

Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?

Final Project Report

December 2018





HLF Project Reference: OH-15-02991
LEADER Project Reference: Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?



Contents

MONITORING SUMMARY	4
BACKGROUND	5
History	5
Aims and key elements of the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? Project	6
Investment in the project	6
Project partners and governance	6
THE PROJECT EXPERIENCE	8
Employment of WWA Project Officer	8
Species identification training	8
Citizen science projects	12
Program of talks	15
Wildlife records database	17
Community wildlife recording toolkit	18
Website development	19
Networking Events	19
Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? Spring conference – 10th March 2017	19
End of Project Conference – 10th November 2018	19
Promotional materials	20
Newsletters	20
Social media presence	20
LESSONS LEARNT	21
FEEDBACK	22
LEGACY AND THE FUTURE	24
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	26

Monitoring summary

The Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? Project (WWA) was hosted by the Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP). Funding totalling approximately £100,000 was provided by; The Scottish Government and the European Union Ayrshire LEADER 2014-2020 programme, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council, to deliver the following outcomes in Table 1.

The project successfully worked with all three Ayrshire local authorities. It has also retained the ongoing support of these partners after completion of the project for co-ordination of wildlife recording in Ayrshire through the activities of the local environmental records centre.

Table 1: Key tasks, deliverables and results of the project

TASK	DELIVERABLE	RESULT
To appoint a project officer to deliver the two year project.	1 full time project office (2 years)	Complete Officer in post between 5th October 2016 – 30th November 2018
Provide opportunities for 250 people to develop new skills.	250 people 12 events per year (4 topics repeated in the 3 local authority areas)	Complete 36 training events delivered to 330 people
Citizen science projects	1 project per year	Complete Year 1 - 2 species group identification guides produced Year 2 – 6 individual species surveys produced
To deliver a programme of talks about wildlife in Ayrshire during the winter months.	A series of 6 winter talks undertaken each year to engage with 250 people.	Complete 15 talks delivered to more than 400 people
Formation of a database of wildlife records that reflect species and habitats across Ayrshire that can be mapped through GIS applications to show region-wide distribution that can be used to influence decision-making	Database to be developed 100,000 records to be collated	Complete Recorder 6 Database now has more than 115,000 records of 6,450 species digitised and ready for use within the system.
To produce long term training materials, including a freely accessible recording toolkit.	1 toolkit	Complete Available online and a short hard copy print run produced
To develop a website where project participants will be able to share their findings and provide users with information on local species.	New website	Complete New website is live at: whereswildlifeinayrshire.org.uk
To deliver a session teaching participants how to use the newly developed website.	1 session	Complete 2 sessions delivered
Networking events	1 event per year	Complete 2 Conferences delivered with more than 140 people attending.
Promotional Materials to support project	Project logo and identity, promotional material, flyers, banners.	Complete Project identity established, 2 pop up banners, leaflets/flyers, branded pencils and notepads produced.



Background

History

In 2014, the SUP ran a conference entitled “Planning for a Greener South West Scotland”. The aim of the conference was to discuss the value and need for biological data within the South West Scotland region. The event attracted widespread interest from both public, commercial and third-sector representatives.

Discussions during the conference identified the need for the services of a records centre in engaging communities in the natural heritage, recording, identifying and interpreting species and sites of interest, and providing a better evidence base for decision making. The lack of a co-ordinated approach to biological recording and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) objectives within the three Ayrshire local authorities was also identified as potentially having a significant impact on the local authorities’ ability to deliver on their biodiversity duty as required by Scottish Government.

Following the conference, the Dumfries & Galloway Environmental Records Centre (DGERC) approached North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to explore whether the organisation could be expanded to cover the whole of South West Scotland.

Two Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Parks for People projects run by South and East Ayrshire respectively further reinforced the need for a co-ordinated approach to wildlife recording. Both projects had a notable focus on engaging local people in the gathering of biological data but no means of either storing that information in an accessible way so that it could be used to help inform future decision making or of continuing that people engagement and training of identification skills. Outwith those projects there was no obvious central point that could be used for sign posting and supporting individuals or groups that want to learn more about their natural heritage or that can act as the stimuli for creating and supporting new opportunities for engagement. The Where’s Wildlife in Ayrshire? project was then developed to use the experience gained by DGERC to address the identified gap.

The Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? project, was a 2 year project that ran between October 2016 and December 2018. The aim of the project was to engage local people in recording locally distinctive wildlife and habitat sightings across the region. Through creating a focal point for training in identification skills, volunteer recording of environmental data and use of that data to influence environmental decision-making and better natural heritage management in the region.

Key deliverables of the project were as follows;

- Recruitment of a full time **Project Officer** for the duration of the project.
- **Programme of species identification training courses** – Provide opportunities for 250 people training/ developing new skills via a series of four training courses a year, repeated in each of the three local authority areas. The aim was to focus on getting communities and individuals out identifying their local wildlife in their area. In addition, a session to teach participants how to use the newly developed website was to be provided.
- **Citizen science projects** – One citizen science project to be undertaken each year focusing on identification and submission of records for easy to identify species. The aim of this is to engage the general public in identifying and learning about key species relevant to Ayrshire.
- **Program of talks** – To engage with 250 people with the project. A programme of talks were scheduled, over the winter period in each year aimed at a wide variety of audiences across Ayrshire who have an interest in their natural heritage. The aim of these was to generate new interest in wildlife recording and raise awareness of the project.
- **Biological (wildlife) records database** - The formation of a database of wildlife records that reflect species and habitats across Ayrshire that can be mapped through GIS applications to show region-wide distribution that can be used to support decision-making.
- **Wildlife recording toolkit** – To produce long term training materials, i.e. a freely accessible recording toolkit that helps guide community groups in how to develop and run their own 'wildlife recording events'.
- **Website development** – Development of a new website to enable online submission of wildlife records, details of local events, guidance on identification of key local species and further information about Ayrshire's natural heritage.
- **Two networking events** – One to be held each year with the aim of bringing together established NGO's, community based 'environment groups' and individuals to share experiences and help guide future recording priorities for Ayrshire.
- **Project promotional materials** – creation of promotional materials to raise awareness of the project while attending public events
- **Evaluation and final report** – this document comprises the end of project evaluation and final report. This provides feedback from attendees, a summary of the projects achievements and details on the future of the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? project and wildlife recording in Ayrshire.

The project also aimed to stimulate better sharing of information between individuals and local groups that are interested in wildlife recording.

Investment in the project

We would like to thank our host organisation, the Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP) and our funders for their support; the Scottish Government and the European Union Ayrshire LEADER 2014-2020 programme, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council.

