

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre



Sharing environmental information in Berkshire and Oxfordshire

TVERC Excel Input Forms: How to Fill Them in & When to use Them

These forms are for recording occasional or multiple sightings of a variety of wildlife. There are forms available for individual species groups, for example butterflies, mammals, Herps, and dragonflies. There is also a "general" input form which is more suitable to use if you record many different groups, for example in your garden or at a local wildlife site. These forms have been especially designed to be easy for you to give us your information in a format that we can process quickly and efficiently, thus enabling us to use your records sooner. However, if none of these forms is suitable for the recording you do, please contact us and we will see what we can do to help.

1. GUIDANCE ON WHAT TO ENTER IN A COLUMN

Columns highlighted in **Green** are for the information that is necessary for our records but as much information as you can give is always welcome.

English name: Click on a cell in this column and you will get a drop-down box containing the names of many commonly observed species. Click on the arrow at the right hand side of the box to see the list and use the computer mouse to navigate up and down this list. When the desired species is highlighted, click the mouse and the "scientific name" column will automatically be populated.

Scientific name: This is populated by selecting an English name (see above). If the species you wish to record is not available in the above drop-down list, then its scientific name can be typed into this box.

Abundance: Either enter the number of things you saw (4 plants, females, droppings etc.) or a DAFOR code if you are recording vascular plants. Any vague abundance (e.g several, lots, few, large clump etc.) should be entered into the comment column. This is a non-mandatory column.

Sex/Stage: This is what the abundance figure refers to, e.g. male, juvenile, dead, displaying etc.). It is non-mandatory, but useful in conjunction with an abundance. Click on a cell in this column to access a drop-down list which contains the terms you can choose from. If what you want is not in the list please add this information to the comment column.

Date: The date you made the observation. Note, it is also valid to enter a date range, for example 1/2/2012 – 29/2/2012. Please enter dates in the dd/mm/yyyy format, e.g. 30/03/2012. Please don't use dots to separate the day month and year.

GridRef: The column contains the grid reference using the British National Grid Reference system. Ideally we would like to receive records with at least a 6-figure grid reference e.g. SP356112. Using a website is the best way of getting an accurate grid reference. A good site to try is:

<http://www.bnhs.co.uk/focuson/grabagridref/html/index.htm> or:

<https://gridreferencefinder.com/>

A Useful Tip!!!

If you spot something on the road as you're driving (or cycling!) along you can work out a grid reference by:

- set your mileage counter back to zero as soon as you see the animal / plant
- wait until you see something along the road that is a good landmark (such as a road turning off to a named place).
- When you are at the landmark, note your mileage (this is the distance along the road from the record location)
- You can use this distance (when you are no longer driving!) to work out the exact grid reference of your record from the Ordnance Survey map
- It is easier to locate the right spot on the map if you convert the distance between record and landmark from miles to kilometres. There are 1.6km to the mile.

Location: Enter where you saw the species in this column. Please enter enough information to allow someone else to be able to find the location independently on a map. Please restrict your locations to 100 characters or less.

Recorder: Your name, or whoever saw the species reported.

Determiner: If you referred your observation to an "expert" for confirmation, perhaps you sent them a photo or described what you saw to them, please could you put their name in this box.

Record Type: Another selection from a drop-down list. If you spotted what you are reporting and didn't trap it, detect it with a bat detector, catch it in a net etc. then the default value to select is "Field record".

Comment: Anything else you think we might want to know.

Data Log Number: For TVERC use only

2. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR RECORDS

When your records arrive at TVERC, the first thing we will do is to acknowledge them. If you have sent them in via email, this is how we will contact you. If you do not hear from us within a week or so of submitting the records, please feel free to check that we have received them successfully.

At TVERC we are committed to the highest possible standards of accuracy with the data that we hold and this means that once your data has arrived it will be logged and then we will perform

various checks on it before we incorporate it into our database. These checks are generally known as verification and validation.

Verification – This involves looking at what you have recorded and asking the question “could this species have been recorded at this place and at this time?” Often, if records are submitted by local experts this just amounts to checking that some extremely unlikely species has been accidentally typed in because their knowledge of their specialist taxonomic group is far better than ours. For other records our “in house” expertise is often sufficient to perform this check. If the species is one which is commonly misidentified (otter and water vole spring to mind) we may need to contact you and ask you to provide more information. Occasionally, especially if the species is rare and perhaps difficult to identify we may send your record to a local expert. Obviously we always bear in mind that with global warming, new species are appearing in the two counties all the time. Just because something hasn’t been recorded before doesn’t mean that it hasn’t been correctly identified.

Validation - This means that before we enter your data we check that it has a valid “who, what, when and where”. In particular our normal procedure is to double check the grid reference you have provided using our GIS (computer mapping) software. This is why providing a written description of where you saw a species is very important, it allows us to do this check.

3. WHAT YOUR RECORDS ARE USED FOR

Many people like to know what we use their records for. The answer is for a wide range of things including the following:

- Providing information about wildlife for local people so they can, for example, enjoy their local wildlife more.
- Providing local wildlife groups and Parish Councils with information about wildlife to, for example, to assist in creating local plans.
- Providing information about wildlife to local naturalists and recorders to assist them in a deeper understanding of what they record, and to help target further recording work.
- Providing information about wildlife to local authorities to enable them to carry out their statutory duties and to manage land they own for wildlife.
- To assist TVERC and others to make assessments of the nature and quality of wildlife habitats
- Providing wildlife information to academic researchers and students
- Providing wildlife information to government organisations, such as The Environment Agency and Natural England, to assist them in carrying out their duties and managing land (e.g. SSSIs) and waterways.

- To provide wildlife information to other non-governmental organisations who need it, for example wildlife charities (e.g. RSPB, Plantlife)

DON'T FORGET

Email Berkshire or Oxfordshire records to: tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Or send to: Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre c/o Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, Oxford OX1 1NE