

Guide for BioBlitz Volunteers

As a volunteer or naturalist at a BioBlitz you are the first point of contact for visitors to the event, so it is important that you are able to give them some context and explain what a BioBlitz is and why we are doing it. Here are some top tips to prepare you for your BioBlitz experience. For details specific to your BioBlitz, please ask the event organiser.

The key role of a BioBlitz Volunteer is to help participants record their wildlife sightings.

The most vital components of a species record are:

- **who** (who made the record?)
- **what** (what did they see?)
- **when** (what time and date was the sighting made?)
- **where** (exact location; either through a 6-figure grid reference or a photo which has geo-location allowed)

If using the [iNaturalist](#) mobile app to record wildlife sightings, the app will suggest the species seen, and automatically record location, time, and profile of the person who made the recording (if not automatic, you may need to check phone settings). If using paper recording forms, make sure to note all of these details for each record.

If using iNaturalist app:

Check out this video explaining [How to Make an Observation on iNaturalist](#) on YouTube. Be ready to help people download the app and use it on the day. Top tip - make sure to take more than one photo per observation and photograph from different angles (you can upload up to 4 per species). This can help to get a positive verification and make your observation count. Please see our [Guide To Using iNaturalist](#) for more info on this.

If identifying with keys/guides/supported by naturalists:

In many cases, the iNaturalist app will make a confident identification. However, in some cases we will need the help of ID keys and experts. If you find a specimen (for example, a millipede, fly, spider etc), you can:

- Collect it in a pot
- Make a note of the location (find your 6-figure grid reference)
- Take it to the BioBlitz base, where volunteers and naturalists will be on hand to help identify it with guides.

Paper record sheets may also be provided by your BioBlitz organiser to note species that aren't recorded on iNaturalist.

Working with children:

Records that are very vague e.g. "snail" or "spider" have little scientific value, but getting children involved in identification at this basic level is invaluable to cultivating an interest and appreciation of nature. Children can be very helpful collecting species in a pot or with a photograph. More detailed identification may then be done by the adults later.

FAQ's for BioBlitz Volunteers

As a volunteer, you will expect to get asked lots of questions throughout the day. Here's some FAQ's that are likely to come up!

What is a BioBlitz?

"Bio" means "life" and "Blitz" means "to do something quickly and intensively".

A BioBlitz is an event where expert naturalists and members of the public work together to do a fast and intensive survey of all forms of life in an area. It's a race to find as many different species as possible of plants, birds, insects, fungi, mammals, fish and everything else in a set time period (normally 24 hours). A BioBlitz aims to record everything, common or rare, to build up a full picture of the biodiversity of a site on the day.

Why do a BioBlitz?

There are a few reasons why a site would want to do a BioBlitz; it could be to help a local community to learn more about their local biodiversity, to connect to their local green spaces, or to give people the opportunity to support wildlife and experience wildlife recording. Intensive efforts of these kinds are also critically important for finding rare or undocumented species. We can't protect wildlife unless we know where it is, so by recording wildlife we can help scientists and decision-makers to know where our important habitats are.

What is a species record?

A species record is a documented record of a particular species, in a particular area, on a particular date.

Can I still take part if I don't have a phone/access to iNaturalist?

Yes. You can either team up with someone who does, or take your species back to the BioBlitz hub where volunteers can make records of your species with you another way.

What if the iNaturalist app cannot identify the species that I've found?

If you cannot identify an organism to species level, you can submit to as accurate a level as you can. For example, if you're not sure what type of snail it is, you can just type "snail". An online expert will likely make a suggestion of what type your snail is. Alternatively, take it to the BioBlitz hub where a naturalist may be able to help with identification. Please note that sometimes the app struggles if the picture is blurry. Please avoid submitting blurry photos - you can re-take the photo and re-upload if this happens.

What if I'm not using iNaturalist and I do not know the species I've found?

You can take a photo or collect a specimen and ask a naturalist colleague to help; just remember to make a note of "Who, When and Where" (who saw it, when it was seen, and most importantly, where you saw the species). Your BioBlitz organiser may have a selection of fold-out/online field guides available for identifying species, although often only a tiny selection are illustrated in the guides. Don't just pick the picture that looks closest: it is always worth running your IDs past a friendly naturalist colleague - if it's not on the ID guide, you may have found something rare!

What will happen to our data?

The data that is collected (on iNaturalist and by volunteers at the main hub) will contribute towards local and national datasets that can be used by scientists, local authorities and surveyors to research, manage and protect your local wildlife and green spaces.

