Aims:
To learn about wildlife recording; where to send your sightings and how to access records for your local area.

You will need:
- Access to the internet

Discussion:

All wildlife sightings are valuable – whether they are of common, rare, non-native or invasive species – they are all important in understanding the wildlife around us.

Wildlife databases are a way of forming a big picture about the health of our environment. If lots of people submit records of what they have seen this can show how the population and distribution of different plants and animals change over time in different areas. This understanding can inform research, government policy and habitat management decisions – and help us all protect our local wildlife.

Instructions:

Recording activity

1. Go outside and ask the group to work in pairs (or as individuals) to find a common animal or plant that they recognise and are confident they have identified correctly. E.g. dandelion, Birch tree, blackbird, earthworm etc.

2. The following pieces of information are needed to record your wildlife sighting - get the pupils to write them down on a piece of paper:
   - Who: who saw it (your name)
   - What: what the species is (its name)
   - Where: where is it. You'll need a grid reference for this (see right) but a place name can be good too
   - When: what date you saw it
   You can also record other things like how many there were, the life stage of the animal (young/adult) and any other notes of interest.

3. Back in the classroom you can submit the records online using a website called iRecord. https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/

   Or if you have a smartphone the App is easier to use and allows you to enter the wildlife record outside, automatically finding the grid reference for you (https://irecord.org.uk/app/)

All records submitted via iRecord are checked (verified) – so a record of a shark in a garden pond wouldn't be accepted! – and then automatically sent into the UK National Biodiversity Network (NBN) database.

Handy notes:

Finding a grid reference

Download the free OS Locate app onto a smartphone. When the App opens it will tell you your grid refence.

Use the website Grid Reference Finder you can put an pin on an aerial map (right click to do this) and it will tell you the grid reference of that spot.

Or get an OS paper map out and work it out!

Do more:
Have a look at the NBN Atlas Scotland (https://scotland.nbnatlas.org/). This is a database of all wildlife records in Scotland. Click "Explore your area", enter your postcode and see what has been recorded near you. Or you can search by a species – e.g. have a look where the red squirrel sightings are across Scotland.