

The **BIG** Count

Information Pack

18-27 June 2026



Somerset
Wildlife Trust





Thank you for taking part in The Big Count!

What's the BIG idea?

To put it simply, The Big Count directly helps us build up a more complete picture of Somerset's wildlife, which is vital to our work as a conservation charity.

If we don't notice wildlife declines, we run the risk of losing species forever. But how does The Big Count help notice those declines?

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

The Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) has over 4 million species records, but the majority are about protected or rare species. There's a gap in our knowledge about how the more "common" species are doing on a wider scale across the county. Experts alone would struggle to collect as much of that data as they need. That's where citizen science projects like The Big Count come in!

Knowing more about wildlife helps us better protect it. To understand what a species needs, we have to gather a lot of information about things such as its population, habitat choices and behaviour. Even more importantly, we have to monitor how these things change over time, in order to spot worrying trends and identify issues.

This year being our fifth, we are on our way to creating a dataset that shows change over time.

The state of our nature

It's ever more critical that we make smart decisions as to where best to direct our collective efforts to restore nature across the county. These efforts must be based on strong science and evidence.

SOMERSET STATE OF NATURE REPORT

The Somerset State of Nature report provides an important benchmark of how wildlife is faring across our county. In many ways, the report tells us what we already know; that the pressure on our natural environment locally matches many of the national trends.

Whilst the Somerset State of Nature report is based on the best data and information available from the huge range of amazing recorders across the county and SERC, there are gaps in our knowledge that we need to fill.

THAT'S WHY PEOPLE POWER MATTERS

Growing a wider citizen science community across the county is also vital. We need more eyes and ears on the ground. Whether that's individuals, specialist groups or communities, it's something everyone can do to make a contribution to nature's recovery.

**Citizen science projects
are a great way to learn
more about our wonderful
wildlife, at the same time as
helping to protect it.**

Ready to become a Big Count citizen scientist?

Get started with iNaturalist

Becoming a Big Count citizen scientist might sound complicated, but it couldn't be easier!

MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR MOBILE

Taking part in The Big Count is straightforward. All you need is your phone and a basic knowledge of wildlife. Then, from the 18th to the 27th of June, keep your eyes peeled for a handful of very special species and if you spot one (or several), snap a picture and upload it to The Big Count project on iNaturalist.

We've broken down the steps you need to take to get up and running.



GOT ANY QUESTIONS?

We've put together a document that covers frequently asked questions about The Big Count: somersetwildlife.org/big-count-faq



© Adrian Clarke

Get started with iNaturalist

To submit an observation for The Big Count, you'll need an iNaturalist account.



GET THE APP

Download the iNaturalist app from the App Store or Play Store (depending on what device you're using). We recommend using iNaturalist on your phone, but you can just as easily set up an account and upload observations from your computer: www.inaturalist.org



CREATE AN ACCOUNT

An iNaturalist account is free to create and to use. Follow these instructions to create an account: inaturalist.freshdesk.com/en/support/solutions/articles/151000195690-how-to-sign-up-for-an-inaturalist-account



JOIN THE BIG COUNT PROJECT

Follow this link to join The Big Count project: www.inaturalist.org/projects/the-big-count-2026

Get counting

Throughout The Big Count, keep your eyes peeled for specific species (which you'll find on the next page). If you spot one, snap a picture and upload it to iNaturalist. It's that simple!



USING AN IPHONE

Follow these instructions to upload photos iNaturalist on an iPhone: help.inaturalist.org/en/support/solutions/articles/151000197160



USING AN ANDROID DEVICE OR A COMPUTER

Follow these instructions to upload photos to iNaturalist on an Android device or a computer: help.inaturalist.org/en/support/solutions/articles/151000192921-how-to-make-an-observation



Rather stay offline?

This year we have added the option to note your findings on a handy paper form, instead of using iNaturalist. Follow the steps below!



PRINT OUT THE FORM

This handy form allows you to print it out and carry it with you. Over two pages, you'll find space to mark down information about the species you spot, such as the date spotted, location, quantity and your confidence level on the species found.



EXPLORE YOUR LOCAL GREEN SPACES

Do you always visit the same green space? Try visit somewhere new (the more different places, the better!) and see if you can spot The Big Count species.



MARK YOUR FINDINGS

Take along a pen or pencil, and fill in the form as you go! Any additional information you want to include will always be useful!



SEND IN YOUR FORM

When you've finished, pop the form in an envelope and post it to:
SERC, 34 Wellington Road
Taunton, Somerset
TA1 5AW

Or email it to records@somerc.com

Species to spot



SPOTTER SHEETS
Visit www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/activities to download handy spotter guides to help you identify The Big Count species, or any other species you might come across.

There are 16 species we want you to count: 11 individual species and five whole groups of species, where you can count any and all within that group.

Red fox



© Clive Nichols

This clever, adaptable mammal has reddish fur and a bushy tail, its distinctive high-pitched, bark is often heard at night, even if we'd rather not! They thrive in both urban and rural areas alike.

WHY RECORD THEM?
As foxes are so adaptable, monitoring their populations not only allows us to track their species numbers, but also the quality of habitats and where they are being pushed to. Our recent Somerset State of Nature report hinted at the beginning of a decline, and we want your help to find out if this is true.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

Hares and rabbits



© Guy Edwardes/2020VISION

These herbivorous mammals have long ears and are fast:

- Hares are larger, live above ground and are solitary; they're grey or brown in colour.
- Rabbits are more social, burrow underground and are grey-brown in colour.

