



NARRS

National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme

Landowner Liaison Advice Sheet

Wildlife surveys should only be carried out with legal access to the land in question. In some cases land may be publicly accessible; for example, a Public Right of Way or designated Open Access land; but it is still courteous to ask permission to survey. If land is not publicly accessible, then it is essential to obtain the landowner's permission in order to carry out a survey. It is a good idea to liaise with the landowner anyway, to explain the survey and identify the landowner for future reference. They may also be interested in the findings, and may be sympathetic to conservation in general.

Admittedly volunteer surveyors would find it easier if land access arrangements were arranged centrally, but unfortunately this is not practical and we do not have the resources to do this. Locating hundreds of landowners would be very time-consuming for us, and often impossible without local knowledge. There is also a lot of benefit in a face-to-face meeting. Sometimes local volunteers either know the landowner, or can use local knowledge to identify the landowner. If you do not know who the landowner is, it is usually productive to knock on doors of properties nearby, to ask in local shops, or to ask passers-by. Passers-by may ask you what you are doing anyway.

Experience has shown that the majority of landowners willingly grant access for wildlife surveys. If not, this may be due to concerns about discovery of protected species that might restrict their activities. For example, it might be perceived that discovery of great crested newts would prevent them from farming adjacent terrestrial habitat. Reassurance should be given that NARRS does not aim to hinder the activities of farmers and other landowners or tenants, and if someone is adamant in their refusal to grant access, you should not persist in trying to change their mind. In this situation, either select an adjacent square (if owned by someone else) or request another survey square from us. **Do not attempt to enter land where access has not been permitted.**

When meeting a landowner, it may help to use the *Landowner Introduction Letter* to verify your credentials. This introduces NARRS and provides contact details for the project coordinators. In your negotiations with a landowner, you are essentially acting as an ambassador for all wildlife projects, not just NARRS. So, please be courteous and attempt to build good relations with landowners.

Liaison with a landowner is not only essential to gain access to private land, but it is also an opportunity to gather information about the survey site. For example, a landowner may know of the presence of amphibians or reptiles. With regard to ponds, a landowner may know the history of fish stocking and is likely to know whether, or how frequently, the pond dries out. They may also know how long land has been under its current management regime. Landowners may also know about potential hazards on site.

You should make an agreement with the landowner about providing advance notice of site surveys. They may be happy for you to turn up when you want, but they are more likely to want to know when you will be on site. This can be especially important for torchlight amphibian surveys, which would be likely to attract attention from the landowner or their neighbours.

Some landowners may be interested in the results of your survey. If this is the case, you should ensure that you provide the landowner with feedback. This can be a quick call or note to summarise your findings, and perhaps a photocopy of your survey form. If the landowner would like to know more about the survey, then this can be supplied by the NARRS team at the HCT if you ask the landowner to contact us directly.



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