

Ecology Survey Seasons Guide



| | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|----------------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Badgers | Including bait marking | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bats | Aerial tree inspection | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Emergence and re-entry surveys | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Ground level roost assessment - trees | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Hibernation | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Preliminary roost assessment - buildings/structures | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Swarming/mating roosts | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Transect and static monitoring | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Birds | Breeding | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Passage | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Winter | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Botanical | NVC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Habitat condition assessment (baseline BNG) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Hedgerow | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Preliminary ecological appraisal | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dormice | Footprint | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Nest tubes and boxes | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Great crested newts | eDNA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Habitat suitability index | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Presence and population assessment | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Invertebrates | Aquatic | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Terrestrial | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | White clawed crayfish | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Otters | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reptiles | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Water vole | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Timings are provided as guidelines and can vary based on locations, season variations and specific species.



Optimal survey time



Sub-optimal survey time



Survey invalid

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Important Information & Legislation

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)

- The PEA will include:
 - A UKHab Habitat Survey,
 - Protected species walkover, including a Habitat Suitability Index for great crested newts and daytime bat walkover (where appropriate),
 - A desktop study of existing ecological information relevant to the site.
- Results are presented in a PEA report, which will detail the survey methodologies, results, and recommendations for further survey/mitigation, where required.
- A PEA does not include a detailed assessment of a finalised scheme but provides an indicative assessment of likely impacts and a guide for the project owner as regards further surveys and mitigation, as well as enhancement opportunities.
- A Habitat Condition Assessment can be undertaken at the same time as the PEA to inform a Baseline Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment which can be incorporated into the report.

Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)

- An EcIA can form the ecological component of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or be a standalone report.
- An EcIA is more detailed than a PEA and is usually completed when requested by the relevant planning authority or, as required by law, as part of an EIA or Habitats Regulations Assessment.
- For projects where no further ecological surveys are needed, an EcIA Report can be produced following the completion of the PEA.
- If a Habitat Condition Assessment was not undertaken during the PEA, it can be completed during the EcIA and the Baseline BNG Assessment incorporated into the report.

We offer comprehensive ecological services across the UK, including surveys, mitigation, and enhancements, ensuring compliance with best practices and legislation.

Please get in touch for more details:

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Habitat Condition Assessment (HCA)

- A Habitat Condition Assessment (HCA) is undertaken using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment to establish the baseline value of habitats present to inform BNG. An HCA must be undertaken prior to works commencing and can be undertaken during the preparation of the PEA.
- The HCA should be undertaken during the optimal period of April – September when most plants are visible. If an HCA is undertaken during sub-optimal periods, a higher condition should be assumed.

Badgers

- Badgers are protected by UK law and it is an offence to kill, injure or take a badger or to interfere with a sett.
- Badger surveys can be completed at any time of year, but early spring and late autumn are optimal. This is because badgers are more active, and vegetation is minimal.
- Surveys include visual surveys looking for setts, latrines, tracks, and paths. They can also include bait marking to establish the location of territories.

Birds

- All nesting birds are protected by law in the UK.
- Some species (Schedule 1) are afforded additional protection from disturbance.
- Breeding bird season is generally considered to be March to August, however, this is just a guide as some species breed earlier in the year and the season can be affected by prevailing weather conditions.

Bats*

- Trees, structures, and buildings can be used by bats to roost.
- Bat roost surveys, which will comprise either daytime inspections and or nocturnal surveys, in addition to climbing surveys will need to be undertaken at the time when bats are most likely to be using the site.
- For trees, the preferred method of survey to confirm presence is through aerial tree inspections.
- For buildings, this will involve a preliminary roost inspection and nocturnal emergence/re-entry surveys.
- Emergence/re-entry surveys will use bat detectors and infra-red cameras to capture bats emerging from or re-entering a roost. These surveys must be undertaken between May and September with the majority of surveys taking place between May and August.
- Static bat detectors can be deployed in-situ to monitor activity over a longer period.

Water Vole

- In most case, at least two surveys are required. The first between mid-April to the end of June, and the second between July and the end of September.
- A visual search will be made of the watercourse for burrows, droppings and feeding stations.

Otters*

- Otter surveys involve a visual search of the watercourse for footprints, spraints, couches, and holts.
- Surveys should not take place after periods of heavy rainfall or flooding.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)*

- A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) survey can be undertaken any time of the year to assess whether a habitat has the potential to support GCN.
- Environmental DNA/ eDNA is a method to test for the presence of GCN within a waterbody by sampling the water to test for traces of secreted DNA. The eDNA survey season runs from 15th April to 30th June.
- Presence/absence surveys involve four overnight survey visits. Where a population assessment is required, a further two surveys are required (six in total).
- Presence/absence surveys require a total of three survey methods which can include torch surveys, bottle trapping, egg searching, sweep netting and refugia checks.
- Some developments may qualify for the use of a Low Impact Class Licence or can be registered with a District Level Licence which are lower in cost and require less survey effort and mitigation.

Dormice*

- If only a small area of potential dormouse habitat is to be removed, then a visual search for nests and feeding signs can be conducted.
- If larger areas of habitat such as hedgerows are to be lost, nest box and tube surveys may be needed.
- Nest tube surveys use a weighted scoring system which takes into account the months during which the survey is undertaken and the survey effort.
- Nest tubes are ideally sampled at intervals across the active season (April-November), with May, August and September being key months for survey.
- Footprint surveys are a new technique, which has proven highly effective at detecting presence.

Reptiles

- Widespread reptiles include adder, grass snake, common lizard, and slow worm. It is an offence to kill or injure a widespread reptile.
- Sand lizard and Smooth snake are a European protected species*.
- Surveys can include visual searches for basking reptiles, checking of refuges and the use of artificial refuges. A total of seven visits is required.

** European Protected Species – EPS surveys must be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist with the appropriate survey licences in place to be lawful. It is an offence to harm, kill, disturb, capture, or damage a place of rest or breeding without an appropriate licence in place.*

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