



How to Survey a County Wildlife Site or Churchyard

This handout provides information on the equipment you will need and the methodology to follow to conduct a plant and habitat survey on your chosen County Wildlife Site or Churchyard.

Equipment (some items provided by Norfolk Wildlife Trust)

- X10 hand lens
- Plant ID books and field guides
- Clipboard/paper/notebook and pens
- Plastic bags for samples
- Camera with macro setting
- Compass/GPS/GPS app on smartphone
- OS site maps
- Insect repellent
- Sun hat/sunscreen

Plant Survey Methodology

This method allows you to identify what plant species are present and can be followed on either a County Wildlife Site or at a churchyard.

Follow this method to complete your plant list, other notable species list and invasive species list (**handout 7 for CWS or handout 8 for churchyard**).

1. Start by walking the perimeter of your chosen site and identify any plant species that make up its boundaries.
For example, if there is a hedgerow or grass bank, record the species on your plant list.
2. Walk over the different areas that make up your site and identify as many of the plants that are present as you can.
3. Walk the same route through your site on each returning visit and ensuring all areas have been surveyed.
4. **Only record each species of plant in your plant list once!**
Even if the plant occurs in multiple areas of your site the species only needs to be recorded once in your list. Use the associated DAFOR ticklist to reference its total coverage over the whole site (**see handout 9 for how to do this**).
5. Remember that your site will change in appearance over the season as new plants begin to flower, this may cause your assessment of DAFOR for a species to change as the flowering season progresses. Change this as appropriate in your plant list.
6. Remember to look out for any other notable species as you walk the site, such as barn wwls or purple hairstreak butterflies, and record these in the Other Notable Species table.
7. Remember to look out for any invasive species that are listed in your Invasive Species table.



Phase 1 Habitat Survey Methodology

A phase 1 habitat survey allows a site to be categorised into its distinct habitats which builds up a picture of the overall site and its condition. The results of this survey will be used to inform conservation management plans for the site.

You will complete this survey with a staff member from Norfolk Wildlife Trust. The following methodology has been given for your information only.

You will be supplied with site maps that you can annotate as your completing the survey.

1. Start by walking the perimeter of your chosen site and identify what makes up the boundaries, marking them on your map as you go.
2. Walk any footpaths through the site and also mark these on the map.
3. Whilst walking the site, start to identify the different types of habitats that make it up and mark any clear compartments on your map that can be referenced to help with writing the habitat descriptions.
4. For each different habitat identify a range of plant species that are present and note which species are dominant.
5. List your plant species in the separate plant list on.
6. Write a detailed description for each habitat you encounter, including information such as general structure, dominant plant species and any notable features or characteristics, such as standing water or rocky outcrops.
NB* If your site is very large, it can be split into separate compartments to help with writing the habitat descriptions.
7. Mark on the map the extent of the different habitats throughout the site.
8. Clearly mark and label on your map any other notable features such as ponds, hedgerows or buildings or any rare or notable plant species.
9. Direction and flow of any rivers, streams or ditches need to be marked on the map with arrows showing direction of flow.
10. Mark on the map the land use and any notable features that surround the site.



Writing your Habitat Descriptions

This is an important part of completing the phase 1 habitat survey and will initially be done in the field with an NWT staff member, however these descriptions can be added to over the summer as you revisit the site if you find any new species or the habitat changes in a notable way.

To help you write the habitat descriptions, think about these features that you might want to comment on for different types of habitat, and make a note of the flowering plant to grass ratio (e.g 30% flowering plants to 70% grasses). Other features to think about:

Grassland

- Acid/calcareous/neutral soils
- Wet/dry areas and their extent
- Presence/extent of scrub
- Ponds/ditches
- Signs of past or current management e.g. grazing
- Sward height
- Sward structure – rough : fine grass ratio

Fen

- Ditches/ponds/rivers/streams
- Presence of springs/groundwater sources
- Sward height
- Soil type
- Presence and extent of scrub/trees
- Flowering plant : grass/sedge ratio (advanced level of ID)

Heathland

- Soil type – sand / gravel
- Presence and extent of scrub/gorse/birch
- Structure and age of heather (advanced level of ID)

Woodland

- Soil type – clay / sand / gravel
- Wet/dry areas and their extent
- Slopes and aspect
- Internal features – paths, drains, thickets, clearings
- Boundary features – hedges or fences
- Earth features – banks, hollows
- Dead wood – fallen, standing, hanging, pits and mounds, windthrows, stumps
- Drains – wet, dry, running, width
- Age structure of trees
- Structure of canopy, understory and ground flora
- Signs of past management e.g. coppicing, pollarding
- Signs of current management
- Ponds / ditches



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