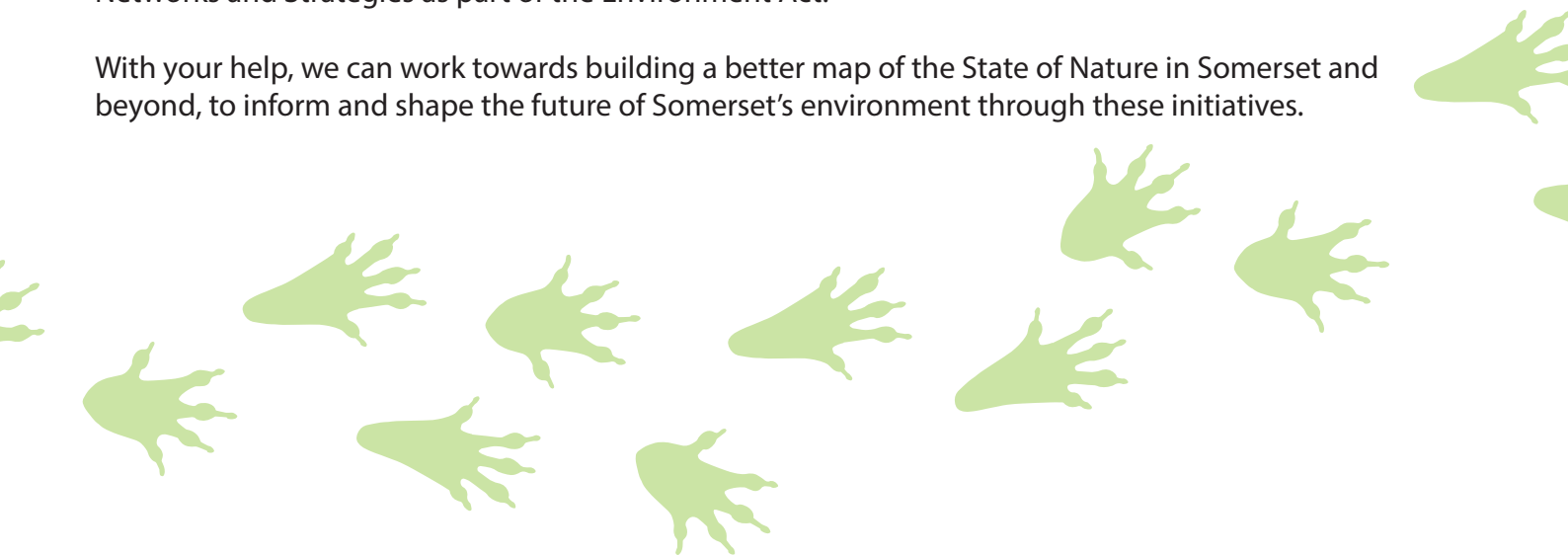
To try and address this, SERC & SWT will work together quarterly to deliver a seasonal community science survey to monitor abundance levels of common species across Somerset. Each season will focus on a different set of common species (moths, amphibians, pollinators etc) or iconic species such as swifts. The team will develop easy to use spotting sheets, similar to RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch, and invite people across Somerset to take part over a designated weekend, recording their results and sending to SERC.

This data over time will enable SERC to monitor abundance trends across Somerset and will support a new Somerset County Council initiative called the 'Somerset State of Nature'. This is a long-term project, ten years plus, and the quarterly surveys will need to be repeated annually for the same species so have needed to be chosen carefully at the outset.

Other initiatives will be developed separately, and we have already started to discuss work with some of our specialist groups to monitor trends in more specialist species.

Several big projects are happening at the moment, with the government introducing biodiversity net gain into the planning and development system, and the movement to develop Nature Recovery Networks and Strategies as part of the Environment Act.

With your help, we can work towards building a better map of the State of Nature in Somerset and beyond, to inform and shape the future of Somerset's environment through these initiatives.



Autumn Species Identification

Goldfinch

Category

Finches and buntings

Statistics

Length: 12-14cm

Wingspan: 24cm

Weight: 17g

Average lifespan: 2 years

Did you know?

The collective noun for a group of goldfinches is a 'charm'!



Common Frog

Category

Amphibians

Statistics

Length: 8-13cm

Weight: 22g

Average lifespan: 5-10 years

Did you know?

Frogs can spawn as early as December or as late as April depending on the weather!



European Hedgehog

Category

Mammal

Statistics

Length: 15-30cm

Tail: 1-2cm

Weight: up to 2kg

Average lifespan: 2-3 years

Did you know?

Hedgehogs are known for their ability to roll themselves into a ball of spines when threatened.

These spines are actually modified hairs and the average hedgehog has about 7000 of them, which can be raised using powerful muscles along their back.



Honey Fungus

Category

Fungi

Statistics

Growth: upto 1 m per year underground

Mushrooms: Late summer to autumn

Number of different species in UK: 7

Did you know?

The largest known organism (of a species of Honey Fungus) covers more than 3.4 square miles (8.8 km²) in Oregon's Malheur National Forest and is more than 2,400 years old!



Painted Lady

Category

Butterflies

Statistics

Wingspan: 5.8-7.4cm

Did you know?

The painted lady is one of the most widespread species of butterfly, found right across the world with the exception of South America. The Australian type is classified by some as a different species.



Redwing

Category

Thrushes, chats, flycatchers, starling, dipper and wren

Statistics

Length: 21cm

Wingspan: 34cm

Weight: 63g

Average lifespan: 2 years

Did you know?

