

# WPD Field Guide to Protected Species



## WPD Environment Team

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## About This Guide

This guide is to inform you as to your legal position when encountering protected species and their habitats (places they live, rest, breed). You are potentially liable for a fine up to £5000 and up to 5 years in prison so this guide is aimed at informing and protecting you as well as the reputation of WPD. If in doubt call Green Ecology 0845 4748774 for further advice. If encountering protected species or habitats always take photos, make notes of when, where and what happened along with who was present. Report this information to a manager and Green Ecology. Use this table to see which protected species you should consider when working in a particular habitat.

	WOODLAND	SCRUB	BUILDINGS	FIELDS/HEDGES	COASTAL	WATER COURSES	HEATHLAND
BADGERS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
BATS	✓		✓	✓			
BIRDS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DORMICE	✓	✓	✓	✓			
GREAT CRESTED NEWTS	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
OTTERS						✓	
REPTILES		✓		✓	✓		✓
WATER VOLES						✓	

## Badgers

- Badgers are a UK protected species
- Their setts and tunnels are also protected
- To disturb a sett you need a licence

### Can be found

- Urban or rural settings, hedge/field margins, woodland, scrub and under buildings

### Field signs

- Setts have D shaped entrance (minimum 250mm diameter)
- Spoil heap by entrance



### Potential risk scenarios

- Setts/tunnels interfering with cables or sub-stations
- Setts/tunnels on proposed cable routes
- Setts/tunnels on access routes to repair site
- Setts/tunnels affecting pole erection or removal

### Risk avoidance measures

- Avoid work around sett openings. Assume tunnels run up to 20m from opening at a depth of >0.2m
- Do not fell trees onto setts or tunnels
- No fuel, oil, chemicals near sett opening
- If long term planning, avoid December-July as this is the breeding season

### In an emergency

- Call Green Ecology
- If Green Ecology can't be present, use hand tools, minimise excavation, proceed with caution
- Always report incident to Green Ecology afterwards as it may need to be reported to Natural England



## Bats

- All bats are European protected species
- It is illegal to harm or disturb a bat or to destroy its roost (place it rests)
- To move a bat or disturb or destroy a roost you need a licence



### Can be found

- Urban or rural settings, buildings new and old, trees, tunnels and bridges etc.

### Field signs

- Most UK bats are 4-6cm long and if found may appear dead but could in fact be torpid
- Droppings about the size of a grain of rice. Unlike mouse droppings they will crumble to dust between finger and thumb. Often in piles below a roost
- Roosts in trees could be in splits, holes, cracks. Sometimes staining below roost feature



### Potential risk scenarios

- Bats roosting in trees/limbs that need felling
- Bats roosting in sub-stations or other buildings that need accessing

### Risk avoidance measures

- Avoid felling trees/limbs of trees with bat features
- If any bats or Field signs found call Green Ecology
- Affecting bat roost during pole erection or removal

### In an emergency

- Call Green Ecology if bats (dead or alive) or piles of droppings found
- If trees/limbs need felling that have bat features, adopt a soft fell approach
- If a limb must be cut and it may contain a bat, strap the limb to a nearby tree after works
- If Green Ecology aren't present and a bat must be moved. Wear gloves, place bat carefully in



## Birds

- All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by UK law
- Main nesting season is March-August inclusive

### Can be found

- Urban or rural settings, hedges, woodland, scrub, on buildings/pylons, wetlands, heathland

### Field signs

- Nests
- Birds carrying nesting materials or food for young
- Birds displaying mating behaviour (singing vigorously, courtship behaviour, actual mating)



### Potential risk scenarios

- Nests in vegetation that needs cutting back
- Nests on buildings that are in the way of operations
- Nests on pylons or poles
- Ground nesting birds when trenching/earth works



### Risk avoidance measures

- Avoid vegetation clearance within the nesting season

### In an emergency

- If clearance must take place in nesting season call Green Ecology to oversee operation and check for nesting birds
- Use hand tools for vegetation clearance during nesting season, cutting 1m at a time
- If a nest must be moved in an emergency, place it in a close, safe location of similar habitat





### Can be found

- Urban or rural settings, hedge/field margins, woodland, scrub and under buildings

### Field signs

- You are unlikely to see dormice but that doesn't mean they aren't there
- Nest's shaped like a ball of woven leaves at the base of trees/hedges
- Gnawed hazelnuts with a smooth round opening



in the area to be effected

- Call Green Ecology if clearing more than 20m<sup>2</sup> of dormouse habitat (licence needed)