A total of £106,839 was secured to run this 2 year project, the contributions were as follows (see table 2).



Table 2: Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? Project funding organisations

FUNDER	FUNDING PACKAGE SECURED	OVERARCHING FUNDING OBJECTIVES
HLF	£56, 800	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage - Heritage will be better managed • People - People will have developed skills • Communities -Engaging with local communities in recording local wildlife
LEADER – Ayrshire 2017-18	£32, 039	<p>THEME 4: Celebrating our Natural Heritage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing awareness and interest in the area's biodiversity through the development – through celebrating and sharing information about what wildlife you can see in Ayrshire at different time of the year and in different locations. • Enhancing and protecting the area's natural heritage – by creating a database of verified information that can be used when considering development proposals and their impact on the natural heritage. • Improving access to the natural environment – by running training courses that will actively lead groups out into Ayrshire natural environment and informing them of the Scottish Outdoor Access code in relation to rights of access and biological recording.
East Ayrshire Council	£6, 000	Provision of a central hub for wildlife recording for the region. Records collected will help deliver each local authority's biodiversity duty and LBAP reporting requirements as required by Scottish Government.
North Ayrshire Council	£6, 000	
South Ayrshire Council	£6, 000	
TOTAL BUDGET	£106,839	

The funding secured has helped to create the foundations of a network across Ayrshire that will focus sharing and learning about our natural heritage.

Project partners and governance

SUP, via the South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre (SWSEIC) have managed the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? project with support from a steering group with representatives from the following organisations:

- **Southern Uplands Partnership - chair**
- **East Ayrshire Council**
- **North Ayrshire Council**
- **DGERC (SWSEIC)**
- **Scottish Natural Heritage**
- **South Ayrshire Council**

Southern Uplands Partnership is a not for profit organisation with full charitable status. Our mission is to keep people living and working in rural southern Scotland by promoting sustainable use of the region's abundant natural resources. SUP is a Rural Development charity with over 15 years' experience focused on developing, implementing and managing a broad range of projects on behalf of partners whose common interests are thriving communities and sustainable land use in southern Scotland.

During the course of the project, DGERC formally changed its identity to South West Scotland Environmental Records Centre (SWSEIC) to reflect the operation of the Centre, through the WWA project, on a wider regional scale (see Legacy and the future).

SWSEIC is the region's local environmental records centre and aims to further the appreciation, understanding and protection of the natural environment by collecting, collating, managing and safeguarding relevant data and providing a focal point through which anyone may access that information. A key role is to make information available to a variety of users including local authorities, statutory agencies, environmental consultants, commercial developer, voluntary organisations, students, local wildlife groups and members of the public.

The information provided enables those involved in decision-making to gain an informed picture of the wildlife interest of their study area. SWSEIC is hosted by SUP.

The Project Experience

The project was delivered between 3rd October 2016 and 30th November 2018 via the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? Project Officer. This section provides details of the achievements against the key objectives of the project.

Employment of WWA Project Officer

The project officer's role was a full time post, dedicated to delivering the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire project. The first officer held the post between 3rd October 2016 and 18th December 2017 and the second was in post between 15th January 2018 and 30th November 2018.

This post was originally advertised and recruited for during Summer 2016 with the new project officer (Aisling Gribbin) starting on 3rd October 2018. She was in post until December 2017. Due to her departure, the post was re-advertised in Autumn 2017; the second officer (Helen Embleton) began on 15th January 2018 and remained in post until the end of the project.

Species identification training

The project aimed to deliver a total of 24 species identification courses and train a total of 250 people

during the project. The original project plan outlined that during each year of the project, 4 course subjects would be repeated in each of the three council areas.

However, due to demand a total of 36 courses were delivered to 330 people during the 2 years of the project. In 2017 four additional courses were delivered and in 2018, eight additional courses were delivered.

Since many taxonomic groups in Ayrshire are under recorded, the topics covered by the species identification courses were guided by a range of factors – accessibility of species groups to novice recorders, the interests of stakeholders/participants, species groups of conservation interest etc.

Whilst for some groups it was possible to replicate similar events around the region, it was not always possible or relevant to do this each local authority area (e.g. no coastal areas in East Ayrshire). However, where possible, we endeavoured to ensure that the courses followed the same broad theme.

In 2017 a total of sixteen events were delivered, with 121 people attending. Table 3 outlines the topics of the courses run in 2017 including the location, date held and number of attendees. The table also indicates delivery partners where relevant, where no partner is included, these courses were delivered entirely in-house.

Badger Watch, Dunlop

There's nothing like getting up close to nature. During Scottish Badger Week in May 2018 we ran an event in conjunction with Scottish Badgers – Ayrshire Branch. After a short talk about badger ecology and behaviour a small group of us went out at dusk to a local badger sett to watch these amazing creatures emerge for the evening. Just as we thought the badgers weren't coming out to play, we were amazed to have a female and her cub emerge to frolic in the twilight just a few metres from where we were sat. We also caught the briefest of glimpses of an erythristic badger (ginger!) which is an unusual occurrence.



©Edward Hasting-Evans | shutterstock.com



Some of our attendees enjoying the Species Identification training.



Table 3: Species identification training courses in 2017

COURSE	DATE	LOCATION	DELIVERY PARTNER	NO. OF ATTENDEES
Introduction to Wildlife Recording	28/01/2017	Catrine	--	4
Amphibian Identification Workshop	17/03/2017	Ardeer LNR	--	10
	25/02/2017	Dalmellington Moss	Erik Paterson, Clyde Amphibian and Reptile Group	6
	31/03/2017	Culzean Castle	--	5
Moth Identification Workshop	06/05/2017	Auchincruive	Tom Vorsterman, Moth Recorder	6
Reptile Identification Workshop	19/05/2017	Shewalton Woods	Rennie Mason, Ranger, Whitelees Windfarm	9
	29/04/2017	Auchinleck Community Centre	Cancelled	0
	03/06/2017	Feoch Meadows	Erik Paterson, Clyde Amphibian and Reptile Group	5
Butterfly Identification Workshop	16/06/2017	Gailes Marsh	Scott Donaldson, Butterfly Conservation	13
	07/07/2017	Knockshinnoch Lagoons		9
	05/08/2017	Auchalton Meadow		5
Dragonfly Identification Workshop	21/07/2017	Kilbirnie Loch	--	6
	01/07/2017	Dalmellington/Craigengillan Estate	Jonathan Willet, Red Kite Tours	10
	18/08/2017	Auchincruive	--	10
Bog Wildlife Microscope Identification Session	29/09/2017	Low Moss/ Auchincruive	Gemma Jennings, East Ayrshire Coalfields Environment Initiative	6
Bumblebee Identification	06/07/2017	Alloway Parish Church Hall, Alloway	Bumblebee Conservation Trust	7
Fungus foray	22/10/2017	Craufurdland Estate, Fenwick	Graeme Walker, SNH	10
TOTAL ATTENDEES				121

In 2018 a total of twenty events were delivered, with 209 people attending. The courses were well received and most were full booked or very close to it at the point of delivery.