A tiny population of redwings breed in the UK, but most of our birds come from Iceland and Scandinavia in the winter.



Methodology

Whether you've spotted one of these in your garden, on a dog or countryside walk, or even on a bike ride, getting that sighting recorded is going to be helpful.

We have a special web page dedicated to collecting the sightings made for the Great Somerset Nature Watch, but if you're unable to, they don't need to be uploaded to the website as soon as you've seen it, just make a note on a piece of paper, on the recording form we provide, or even as a note on your phone.

What we will need is a date, a location, the name of the species you saw and the number of individuals you saw. You can record the location any way you feel comfortable, you just need to be able to recall where you saw it when uploading your record, there's a handy map on the SERC page to help you. Recommended ways of recording your location include Dropping a pin on Google or Apple Maps, a British National Grid reference, a Lat Lon from your GPS on your phone, a what3words location (an easy to use location app available for Android and iOS), or even the name of a street and town. The online SERC map allows you to search for your location via British National Grid, Lat Lon and by placename.

The survey will run for 48hrs and the trick to recording is trying not to record the same individual twice and not on the same day.

Examples for guidelines on recording include:

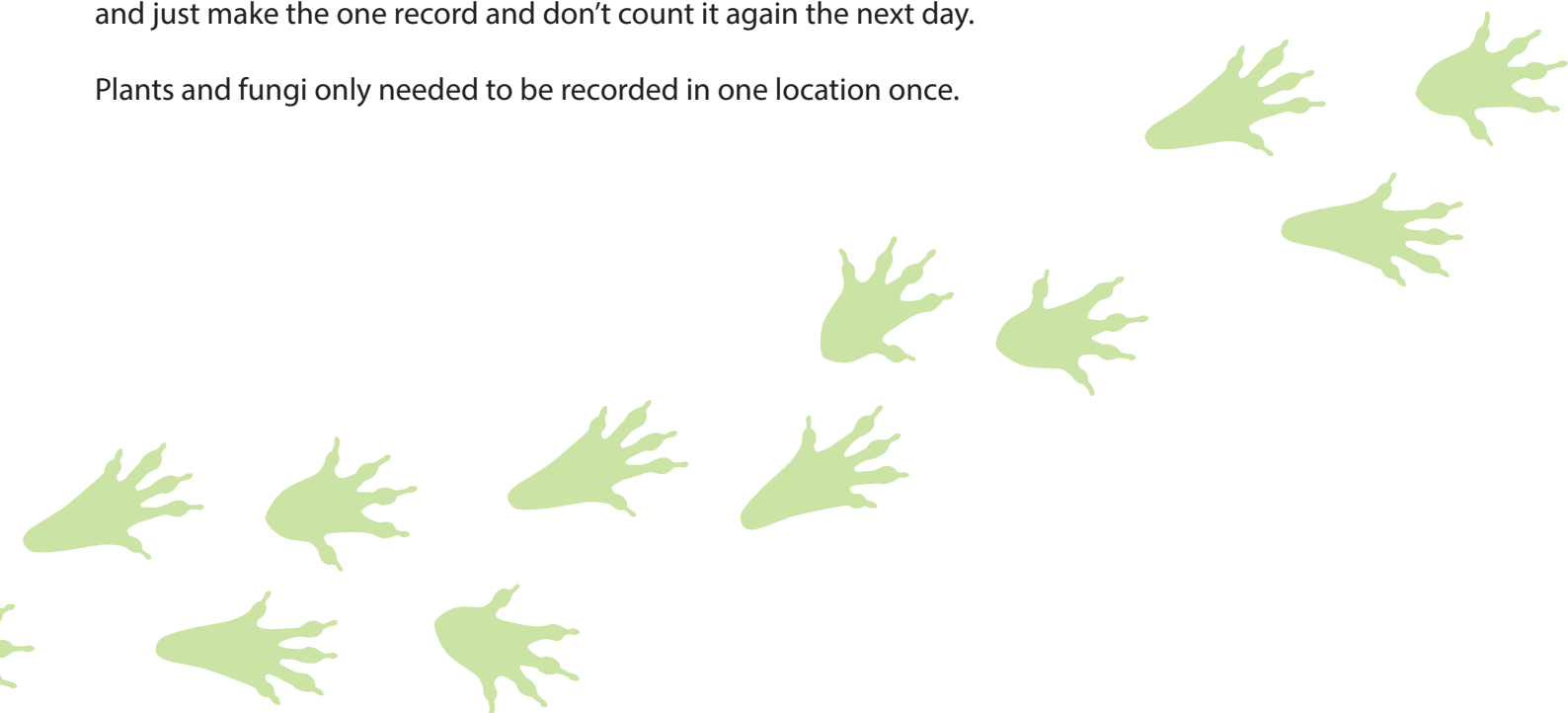
Only count the birds that land and as the same birds may land more than once, only record the highest number of each bird species you see at any one time. Wait until the next day to repeat.

If on a walk, just make a note of what you see along the way, with a location for each of the sightings on your journey, and only in one direction (stop recording on your return if backtracking the same path).

If it's just a one-off whilst you're out and about, that's great!

If you see a frog in a pond, or hedgehog in your garden, make a note of the total number of individuals and just make the one record and don't count it again the next day.

Plants and fungi only needed to be recorded in one location once.



[illegible]