How do I take part in more BioBlitz events?

Check out National BioBlitz Network social media pages for more upcoming events across the UK.

- Facebook: National BioBlitz Network
- Instagram: @UKBioBlitz
- Twitter: @BioBlitzUK

If you are feeling inspired, you can also find advice and tools for running your own event with free guidance from:

<https://bioblitzuk.org.uk/>

Further ways to get involved with wildlife monitoring:

With iNaturalist, you can record wildlife wherever and whenever you find it! In your local park, on your commute, or in your own garden! There are also alternative recording tools such as iRecord where you can record your sightings. You may want to find your local Nature Groups in your local area to find out about nature focused events.

The vast majority of wildlife data is recorded by volunteers and amateurs so your contribution can make a huge difference. You can look to the Biological Record Centre's website to find a list of monitoring schemes taking part in the UK if you are interested in helping to monitor a a specific species on a longer term basis:

<https://www.brc.ac.uk/recording-schemes>

Some useful websites

- National BioBlitz Network - more resources about running a BioBlitz: www.bioblitzuk.org.uk
- iNaturalist UK - full website version of iNaturalist app for submitting records: www.uk.inaturalist.org
- NBN gateway & national species data: www.nbn.org.uk
- iSpot - help identifying species: www.ispot.org.uk
- iRecord - alternative website for submitting species records online: <https://irecord.org.uk/>

Social media:

If you use social media, why not tweet or post photos from the event during the day! Ask your BioBlitz organiser if they have a specific tag to use. Also make sure you tweet the National BioBlitz team (@BioBlitzUK), tag on Facebook (National BioBlitz Network) or mention on Instagram (@UKBioBlitz).

This guide is an adapted version of supplement resource written alongside the Guide to Running a BioBlitz. National BioBlitz Network www.bioblitzuk.org.uk

Robinson, L.D., Tweddle, J.C., Postles, M.C., West, S.E., Sewell, J. & Drewitt, E. (2013) Guide to running a BioBlitz: volunteers supplement. Natural History Museum, Bristol Natural History Consortium, University of York and Marine Biological Association.

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Working with the public – 10 Top Tips for BioBlitz Volunteers

1. The key to a good BioBlitz is enthusiasm, passion and interest. This will rub off on to others taking part, so have fun and enjoy yourself!
2. You (both naturalists and volunteers) are on hand to ensure each session provides a fun, interactive, and accessible activity. Give participants the chance to touch, smell, pick (depending on the plant), and use all their senses to experience the outdoors, and give them the confidence and freedom to shake a tree branch or pass a net through a wild meadow.
3. If you are leading a session, introduce what the BioBlitz is about and what the group will do. After the activities, finish the session with a summary/plenary. Go over what you've done, what you've found, etc. Suggest things to do next (visit other sites or events, visit a website, or make your own 'something' at home).



4. Never assume knowledge or skills - participants may have never been to the green space before. Some may not know what a daisy or a stinging nettle is or only know it in their own language, while others may be able to tell you about wildlife or plants from their part of a city, or another part of the world.
5. Enable your language to be accessible, clear and simple. There is nothing wrong with using big or complicated words, as long as they are explained. Latin names can be used sparingly, and if used, used in context and explained. For some groups, simply calling something a beetle or worm will do. The "proper" names can be found on iNaturalist, or recorded on the paper recording forms.
6. Be the eyes and ears of your audience - if you are unable to hear or understand your naturalist or volunteer colleague during the introduction, the main activity or the plenary, your participants won't either. Ask questions on their behalf to provide some clarity.
7. If working with school groups, be clear with the teacher or adult what their role is right from the start so expectations are clear. With families, be clear that the activities are for parents/carers and their children to do together. Be inclusive; ask open-ended questions which can be discussed in pairs, so everyone has the chance to think about the question and answer it (and also helps those who are more introverted, or unable to speak English very well).

8. The public will perceive you all as experts, whether you are designated a volunteer or a naturalist. They will be interested in what you do, how you got to be there, and ask questions. If you don't know the answer, just say so - and it is good practice to sometimes bounce questions back for people to answer when they get home (or seek out another naturalist at the event).

9. Keep a holistic overview of your group - ensure parents are with their children, everyone keeps relatively close together when dispersing during an activity. Ensure children are not left by themselves, or that you are not left alone with them.

10. Empower participants to go home and have a go themselves or return to 'their' green space another time.



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