

Early spring is the optimum time to begin planning this year's ecological surveys to ensure that key timings are not missed. A missed survey can cause considerable delays and costs as the presence/absence of legally protected species is a material consideration for planning applications. Such information is also critical to allow ongoing management of habitats during sensitive periods e.g. during the bird breeding season.

At Lockhart Garratt we have been able to work effectively with our clients where we have been involved at a very early stage to provide risk and constraints assessments to minimise the costs associated with ecological issues. Subsequently we work to ensure that all ecology surveys are met as early as possible so that ecological information is available to inform planning applications, management plans, maintenance schedules and ongoing site works. Our clients include developers, house builders, architects, site managers, planners, minerals and waste companies and private estates.

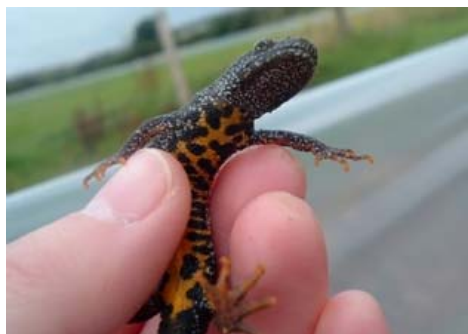
The key topics set out in this e-brief are detailed below:

- Protected Species Timings
- Bat Survey
- Biodiversity and Business



Protected Species Timings

To highlight some of the key species considerations a list of the commonly encountered protected species is provided below. We hope you find the list useful and should you require a **call back** regarding the species, just click on the corresponding picture and email us your enquiry.



Great Crested Newts - Mid March to June

The presence of GCN can often cause significant delays due to GCN habitat, as well as the animal being protected. Only a small window of time is available to confirm presence/absence of GCN on suitable sites. The survey needs to be conducted in the spring when newts are breeding in ponds. The optimal period is mid-April to mid-May.



Reptiles - March to June & September

The survey effort required for presence/absence surveys for reptiles on suitable sites is considerable. Best practice stipulates seven visits to check artificial refugia which have been installed well in advance of the repeat visits. It is therefore important to assess suitability of an area for reptiles to ensure that the time required to fully assess the site is available.



Nesting Birds - March to August

The bird nesting season can vary depending on the species e.g. crossbills can nest in late February and skylark can have a second brood in August. It is important to have a good understanding of the type of birds using a site ahead of works commencing. Once a bird nest is established it is illegal to damage and rarer species are protected from disturbance.



Badgers - March to May

Spring is a good time to assess badger activity on a site as vegetation is low, setts are active and badgers are busy foraging. The early identification of setts, both used and disused is important to inform a schedule of avoidance or sett closures if required.



Bats - May to September

Although inspections for signs of bats can be undertaken at any time of year, if bats are present then evening surveys are often required to assess the bat species and population size.

This information is often critical to allow the production of a mitigation strategy to support the proposed works.

Bat Survey Timings and Considerations

Risk Assessments

Early surveys to assess the potential of buildings and structures to provide opportunities for bats.

Conducted at anytime of the year to inform masterplanning, strategic decisions and site maintenance.



Internal Inspections

Detailed inspections of buildings and structures to search for signs of bat use e.g. actual bats, droppings, urine staining etc. **Conducted at anytime** of the year to provide presence/absence information and inform the requirement for further surveys.



Emergency Surveys - May to September

Evening and/or dusk surveys to assess bat use of structures that have signs of bats or high potential for bats. Emergency surveys provide further information which is often required to support mitigation strategies as part of the planning application. The information will also inform bat licence applications post-planning.



Activity Surveys - May to September

On large scale developments bat usage of the landscape is often required to support detailed impact assessments and identify important foraging and commuting routes used by bats.



Mitigation and Supervision

If bats are present and works are permitted then mitigation strategies and licences are required to ensure that bats are fully protected during works e.g. demolitions, renovations, restorations etc.

Such works are usually supervised by a bat licence holder to ensure that methods are followed and that should bats be encountered, immediate advice is available.



Biodiversity & Business

There are numerous positive benefits to businesses for demonstrating consideration of biodiversity issues including; risk management associated with environmental legislation, partnership and relationship building with key consultees, sustainable business practices and green credential recognition.



Lockhart Garratt works with a number of clients with regard to biodiversity enhancement, accreditation and award through schemes such as BREEAM, Code for Sustainable Homes and the Biodiversity Benchmark Award.

We can provide suitably qualified ecologists to assess the likely biodiversity impacts of a project or works programme and set out mitigation and enhancement measures. We have experience in producing and delivering biodiversity baseline assessments, action plans and implementation programmes.

The monitoring of biodiversity enhancement and implementation work is also a critical element of the process and we have proven experience in production and delivery of monitoring schemes to assess the success of various projects.



As part of the above service we have successfully assisted **Viridor** in their application for the prestigious Wildlife Trusts Biodiversity Benchmark Award on three of their closed landfill sites. These sites support a wide range of biodiversity as demonstrated by our baseline surveys ([click here](#) for further information) and as such require sensitive ongoing management to both protect and enhance the species and habitat present. We have provided succinct site specific Biodiversity Action Plans, which set out actions and targets for important site features including heathland, ancient woodland, dormouse, sand lizard and nightjar.

We are looking forward to the ongoing assessments of other closed sites to promote three more sites for the benchmark award. We are also working with other clients who have large landholdings and are interested in protecting and promoting their biodiversity resource ([click here](#) for a case study).