WHY RECORD THEM?
Hares and rabbits are under-recorded in Somerset, despite the notion that they are a common species. We need to have a better idea on how their populations are faring so that we can know how conservation efforts are impacting them.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

Goldfinch



© Neil Aldridge

What a colourful and social bird this is! Often breeding in loose colonies, the goldfinch can be easy to spot with its red face and yellow wing patch. They're one of the countryside/farmland bird species that's successfully transitioned to gardens due to bird seed and us feeding them.

WHY RECORD THEM?
Seeing them in gardens is great, but if we can also tie in these records with those seen in the wider countryside, we could get an indication of wild seed abundance such as from teasels. Will these birds move back into farmland with a change of practice over time?

[LEARN MORE >](#)



Bullfinch



© Chris Lawrence

Usually found in woodlands and hedgerows, this distinctive bird is being seen more frequently in gardens. In Somerset we are lucky that our homes tend not to be far from the countryside and bullfinches are attracted in by food. Feeding in the spring on tree buds, the brightly coloured males are easy to spot.

WHY RECORD THEM?
The bullfinch is currently listed as of conservation concern and on the Amber List for birds. Spotting these and monitoring their numbers will help in the development of wildlife corridors within our urban environments.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



One of the longest living reptiles in the world, these legless lizards are one of just a few species of reptile found all across Somerset and the UK. Due to habitat loss, they are now more commonly seen in gardens and allotments, often hiding in the warm under a log or compost heap. If you're not a fan of slugs, snails, or spiders, then slow worms are your friend! They will happily munch on these, along with all sorts of other invertebrates. They themselves are an important food source for many birds, snakes and even mammals, such as badgers and hedgehogs. It's important to remember that they are protected by law from being deliberately killed, injured or sold/traded in any way. Avoid picking them up as they can release very smelly poop or even 'drop' their tails as a defence when alarmed.

WHY RECORD THEM?
As indicators of a healthy environment and being protected by law, their presence reflects good habitat quality and biodiversity. Recording this species will also help us understand any potential connectivity between areas.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



A member of the pea family, common bird's-foot trefoil is one of the many wildflowers that would have made up the plant communities in these grassland ecosystems. It has a variety of names that conjure up some interesting images: 'Eggs and Bacon', as one great example. The seed pods look like bird's feet or claws, hence the common name, and its yellow flowers look like little slippers and appear in small clusters. It can still be seen in all kinds of grassy places and is a very distinguishable and easy to identify flowering plant. Not only is it pretty to see, it is a key part of food webs, providing food for bees and butterflies.

WHY RECORD THEM?
As bird's-foot trefoil is vital to the ecosystem and plays important roles for other species, it's significant to know its conservation status to reduce risks for species and habitats that depend on it and monitor this.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



The speckled wood likes dappled shade, slightly damp conditions and is found in gardens, hedgerows and woodlands – with climate change, we could see populations changing.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



The pretty small tortoiseshell is a familiar garden visitor that can be seen feeding on flowers all year-round during warm spells.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



The common blue butterfly lives up to its name – it's bright blue and found in all kinds of sunny, grassy habitats.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



The marbled white is very distinctive and loves neutral grassland – a priority habitat that, like many grasslands, has declined in the last 70 years.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

WHY RECORD THEM?
Together, these butterflies represent a mix of species that people might expect to find close to home or in the near countryside. They are easy to identify and, though reasonably common, they are important to monitor as declines will indicate something is seriously afoot.

Dragonflies and Damselflies



© Mark Hamblin/2020VISION

Dragonflies and damselflies are large freshwater insects. The north of England and Scotland have seen increases in numbers, while the south has greater diversity.

WHY RECORD THEM?

Dragonflies and damselflies are regarded as good indicators of both climate change and the condition of our wetlands. With water quality and pollution issues in Somerset being of concern, these make an excellent group of species to observe over time. Seeing these in urban environments will also indicate that good-quality, viable water sources are nearby.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT DRAGONFLIES >](#)
[LEARN MORE ABOUT DAMSELFLIES >](#)

Spiders



© Jon Hawkins – Surrey Hills Photography

Often very colourful and with detailed patterns, this overlooked group can be found everywhere. Spiders, like bats, stop our world from being overrun by flies – they also protect our food crops and are an important food source in the food chain for many other animals.

WHY RECORD THEM?

Spiders are a difficult group to identify and, surprisingly, there are very few specialists collecting official records. We have so few logged sightings of spiders and their allies, like harvestmen.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

Snails



© Jon Hawkins – Surrey Hills Photography

Being low in the food chain, snails are an important part of ecosystems, converting nutrients such as calcium from rotting vegetation, soil and fungi into their bodies and shells, which are then fed upon by a wide variety of other species.

WHY RECORD THEM?

It's important we monitor populations because we tend to ignore snails, and we don't have many records of them, but as with some of the other species, they are easy to photograph.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

Fungi



© Vaughn Matthews

Fungi can appear in any season if conditions are right, though you'd be correct in thinking they are more likely to be seen in summer and autumn. Despite the efforts of a few pioneering scientists, the general scientific community is only just starting to realise the fundamental importance of fungi to our ecosystems, especially soils.

WHY RECORD THEM?

Taking pictures will enable you to stay safe from touching the wrong ones and us to gain a greater understanding of this under-recorded group.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

Thank you!

We can't thank you enough for taking part in The Big Count. We hope you enjoy learning about our wonderful wildlife whilst making a real difference.

Further contacts and resources

- Find out about our other citizen science projects over on our website: somersetwildlife.org/citizenscience
- Find out more about the Somerset Environmental Records Centre over on their website: www.somerc.com
- Got a question about data or species? Get in touch with SERC: info@somerc.com
- Got a question about attracting more wildlife into your garden? Get in touch with our Engagement Team: teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org

