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Introduction

Introduction

Many plants and animals in England and Wales are protected by law. To determine what species may be present on site the relevant ecological surveys must be completed. The following pages contain an overview of the types of survey that are commonly completed, and timelines for when surveys and subsequent mitigation can take place.

Why carry out an Ecology Survey: Legal Requirements & Identification of Project Risks

Legislation relating to the management and control of various species covers both plant and animal species. In the UK the main pieces of legislation are The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994 which give protection to some of the most threatened species in England. Under these statutes it is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill such animals or to deliberately take or destroy their eggs.
- Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place of such an animal.
- Deliberately disturb such animals in a way as to be likely to significantly
 affect (a) the ability of any significant groups of animals of that species
 to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young, or (b) the local
 distribution of abundance of that species.
- Deliberately pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy a wild plant of a European protected species. It is also an offence for any purpose to possess, sell or exchange such a plant.
- Have in one's possession or control, any live or dead European protected species.

Carrying out an ecology survey will identify if any such species are present on site and recommend actions to be taken to protect these species and enable construction to take place.

Advice can then be sought from specialist consultants, The Wildlife Trust or the Countryside Council for Wales on mitigation measures where protected species are present. This may require applying for a specialist licence, protecting or relocating protected species. Early advice can prevent costly delays at a later date.

Why carry out an Ecology Survey: BREEAM/Code for Sustainable Homes Assessments

BREEAM assessments require a suitably qualified ecologist to produce an ecology report as evidence for several of the credits within the 'Land Use & Ecology' chapter. This section covers issues such as ecological value of the site and protection of ecological features (LE3), mitigating ecological impact (LE4), enhancing site ecology (LE5), and long term impact on biodiversity (LE6). The relevant BREEAM assessor manual should be consulted for full details of the individual BREEAM credit compliance requirements.

The Wildlife Trusts

In April 2014, Willmott Dixon signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal Society of The Wildlife Trusts to work together and Willmott Dixon has committed to using the ecological services provided by The Wildlife Trusts ecological consultancies.



Types of Ecology Surveys

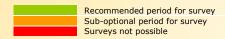
Survey Technique	Overview							
Habitat								
Code for Sustainable Homes/BREEAM Ecological Assessment	The most basic habitat assessment of a site; basic protected species interest assessment.							
Phase 1 Survey	Broad habitat assessment and mapping, determination of protected species interest, ecological desk study data.							
National Vegetation Classification (NVC)	Detailed botanical investigation of selected habitat composition using quadrats.							
Aboricultural Survey	Assessment of the condition of trees at a site and establishment of protection options.							
Species								
Terrestrial invertebrates	Determination of important terrestrial invertebrate interest at a site using a range of techniques and lab ID.							
Aquatic invertebrates	Determination of biological water quality if site is adjacent to stream or river habitats, or contains ponds.							
White clawed crayfish survey	Survey for crayfish presence/absence if a site borders a suitable watercourse.							
Badger survey	Determination if badger setts are located on site or within 30m of a site.							
Otter survey	For sites which border major watercourses.							
Water vole survey	For sites where there is a watercourse present or where there are a network of ponds and wet ditches which are linked.							
Bat survey	Any mature trees and buildings may provide roost features and should be assessed. This involves daytime and nocturnal inspections.							
Dormouse survey	For sites which border large areas of woodland, scrub or have ancient/mature hedgerows.							
Breeding birds survey	Determination of nesting activity at large sites and presence of Schedule 1 bird species (offence to disturb).							
Great crested newt survey	For sites where ponds are present, or where there are suitable ponds within a 500m radius of the site.							
Reptile survey	Sites where there is suitable habitat and connectivity e.g. railway lines, streams, allotments, grassland and scrub.							
Lower plant survey	Specialist survey for mosses, bryophytes, lichens and fungi.							
*Other ecological surveys such as red squirrel surveys and natterjack toad surveys can be undertaken but are highly specialised and confined to limited locations across the country.								



Ecology Survey Calendar

Species	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
Badgers	Limited sett/bait surveys	Bait marking and sett surveys				Limited bait marking and sett surveys				Sett surveys		Limited sett/bait surveys	
Bats	Inspection	of hibernation roos	ts (difficult)	Limited activity	Summer roost e	mergence surveys a possib	and activity survey le throughout Apri	ion of roof-spaces	Limited activity	Inspections of hibernation roosts (difficult)			
Birds	Winter species Breeding birds,			/migrant species	Breed	ding birds	Low activity		Migrant species		Winter species		
Dormice	Gr	nawed hazel nut sea	ırch		Nest tube survey from April to November. Gnawed hazel nut search (best from Sept-Dec)								
Great Crested Newts	Newts hibernating				ults/terrestrial survey. Larvae surveys from mid-May. Habitat and larvae survey				Habitat survey		Newts hibernating		
Habitat/ Vegetation		Phase 1 only			Phase 1 and NVC					Phase 1 only			
Otters	Limited by vegetation cover and weather conditions rather than seasons												
Reptiles	Reptiles hibernating Peek survey months				Reduced basking time lowers effectiveness of refugia surveys			Peak survey month	Limited activity	Reptiles hibernating			
Water Voles	Low activity	Initial habitat survey	Habitat and field signs/activity surveys. May be limited b						e limited by vegetation cover and weather.			Low activity	
White- clawed crayfish				/ assessment only		Manual search, torch light counts and trapping					Habitat suitability assessment only		

Note: Planning authorities may have differing dates when surveys can be completed.

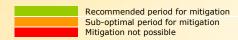




Ecology Mitigation Timeline

Species	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December		
Badgers	Construction of artificial setts only (no disturbance of existing setts)								Exclusion from setts and destruction (see January)					
Bats	Maternity	roost works		d maternity roost orks			Hibernation roost works				Maternity roost works			
Birds	Clearance works			Nesting season (avoid ALL clearance works)				Clearance works						
Dormice	No clear	rance works as hibe	Clearance, translocation and release			No clearance works as may separate females from young			Clearance, translocation and release		No clearance works as hibernating			
Great Crested Newts	Pond mana	gement only	Both terrestrial and aquatic trapping possil					Terrestrial t	rapping only		Pond management only			
Habitat/ Vegetation	Planting and translocation No mitigation for most species									Planting and translocation				
Otters	No seasonal constraints, however restrictions are likely during breeding season													
Reptiles	Clearanc	e of scrub	Capture a	nd translocation pro	grammes and scr	ub clearance	be sub-opt	dant but likely to imal due to erature	Capture and translocation	Clearance of scrub				
Water Voles	Avoid work	ks in habitat	Trapping and exclusion Avoid w				(breeding season) Trapping			and exclusion Avoid works in habitat		ks in habitat		
White- clawed crayfish	Avoid disturbance							Exclusions	s undertaken		Avoid disturbance			

Note: Planning authorities may have differing dates when mitigation can be completed.





Endangered Species

Please refer to these webpages for information on endangered species

https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals

http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/UKBAP Species-HabitatsReview-2007.pdf

References and further information

Natural England webpage on advice and legislation relating to the management and control of various species:

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/default.aspx

The Countryside Council for Wales: http://www.ccw.gov.uk/

The Wildlife Trusts website: http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/

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