

# The Orkney Virtual Garden BioBlitz - what it's all about!

The Orkney Garden Bioblitz, organized by Orkney Field Club, starts on **Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May**, running for 24 hours from **12 noon** on Saturday until **12 noon on Sunday 31<sup>th</sup> May**.

Please take part! Make a list of all the wildlife you can identify around your home and garden over that time. Everything! And then tell us.

Throughout the event the Orkney Field Club (OFC) wildlife recorders and experts will be around to help you. We'll be on Facebook, and you can also keep in touch through Twitter. Please send us your records by emailing us through the day and afterwards at [orkneybioblitz@gmail.com](mailto:orkneybioblitz@gmail.com) or get in touch through social media. Remember to use #orkneybioblitz2020 on Facebook and Twitter!

## What is a BioBlitz?

A BioBlitz is a 24-hour event set up with the aim of identifying and recording as many wildlife species as possible. It's a fun way to look closely at nature and learn more about our local wildlife whilst generating useful information (known as biological records) that are crucial for the work of conservationists. This is citizen science at its best!

## Why a Virtual BioBlitz?

A BioBlitz would usually work by bringing wildlife experts and the general public together at a single site, and OFC has done this in the past, but of course we are now very limited in what we can do due to the Covid-19 restrictions. We've realized that what we can do is to work with you all across Orkney, by all carrying out our own mini-BioBlitz wherever we are, and then combining all the sightings.

## Where can I do it?

We want wildlife records from anywhere around your home and garden in Orkney, whilst abiding fully by the Government Covid-19 restrictions. This might be your garden or land, or the view from your window. Even wildlife in your house can be recorded! If that is not possible, you may contribute records from somewhere close by, always in accordance with current Covid-19 restrictions on movements and activities.

## What Should I record?

Everything! Make a list of all wildlife you can see or hear. We want your help to record everything that's wild in Orkney, whether or not it is native. If a species is not originally native to our area, it needs to have got there naturally, rather than having been planted or released.

## How should I record it?

Every wildlife sighting needs four key things to make it a really useful 'biological record':

- Who you are
- What species
- Where you saw it
- When you saw it

You can make a list and email it to us at [orkneybioblitz@gmail.com](mailto:orkneybioblitz@gmail.com). Or you can use the form we have created as an attachment. This is on our website also.

## What if I don't know what it is?

We are here to help! You can join and post pictures to our Facebook Group Orkney Virtual Garden Bioblitz or tweet using #orkneybioblitz2020. Remember to use our # on any social media posts. Or you can email a picture to us. Mostly we will be able to identify it, or know somebody who can, if it can be identifiable from a photo.

To learn more about wildlife, there is lots of information out there online – see our ID links document in the Facebook group.

It is important to bear in mind that there are very many species out there, some of which are very similar. It can be very difficult to identify some wildlife to species level, and impossible to work out some species from photos alone. We'll be keeping a running total of all the kinds of wildlife we record over the 24 hours, noting down everything we can record to species level, and also making a note of anything else that we can only identify as far as group of species (genus) level.

**How do I record where I am?**

A six-figure National Grid Reference is best, which you can work out from an Ordnance Survey map, or from [www.gridreferencefinder.com](http://www.gridreferencefinder.com). However, if grid references are not your thing, then provide your postal address, or carefully describe the location of where you've seen the wildlife.

**How do I let you know what I've seen?**

Please email us your list at [orkneybioblitz@gmail.com](mailto:orkneybioblitz@gmail.com) , or if you prefer post it (address is on the form). We'll be glad to take any records of small numbers of species from what you send us via social media during the event, but it will be easiest if you can put together a list and send it over. Get them in as soon as you can so we can share results quickly.

**What will happen to the records?**

We will add them all up, and let you know the grand total of how many species have been seen. This will be on our website and Facebook page.

All records collected will go into the county biological records databases, through the Orkney Wildlife and Information Centre (OWIRC) and relevant county recorders for different wildlife groups where appropriate. This will enable records to also enter the national recording schemes for all the different wildlife groups, thus contributing to the National Biodiversity Network Atlas Scotland.

**Thanks and Good Luck!**