However, an average of 7 people actually attended each event. As the events were free to attend, some events suffered from last minute cancellations or people simply not turning up.

Additional courses were added to accommodate requests from local community groups to receive training on wildflowers and an introduction to recording. We also

were given the opportunity to run a two-day course in identification of hoverflies in partnership with the National Hoverfly Recording Scheme. The Stevenston Beach Bioblitz was also added to the programme due to the potential to provide basic training and survey experiences to a large number of people for a wide range of species groups. This event was also an excellent opportunity to engage the local community to encourage them to start recording the wildlife around them.

Table 4 lists the species identification courses run including the location, date held and number of attendees. The table also indicates delivery partners where relevant, where no partner is included, these courses were delivered entirely in-house.

Chris Packham's UK Bioblitz –
Stevenston Beach LNR Event 14-15th July

A total of 298 records were made by 50 local recorders and members of the public during the event.

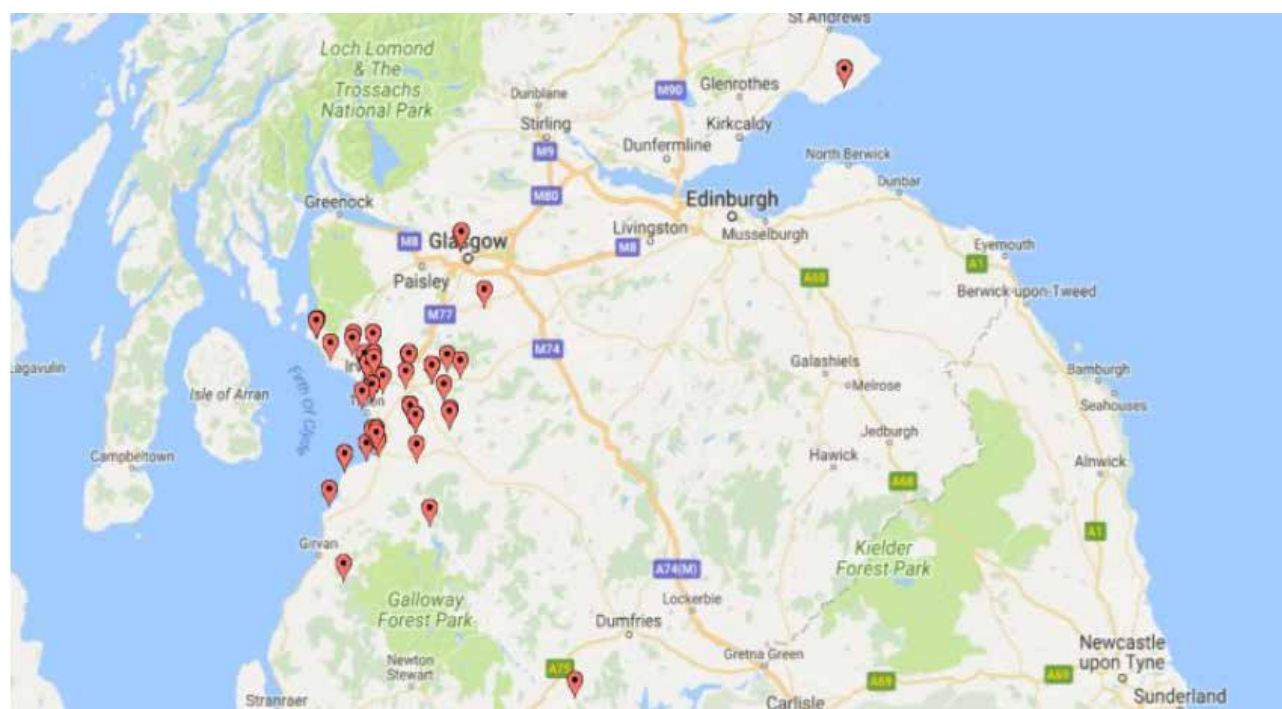
These comprised of 294 species recorded, of these 240 species were previously unrecorded at Stevenston Beach. This included three European Protected Species and four Nationally Scarce moths. This event generated a lot of traffic through the WWA Facebook page and even gained a mention on the Chris Evans Breakfast Show on BBC Radio 2.



Table 4: Species Identification Training Courses in 2018

COURSE	DATE	LOCATION	DELIVERY PARTNER	NO. OF ATTENDEES
Badgers in your lunchtime	09/05/2018	Eglinton Country Park	Steve Jackson-Mathews, Scottish Badgers	8
Badger Watch	06/05/2018	Dunlop		6
Badger Watch	18/05/2018	Dunlop		6
Badgers in the Daytime	05/10/2018	Auchincruive	--	8
Marvellous Mammals	21/09/2018	Ardeer Quarry	North Ayrshire Council Ranger Service	27
	25/9/2018	Dumfries House, Cumnock	Dumfries House	6
	01/6/2018	Auchincruive	Graeme Wilson, TWIC	5
Introduction to Botany	16/06/2018	Beith Community Development Trust	Gill Smart, BSBI	11
	28/7/2018	Eglinton Country Park (Three Towns Growers)	--	11
	25/9/2018	Dalmellington Moss	Daisy Whytock, CEI	7
	27/7/2018	Ailsa Hospital, Ayr	TCV Scotland	9
Rocky Shore Ecology	23/07/2018	Fairlie Village Hall/ Fairlie Beach	Robert Walsh, Co-coast	8
	01/08/2018	Ardrossan beach (Three Towns Growers)		9
	07/09/2018	Dolphin House, Culzean Castle		5
Mystical Moths	24/07/2018	Barony A Frame	CEI, Butterfly Conservation, Tom Vorsterman	12
Introduction to Hoverflies	24-25/03/2018	Ardeer Youth & Community Centre, Stevenston	Dipterist Society/ Hoverfly Recording Scheme	11
Introduction to Recording*	02/5/2018	Auchincruive	Scottish Wildlife Trust	8
	18/5/2018	Auchincruive	--	2
UKBioblitz Event – Stevenston Beach LNR	14-15/7/2018	Ardeer Youth & Community Centre, Stevenston	Chris Packham's UK-Bioblitz, FRIENDS of Stevenston, North Ayrshire Ranger Service, Butterfly Conservation.	50
TOTAL ATTENDEES				209

