

Conservation Communities - Wildlife Spotters Challenge

May and June

We'd love to hear from you if you've seen any of these 8 species. Help us to build up a picture of Devon's wildlife by telling Devon Biodiversity Records Centre what you've seen and where: [Wildlife sightings – DBRC](#)



Photo: Tom Marshall

English Bluebells

English bluebells are more delicate than the non-native variety, with tightly curled back petals and flowers all on one side of the stem.

Wildflowers

Find out how to distinguish these species from other similar plants, along with more woodland wildflowers you can record by watching our [woodland talk](#).



Photo: Jess Smallcombe

Early Purple Orchids

These look nicer than they smell! Found until June in woodlands and road verges, with purple flowers and spotted leaves.

Herring Gulls are large, with yellow beak and pink legs. The beak has a red spot. Their front and tail are white and the back and wings are grey, with black and white bars across the tips. They come inland and can be found around farmland, reservoirs and rubbish tips! Young gulls are a mottled brown colour.



Photo: Bob Coyle

Birds

Did you know that some species we think of as common are actually declining?



Photo: Shirley Freeman

House Sparrows tend to form flocks. Males and females look different. The males have a grey top of the head, with a black bar across each eye, turning brown at the back of the head. Their tummy is pale with a black bib under their chin. Females are a similar colour in the body (brown back and wings and pale front) but don't have the striking markings on the head, just a rather subtle brown eye stripe.

Both house sparrows and herring gulls are on the [Birds Of Conservation Concern, red list](#)

Reptiles

In spring and early summer reptiles can be seen basking in the early morning sun. We'd like to hear about any reptiles you see.



Grass Snakes are often seen in gardens and near water. They are usually an olive colour with black bars, but colour is variable. They have a creamy-white collar just behind the head. Young grass snakes don't hatch until late summer.

Mammals

Here are a couple of mammal species that are often seen, but not so often recorded. Both species are covered in our [Meadow Mammals Talk](#).



Rabbits

Rabbits can be seen all year round. Their network of warrens can be hidden in scrub but are often visible. They will graze grassland around their warrens, leaving closely cropped lawns.



Moles

It is unlikely that you will see a mole but their molehills are unmistakable evidence of their presence. Molehills will appear in spring until June, when the ground often becomes too hard. Send us in your records of molehills.

Amphibians

We'd like to hear about any amphibians you see, there are very few records of amphibians in the Conservation Communities Project area. To learn more about amphibians and how to identify them watch our [Amphibians Talk](#).



Palmate Newts are common across Devon. At this time of year they are breeding in ponds. Palmate newts grow to about 9cm long. The males are easiest to identify. Breeding males have large hind feet (almost like they are wearing gloves) and have a filament at the end of their tail. For both sexes, their throat underneath is unpigmented and has no spots (unlike a smooth newt, which has a spotty throat).



Conservation Communities is a project working with 11 parishes between Great Torrington and Hatherleigh to record as much about the natural environment as possible. Currently, little is known about which species live here and even fewer sightings have been formally recorded with [Devon Biodiversity Records Centre \(DBRC\)](#), this makes it very difficult to assess how the local wildlife is doing, and makes it even harder to protect it.