

# Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly



## **B2. Records – Key Principles**

### **1 Policy statement**

- 1.1 In the light of an ever increasing demand for biological and geological data, ERCCIS collates, manages and disseminates this information it holds for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.
- 1.2 The data ERCCIS provides to its data users needs to meet their demands. Minimum recording standards are therefore needed to define the essential elements needed for a biological record to ensure data are useful and fit for purpose.
- 1.3 ERCCIS encourages recorders to submit data of a higher quality than those stated in the minimum standards. If minimal recording standards are not met, ERCCIS cannot use the data.
- 1.4 ERCCIS will ensure incoming records contain enough information for their potential use to justify the information entering the data management system.

### **2 Background**

- 2.1 ERCCIS collates, manages and disseminates biological and geological information about Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Data are received from a variety of sources and in different formats.
- 2.2 Biological information is dynamic. Understanding the effects of changes on ecosystems and the environment can be complex and requires sound and reliable information from which to draw accurate conclusions.
- 2.3 Comprehensive, high quality and up-to-date data is central to understanding, managing and protecting the natural environment. Biological records are valuable as the information they contain may be used for not for profit decision-making, education, research and other public benefit uses.

### **3. Key principles**

- 3.1 Minimum recording standards state that four essential pieces of information are needed to make a biological record.
  - 3.1.1 Who – the full name of the recorder making the observation, also known as the observer. The observer may also determine the record by verifying the species observed has been correctly identified. Alternatively, the determiner may be a person who has better knowledge and experience of indentifying the species if the observer is unsure.

- 3.1.2 What – the name of the species observed, preferably both taxonomic and common name and to species level. Recorders should be aware that nomenclature may differ over time as taxonomic changes are made.
  - 3.1.3 When – the date the observation was made. The preferred format is day, month and year. Other formats can be accepted including month and year, the year alone, date ranges of a survey or the season with a year.
  - 3.1.4 Where – the location name and the corresponding grid reference where the observation was made. The most useful grid reference is to 1km<sup>2</sup> resolution or better. The location name should provide an accurate description that corresponds with the grid reference.
- 3.2 In addition to the minimum recording standards, recorders may wish to include further details. Other useful information includes age, sex, number of individuals observed, evidence of presence (droppings or tracks for example), habitat, weather, associated species, evidence of breeding and comments on behaviour.
- 3.3 Historical data may not meet the ERCCIS minimum standards for biological data; therefore, it is subject to lower threshold criteria.
- 3.3.1 Historical data are defined as any record(s) for which it is impossible to contact the recorder or donor for further information to upgrade the data.
  - 3.3.2 It is often possible to upgrade historical records through other means, through additional research and voucher specimens for example.

#### **4. Related documents**

*A Handbook for Biological Recorders – 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2006.* A manual for recording plants, animals and their habitats in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. CISFBR and ERCCIS.