Figure 1. Distribution of training course attendees (postcode areas)



Citizen science projects



Amphibians and reptiles were chosen in 2017 as the focus species for the first citizen science project. These species groups were chosen for a variety of reasons. Both groups are under recorded in Ayrshire – national surveys have shown a paucity of records in the region. The groups include common species as well as scarce/protected species of conservation interest. Importantly, some species can be found close to home (e.g. in garden ponds). Ayrshire has some good habitat for both amphibians and reptiles and the aim of the citizen science project was to raise awareness of these species groups, and to give

people the skills to identify them: self-taught through the production of detailed ID cards and supported by amphibian and reptile identification training courses which were delivered in each of the three local authority areas (see Species Identification Training).

As part of the citizen science project, 1,500 information cards on each species group were created. These cards outlined the key identification features of each species and details of the most suitable habitats to find them. The booklet also provided a link to our online recording form and a detachable recording form that could be posted back to the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? office.

These booklets were distributed in various locations throughout the region and were available at all talks, promotional events and workshops over the course of the project.

During the course of the project a total of 754 reptile and amphibian records have been made or mobilised from historical data sets - see Figure 2.

Table 5 provides details for the species that have been recorded in Ayrshire to date. The distribution maps of all amphibian and reptile records collated are given in Figure 2.

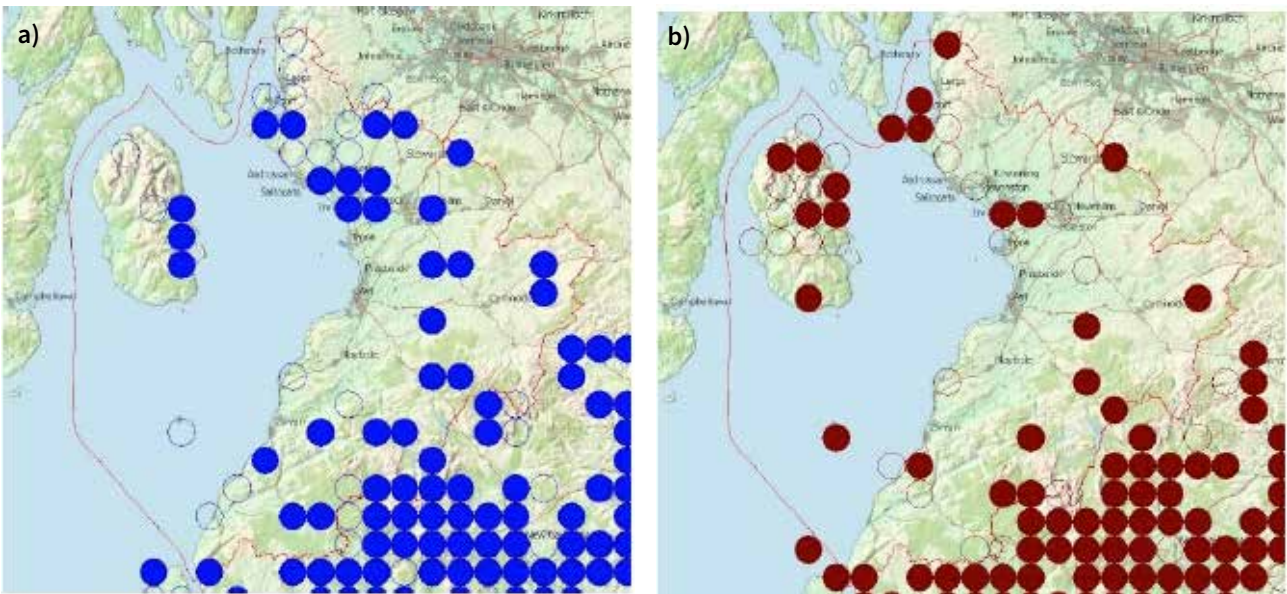


©Jamie Hall | shutterstock.com

Table 5: Reptile and amphibian species records added during the project

REPTILES	AMPHIBIANS
Adder (136 records)	Common Frog (175 records)
Slow Worm (78 records)	Common Toad (191 records)
Common Lizard (105 records)	Palmate Newt (52 records)
Leathery Turtle (1 record)	Palmate Newt (52 records)
Loggerhead Turtle (1 record)	Smooth Newt (7 records)

Figure 2: Distribution of (a) amphibian records and (b) reptile records in Ayrshire up to and including 2018



Mole Survey

The molehills of the European mole are a very common site. Surprisingly they are very under recorded. Recording sightings of both the animals and their molehills are important to help us learn more about them.

Identification: Short black velvety fur, tiny eyes & long sensitive snout. Spade-like forelimbs with large claws.

Molehills: These are the small conical mounds of loose soil raised by burrowing moles when the dig to the surface.

Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?

Please Affix Stamp here

Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?

SWSEIC
Studio 1
Hillhead Mill
Kirkgunzeon
Dumfries
DG2 8LA

The details that you provide will be held on computer and used for environmental decision-making and other public benefit uses. Your name will be linked to the record – no personal details will ever be passed to third parties.

If you wish to be added to the WWA7/SWSEIC email list please tick this box ☐

Please fill in the details of your sighting here:

Type off record: Number of animals observed:

Number of molehills observed:

Date: Location:

Grid Reference (e.g. NS341229):

Your Name:

Address/postcode:

Email address:

Further details about this and other surveys can be found at: whereswildlifeinayrshire.org.uk

The Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? project is part of the South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre (SWSEIC) and is hosted by the Southern Uplands Partnership.

Southern Uplands Partnership, Registered Office:
Studio 2, Lindean Mill, Galashiels TD1 3PE. Registered in Scotland Company No. 200827 Charity No. SC029475

In 2018, the focus of the citizen science project switched to conduct 6 postcard surveys.

The individual species were chosen so that they met one or more of the following criteria: known to be present in Ayrshire; potential to be observed at most times of the year; an element conservation interest, e.g. known declining populations/ranges in the UK or invasive non-native species; common species thought to be significantly under-recorded in the region; easily identifiable by most people.