### In an emergency

- Call Green Ecology if dormice or Field signs are found
- Green Ecology to oversee clearance/felling work in dormouse habitat
- If Green Ecology not able to attend in time, move nest to a close by safe location of similar habitat
- Always report incident to Green Ecology afterwards as it may need to be reported to Natural England



## Great Crested Newts

- Great Crested Newts (GCN) are European protected species
- This means their habitat is also protected (ponds/ditches, fields, scrub within 500m)
- To remove habitat you need a licence



### Can be found

- Ponds/ditches, hedge/field margins, woodland and scrub

### Field signs

- You are unlikely to see field sign other than newts themselves

### Potential risk scenarios

- Newts found in sub stations and cable tunnels
- Works interfering with ponds/ditches
- Works effecting terrestrial habitat

### Risk avoidance measures

- Pre-site inquiry to see if GCN are recorded in the area to be effected
- Call Green Ecology if disturbing GCN habitat within 500m of a known GCN pond (licence needed)

### In an emergency

- Call Green Ecology if GCN are found
- GE to oversee vegetation clearance/pond disturbance work in GCN habitat
- If GE not able to attend in time, conduct hand search at ground level before earth works
- Always report incident to GE afterwards as it may need to be reported to Natural England



## Otters

- Otters are a European protected species
- This means their habitat is also protected (holt, lay up sites on river banks)
- To disturb otters or damage their habitat you need a licence

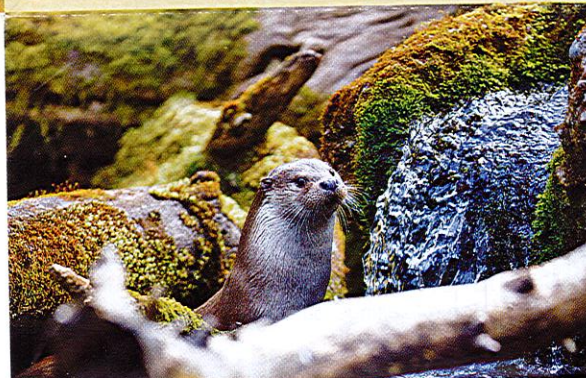


### Can be found

- Rivers, streams, they also have a terrestrial territory

### Field signs

- Spraints (droppings) which are fishy smelling, contain scales
- Footprints
- Holts or layup sites



### Potential risk scenarios

- Works to river/stream banks including pole erection/removal, cable installation and direct drillings

### Risk avoidance measures

- Pre-site inquiry to see if otters are recorded in the area to be effected

### In an emergency

- Call GE if otter field signs are found within 50m of works
- Always report incident to GE afterwards as it may need to be reported to Natural England



## Water voles

- Water voles are protected by UK law
- However their habitat is also protected
- Extinct from Cornwall, most of Devon and large parts of South Wales
- To destroy habitat you need a licence

### Can be found

- River/stream/pond banks (with lush vegetation, not bare banks)

### Field signs

- Burrows, footprints, grazed "lawns" (paths), latrines

### Potential risk scenarios

- Works interfering with river/stream/ponds banks

### Risk avoidance measures

- Avoid strip of land 2m from water's edge if possible
- Call Green Ecology if Field signs are found within working area (licence needed)

### In an emergency

- Green Ecology to oversee vegetation clearance work in water vole habitat
- If Green Ecology not able to attend in time, cut vegetation to ground level before excavation
- Excavate around burrows with hand tools using extreme caution
- Always report incident to Green Ecology afterwards as it may need to be reported to Natural England



## Reptiles

- All reptiles are protected by UK law
- The rare sand lizard and smooth snake are protected by European law, would probably only found on SSSI's (lowland heathland, dunes)
- Apart from sand lizard and smooth snake, reptile habitat is NOT protected



### Can be found

- Coastal, hedge/field margins, woodland, scrub (also gardens and brownfield), heathland

### Field signs

- You are unlikely to see Field signs other than reptiles themselves

### Potential risk scenarios

- Any ground works in suitable habitat

### Risk avoidance measures

- Avoid ground works where habitat is better (tussocky/ unmanaged grass) during spring/summer or hibernacular (log piles) during the winter
- Contact GE if earth works planned in suitable habitat
- Manage habitat in advance of excavation to become unsuitable for reptiles. This involves staged cutting to lengths of 6" and 2" then bare earth with a 24hr gap per cut

### In an emergency

- Call Green Ecology
- Cut vegetation to 2" before breaking earth
- Do a hand search to move any reptiles
- Minimize use of heavy machinery (use hand tool) and vehicle movements