The species targeted by the postcard surveys were as follows:

- **Kestrel**
- **Yellowhammer**
- **New Zealand Flatworm**
- **Garden snail**
- **Hedgehog**
- **Mole**

Table 6: Summary of records currently held for 2018 survey postcard species

SPECIES	NUMBER OF RECORDS COLLATED
Kestrel	210
Yellowhammer	43
New Zealand Flatworm	3
Garden snail	34
Hedgehog	108
Mole	113

In the case of the New Zealand Flatworm and Hedgehog, the previous national surveys on these species appeared to gained very few records in Ayrshire, it was felt that a 'local face' to surveying for these creatures may make a difference in the data coverage for Ayrshire.





©leungchopai | shutterstock.com

Program of talks

A programme of talks were scheduled throughout the project aimed at a wide variety of audiences across Ayrshire who may have an interest in their natural heritage.

Initially it was envisaged that these talks would be undertaken over the winter period in each year of the project. However, due to demand these were scheduled throughout the year as needed. During the project, a total of 15 talks were provided to a range of local community

groups who are either based within Ayrshire or actively record wildlife within the region. The aim of these talks was to generate awareness of the project, to demonstrate the value of wildlife recording, and to provide updates on the project.

The talks undertaken during the project were delivered to approximately 400 people. Table 7 provides details of the groups and number of attendees:

Table 7: Talks given during the project

ORGANISATION	DATE	NO. OF ATTENDEES
RSPB North Ayr	14/10/2016	40
SWT Ayrshire Group Meeting	21/02/2017	35
Scottish Rock Garden Club	08/03/2017	20
SRUC 1st Year Students	09/05/2017	?
Ayr Rural Payments Division Staff	28/06/2017	?
BRISC Conference 2017	14/10/2017	60
SWT Ayrshire Group Meeting	20/02/2018	25
Forehill Primary School	08/03/2018	144
Nectar Network	12/03/2018	50
North Ayrshire Bee Keepers	21/03/2018	15
SRUC 1st Year Students	18/04/2018	20
GNHS Science Week: Amphibians and Reptiles of Scotland Conference	09/06/2018	40
RSPB North Ayr	14/09/2018	25
RSPB Renfrew	05/10/2018	47
Glasgow Natural History Society meeting	13/11/2018	32
TOTAL		458+

In addition, the Project Officer sought to raise awareness of the project with the general public, to encourage to get involved with identification courses and wildlife recording. A total of 13 events were attended, where the Project Officer spoke with the general public, distributed promotional materials and citizen science materials and encouraged people to sign up to the project's monthly newsletter.

It is estimated that more than 400 people were directly engaged via this method, however many more people attended these events. Table 8 provides details of the events attended.

Table 8: Awareness raising at promotional events

EVENT	DATE	NO. OF ATTENDEES
Ayr County show	12/05/2017	c.30
Ballantrae Festival of food and drink	11/06/2017	c.30
Bellisle Parklife Event - Family Open Day	22/07/2017	c.40
Kelburn Country Show	12/08/2017	c.20
Colmonell Exhibition	09/09/2017	c.20
Scottish Ornithological Club Conference	17/03/2018	120
Ayr Environment Fair	24/03/2018	c.30
Beith Community Development Trust - Family Open Day	08/04/2018	50
CEI Celebration Event (Conference)	19/04/2018	40
Ayr Country Show	12/05/2018	40
Lord Provosts Footprint Challenge Conference & Awards	14/06/2018	70
Troon Eco Film Festival (Stall)	16/06/2018	20
Bellisle Parklife Event - Family Open Day	21/07/2018	30
TOTAL		c.540

The Project Officer also represented the WWA Project and SWSEIC on a number of working groups, details of these are included in Table 9.

Table 9: Working Groups where the project was represented

ORGANISATION HOSTING EVENT	
LBAP Steering Group	Development of the 2019 LBAP document for the area.
B-lines project	Working with Buglife to create maps to help identify suitable sites where suitable pollinator habitat could be established to improve habitat connectivity through the North Ayrshire area.
Local Environmental Records Centres meeting	Cross border working group comprising of Local Records Centres
SBIF Review meeting	Input into the review of future of biological recording infrastructure in Scotland
Garnock Connections Project Lead and Heritage Monitoring Groups	Provision of advice and support on integrating wildlife recording into the development of this landscape project.
Plog the Path Meeting	Promotion of wildlife recording while picking up litter.

In addition, the WWA project was nominated for the RSPB Nature Scotland Awards 2018 for Best Community Initiative.

Community Engagement Enthusiasing Young Wildlife Recorders

The project has worked hard to engage all members so of the community. However it is particularly rewarding when our young people engage with nature and wildlife recording. Lewis is already a keen wildlife recorder at the tender age of 7 and has a particular interest in invertebrates. His favourite invertebrates are butterflies. He has attended several events run by our project and recently stole the show at the BioBlitz Event at Stevenston Beach where he impressed Chris Packham and the team with his knowledge of the natural world and his identification skills. He keeps a journal, recording all of the species he finds when he is out and about. We think he is currently Ayrshire's oungest active wildlife recorder!



Wildlife records database

A key element of the project was to begin to collate both historical and new wildlife records for Ayrshire to populate the existing database held by the local environmental records centre. The database software used by SWSEIC is Recorder 6. This is a bespoke database system that has been developed specifically to manage species and habitat records. The database incorporates a geographical interface that allows species records to be interrogated in many ways, such as: by geographical area, species/taxa, time, recorder name etc.

As of November 2018, SWSEIC have collated and mobilised a total of 115,409 unique wildlife records in Ayrshire, with 6,450 individual species being represented throughout the region. The earliest record currently on the database for Ayrshire dates to 1650 when Brown Trout was recorded in New Cumnock.

Figure 3: SWSEIC's Recorder 6 database

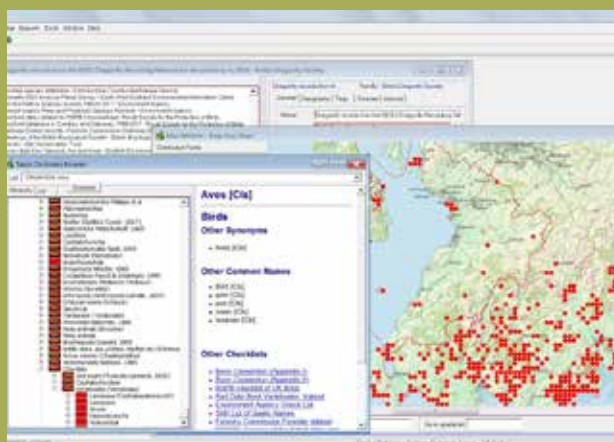
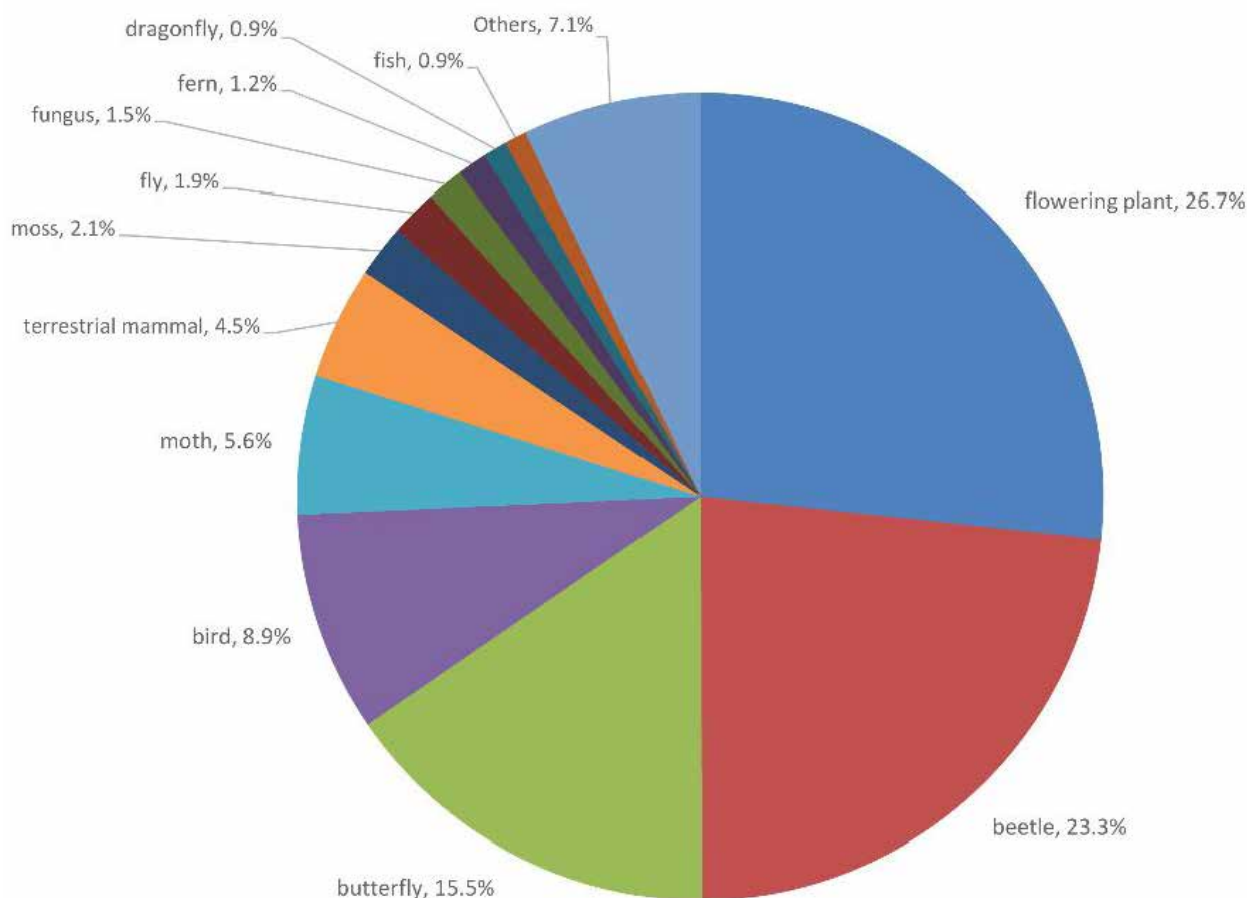


Figure 4: Summary of the total species records held for Ayrshire (as at November 2018)

Prior to records being uploaded on to Recorder 6, all data goes through a validation process to ensure that records are in the correct format, complete, free of spelling errors and include the correct Latin binomial.

Records are then verified using local and national experts to check for potential errors and to add an element of quality assurance to the data.



The records mobilised have come from 140 individual data sets/ surveys which were previously held in a variety of formats, including: paper, obsolete databases and spreadsheets. These have been gathered from many local nature conservation organisations, local wildlife recorders and national recording schemes. To help us we have enlisted volunteers to help us to digitise paper copy records.

Some of the larger data sets mobilised are listed below:

- **Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre, various dates**
- **Former Ayrshire Biological Records Centre records**
- **County Beetle Recorder, records dating from 1900 – present day**

In addition, there are many smaller data sets, including over 400 records from our new website online reporting facility and over 700 records from species identification courses run during the project.

To date, records have been submitted by over 1,000 individual recorders and are dated between 1650 and the present day. Figure 5 illustrates a heat map of the distribution of records through Ayrshire.

To date, more records have been collated in the North Ayrshire than East and South Ayrshire. Figure 6 shows a heat map of the number of different species recorded in each 10km square. Species diversity is closely linked to levels of recording activity.

Figure 5: Heat map of records in Ayrshire & Arran (red - more records, green - fewer records)

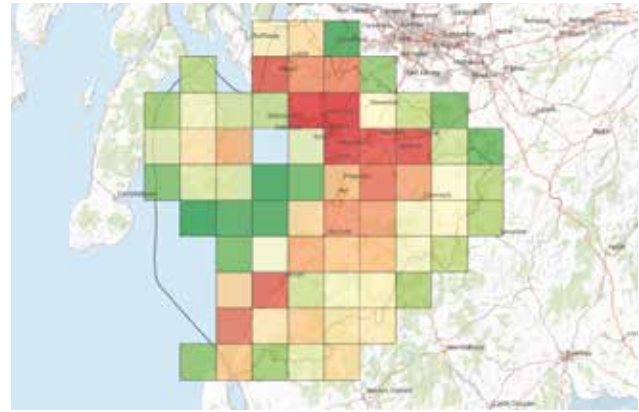
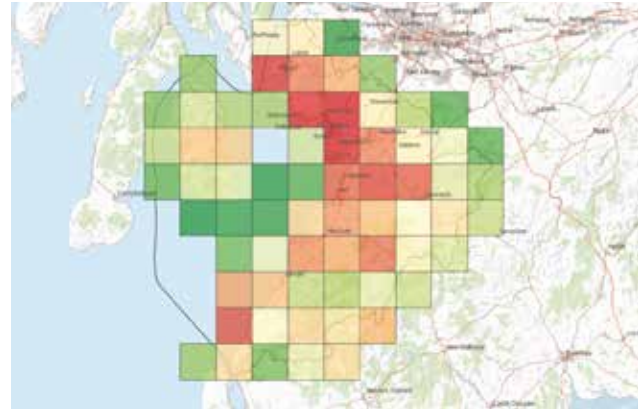


Figure 6: Species diversity based on Ayrshire



Our 100, 000 Record for Ayrshire

In early October 2018 we celebrated the 100,000th addition to the database of county wildlife records. The pivotal record, of a Green Tiger Beetle at Gailies Marsh near Irvine, came from Bruce Philp, our County Beetle Recorder.



Community wildlife recording toolkit

The Community Wildlife Recording Toolkit was developed for anyone with an interest in wildlife and wildlife recording to help to guide them through the essential elements to consider when planning a wildlife recording event. This provides guidance on issues like health & safety, planning the event, getting experts to help, recording and the law, ensuring that good wildlife records are made and where to send them after the event.

The Community Wildlife Recording Toolkit is available online at the WWA website and 200 hard print copied produced for distribution to local individuals and groups who have shown interest in holding their own wildlife recording events.

A new website was created for the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? project.

This work included the re-branding of the former DGERC website to become SWSEIC. The website address is www.whereswildlifeinayrshire.org.uk. The framework for the WWA website was used to update the information for the SWSEIC website.

The website includes an online recording tools linked to the Biological Record Centre's database feature for the submission of wildlife records. It also provides information on habitats and wildlife that can be found in Ayrshire, as well as a calendar of wildlife recording events taking place across the region. The website is regularly updated with news and events. The website also allows people to sign up to the WWA and SWSEIC newsletters.

Figure 7: Screenshot of the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? web page



Networking Events



Two events were organised to help bring together and develop the wildlife recording community in the region.

Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? Spring conference – 10th March 2017

The first ever biological recorders conference in Ayrshire was held at Eglinton Country Park on the 11th March 2017 with 70 delegates attending.

Speakers included Pete Minting from the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, Nick Littlewood on mammal camera trapping and local bryophyte expert Rory Whytock.

End of Project Conference – 10th November 2018

On 20th November 2018, the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? end of project conference was held at Dumfries House in Ayrshire. A total of 75 people attended the event. Speakers included representatives from Clyde Porpoise c.i.c., the South Scotland Golden Eagles Project, Buglife and Police Scotland.

Both events provided participants with an opportunity to meet other wildlife recorders and to find out about some different species groups and projects taking place locally or nationally. It also provided speakers and exhibitors with an opportunity to promote current and forthcoming projects to an audience of interested people. Despite the fact that information is so readily available online, the value of providing an opportunity for people to meet and network with like-minded individuals who share similar interests was clearly demonstrated.

Feedback from both events was very positive:

"[The event gave a] real insight to other projects and their methods and successes."

"Learning about new opportunities in local/national wildlife recording."

"Real variety of speakers, yet all focused on the theme of the conference."

"Long lunch break gave us plenty of time to meet folk."

"...opportunity to meet lots of different people."



Promotional materials



Two pop up banners were produced for the project and have been used at all events that the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? had a presence. Branded pens and notebooks were also purchased along with.

Branded t-shirts and a fleece were also purchased for the project offer to wear at training courses and events.

Social Media Presence

Throughout the project Facebook was used to promote events and activities and to share news about the project.

The WWA Facebook page's following rose steadily throughout the project. At the time of writing (Nov 2018), the page had 473 likes with 490 followers. The page has been retained at the end of the project and those liking and following it have been encouraged to follow the SWSEIC page for future updates.

Newsletters



The WWA project produced a monthly newsletter to highlight the projects' activities and encourage people to get out and record their local wildlife. The newsletter provides a summary of key local and national news in relation to wildlife recording in Ayrshire, details of upcoming events and includes the 'species of the month' feature which highlights two reasonably common and easy to identify species that can be seen locally during the month. The mailing list for the newsletter grew to 217 people during the course of the project, and it was also made available to download via the website and on social media.

During the course of the project the WWA mailing list was adjusted to comply with new GDPR regulations. This resulted in the loss of some previous subscribers, though the detected open rate amongst newsletter subscribers remained high throughout the project.

In addition, articles about the project were also provided for the newsletters of several local and national groups.



©castigatio | shutterstock.com

Lessons learnt

The Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? Project has been very successful, and has provided a great stepping stone towards the continued operation of a local environmental records centre in Ayrshire.

The project has exceeded its targets and established some very effective working relationships with local nature conservation organisations and recorders. Opportunities are already forming to develop links with community groups with whom we have not previously worked, further extending the local interest and participation in wildlife recording in Ayrshire.

Establishing relationships between a new (to Ayrshire) organisation and the wildlife recording community is a long-term process. To become a recognised and trusted, and to build the necessary links with all parts of the recording community, takes time. The project has taken the first steps to build that relationship with local communities, and to benefit them and to help support them in their particular wildlife recording interests. This has been seen through the results we have achieved during this two year project. The project has gained so much momentum and local support for the project, the challenge, as ever, is to be able to continue this work into the longer term.

During the project it has been difficult to cover the full geographic spread of the whole region of Ayrshire. However this is the beginning of what we hope will

be a long term process, and we have established good foundations to start from. The WWA project was overwhelmed by the level of interest in our identification training courses, with most being close to or at capacity on the run up to the event. Non-attendance from a small proportion of booked participants was a recurrent issue at events. Since all the courses were free to attend, it was felt that some people are not sufficiently 'bought-in' to the event – inclement weather may easily cause people to drop out of such events, even though parts of the activity may have been indoor. DGERC/SWSEIC has experienced similar issues in the past. Charging a small amount for courses creates a better 'buy-in' from those attending and improve attendance rates, but also adds a barrier to those who are disadvantaged. In future we think that applying a small fee to events may help in ensuring that people attend once they have reserved their place, whilst also offering free places for selected categories (e.g. students/unwaged).

Our citizen science projects generated records. Based on DGERC's previous experience with this type of campaign, we felt these were less successful in submission of records than some of the previous projects. At the moment it is unclear whether this is due to factors such as: these species being fairly elusive, the optimal survey time is early morning or whether these species are simply not easily visible 'where people are'. In 2018 we decided to focus on a series of individual species survey post cards. We chose easy to identify species that people will recognise and they should be relatively abundant throughout the region. We are hoping that this change in approach will give rise to a higher return rate for records of these target species. The projects materials will remain in use for some time and we hope continue to generate useful records for several years to come.

A man with short brown hair, wearing a bright green high-visibility polo shirt and dark blue trousers, is kneeling in a field of tall, green grass and wildflowers. He is looking down at a small notebook he is holding in his hands, and he appears to be writing with a pen. The background is a dense field of similar vegetation, with some yellow and white flowers visible. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Feedback

Continuous evaluation formed a key component throughout the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? project. Hard copy feedback forms were used to evaluate the relevance and quality of training courses provided by the project and also to help gauge the interests of people attending our species identification courses, talks and events. All survey responses and feedback forms were anonymous.

The information gained via this process helped to focus our efforts on providing training courses that were relevant and covering topics of the most interest. Feedback from all courses was overwhelmingly positive.

**THE QUOTES BELOW
ARE TAKEN FROM OUR
SURVEYS AND HIGHLIGHT
MANY OF THE PROJECT'S
SUCCESSSES.**

“A wee note to say that I think that I have recorded a Migrant Hawker dragonfly at Shewalton Wood Reserve, Irvine. Awaiting confirmation or otherwise to the validity of the record. All of this is directly due to the excellent training day course on Dragonfly ID organised by Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? and led by Jonathan Willet.”

- *Source Unknown*

“Excellent day - thoroughly enjoyed and learned loads. Loved the hedgehog tunnel and owl pellet dissection”

- *Marvellous mammals, Jun 2018*

“Superb event. Excellent value, especially including the ID book.”

- *Hoverfly ID day, Mar 2018*

“Excellent speakers, well laid-out design, good mix between theory and practical ID, wonderful supplementary material.”

- *Hoverfly ID day, Mar 2018*

“Was a great day - no improvement needed.”

- *Introduction to wildlife recording, May 2018*

“Robert [the trainer] was really knowledgeable and led the session with confidence.”

- *Rocky Shore ecology, Jul 2018*

“Excellent event, superbly organised.”

- *Badger sett recognition, Oct 2018*

“Nice to meet like-minded people.”

- *Wildflower ID day, Jun 2018*



Legacy and the future

The project has provided a strong start to increase the number of wildlife recorders and to provide a focal point for wildlife recording within Ayrshire. Training places were provided to over 300 people to help develop identification skills for a variety of local species and to explain the appropriate avenues for submitting records. In addition, over 115,000 wildlife records have been collected and mobilised and are already being used in local and national decision making.

All data gathered during the project is now stored within SWSEIC's Recorder 6 database which will enable these data to continue to be interrogated and used in future to inform decision making after the main project has been completed. The data gathered will be of value to the three Ayrshire local authorities when reporting to Scottish Government on their biodiversity duties.

As a legacy of the project, SWSEIC will retain an ongoing presence in Ayrshire, working with local partners to gather and share biological records. SUP and SWSEIC have secured continued funding from local authority partners in Ayrshire to support the ongoing work of the local environmental records centre's operations throughout the region in 2019-20, and are working with other partners to support wildlife recording activities through other projects (e.g. the Garnock Connections 'Go Wild in Garnock' project).

continue in use by SWSEIC over the coming years. The Wildlife Recording Toolkit is available online, for use by local communities and organisations that wish to develop and run recording events, with or without the direct support of the records centre. The electronic submission forms available will also help to ensure easy submission of data to the records centre and integration of this with the national online recording website iRecord will continue to be developed. Both survey cards and postcards will be in use well beyond the lifespan of the WWA project and data gathered by these will be added to the SWSEIC database. The mailing list has been absorbed into that of SWSEIC so that people who continue to be informed of news and events relating to wildlife recording in the region.

Data gathering is an ongoing process. Current and up to date information is always required when assessing the value or importance of an area for its wildlife and habitats. It is important to maintain the links to local recorders and community organisations to keep the momentum kick started by the WWA project. SWSEIC will continue to offer support to local wildlife recorders throughout Ayrshire and to mobilise local wildlife records. The sheer volume of information

available means there are still a number of important data sources that the project has not managed to enter into formalise potential data sharing agreements, and these will be progressed on through the course of SWSEIC's ongoing work. The British Trust for Ornithology announced in November 2018 a new data sharing arrangement available with LERCs that will allow access to their datasets (potential 600,000 records could be available for Ayrshire). In the coming months SWSEIC will work to incorporate this very significant data set into its data holdings.

The findings of the Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum review were published on 21st November 2018. The report provides a number of ambitious recommendations for the reform of the biological recording infrastructure and provide a sustainable future for organisations supporting biological recording throughout Scotland. If these recommendations are adopted by Scottish government, this could transform the level of resourcing and support available to Ayrshire's recording community and It is an exciting time for wildlife recording in Ayrshire!

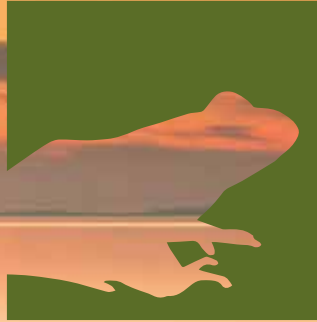


Acknowledgements

The Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? project would like to extend our gratitude and thanks to the organisations and individuals who have supported the objectives of the project. They have assisted in delivering species identification courses, provided records and attended our events. In particular, we would like to thank:

- Ayrshire Rivers Trust
- Ayrshire County Beetle Recorder
- Capturing our Coast
- Clyde Porpoise c.i.c.
- Barrmill and District Community Association
- Beith Community Development Trust
- Bellisle Ranger Service
- Botanical Society for Britain & Ireland - Ayrshire
- Butterfly Conservation – Glasgow & South West Scotland Branch
- Dipterist Society – Hoverfly Monitoring Scheme
- Dumfries House
- East Ayrshire Rangers Service
- East Ayrshire Coalfields Environment Initiative
- Leap Frog Wildlife Watch Group
- Friends of ARDEER
- FSC Millport
- Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre
- Glasgow Natural History Society
- Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere
- National Trust for Scotland
- North Ayrshire Council Ranger Service
- RSPB – North Ayrshire Group
- RSPB – Renfrewshire Group
- Scottish Badgers
- South of Scotland Golden Eagles Project
- SRUC Ayr
- Scottish Wildlife Trust – Ayrshire Group
- The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC)
- Three Towns Growers
- TVC Scotland







Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?

The Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? project was hosted by the Southern Uplands Partnership.

Southern Uplands Partnership,
Registered Office:

Studio 2, Lindean Mill,
Galashiels, TD1 3PE.

Registered in Scotland Company No. 200827
Charity No. SC029475

©castigatio | shutterstock.com

