



Data Search Guidance Notes

1 Search area

Searches are made around a defined site boundary, linear feature, or a central grid reference. The typical search radius is 1 km, but other distances can be requested.

- Where a site boundary is supplied separate searches are made for the site and the buffer area, if appropriate.
- The boundary must be either marked clearly on a map or supplied as a GIS polygon. Only for designated sites and SWT reserves is this not required.

Restrictions

Requests for searches encompassing the whole county, districts or other large geographic areas are dealt with on a case by case basis.

- Normally such datasets are only supplied to partners or other organisations with current service level agreements.
- We can, however, give recorders and researchers access to countywide datasets for single species or taxonomic groups, at our discretion and with the consent of our data suppliers.

2 Sites Search

SERC holds information for sites evaluated for their biological and geological interest, including all those with statutory or non-statutory designations. Our standard search option is for all statutory and non-statutory designated sites. Please indicate if you require a modified site search.

Standard information

- Locations and boundaries of designated sites – Sites map (pdf)
- Summary details of designated sites – Site details report (pdf)

Additional information (available on request)

- Reasons for designation for Local Wildlife Sites.
- Survey reports for Local Wildlife Sites giving full site descriptions, and maps showing key features [not available for every site].
- Statement of Importance for Local Geological Sites
- Other documents may be available for some of the local sites, such as management plans and species lists.
- We also hold copies of survey reports for statutory sites and sites without designations.
- Boundaries and summary information for tithe-map woodlands.

3 Species Search

Our standard search option is for legally protected and biodiversity priority species (local and national), as this meets most clients' needs and basic planning requirements. Tailored options are available including searches for species with other designations; specific taxonomic groups; single species; and all species.



Certain species records come under our confidential species policy and there is restricted access to precise location information for these records. These will be clearly indicated and you can request for the full details to be released.

Standard information

- Species records including details of abundance, stage, and statuses – Excel spreadsheets
- Mapped locations of the species records in relation to the search area – Species Map (pdf)

Additional information (available on request; release subject to conditions)

Other information relating to species records may be available to enquirers on request, at SERC's discretion and with respect to recorders' wishes, this includes:

- Precise locations for species records that come under our confidential species policy
- Details of the source of records
- Names of recorders – under agreement that these will not be passed on to third parties or released into the public domain

3.1 Search Options

Species statuses

Records can be filtered based on a single status or any combination of the different statuses detailed below.

- Legally Protected: protected under European and UK wildlife legislation
- Biodiversity Priority: identified in European directives, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and local biodiversity strategy.
- Red Data Book: species identified by the IUCN as being threatened or having a high risk of extinction. Bird species of conservation concern on the Amber and Red Lists.
- County Notable: present on the Somerset County Notable list, refer to the Somerset Notable Species Dictionary.

Taxonomic groups

Searches can be made for single species, particular taxonomic groups, or mixed groupings of species, listed below are the most commonly requested additional search options for planning applications.

- Bat species
- Bird species – filtering bird records based on breeding status etc. is currently not possible
- Reptiles and/or amphibians

3.2 Datasets searched

High resolution records – those with grid reference recorded at 100 m precision or better.

Most have 6-figure grid references, a few have 8-figure or 10-figure.

- This dataset includes some records original recorded at high resolution that have been reduced to low resolution precision in accordance with our confidential species policy.

Low resolution records – those with grid reference recorded at 1 km or lesser precision.

- When recording on large sites it's common practice to allocate species lists to 1 km grid squares or tetrads (2 km x 2 km).



- Some recording schemes, e.g. those for plants and birds, only require recording at this level of precision, atlas projects are one of the main sources for low resolution records.
- Site or location details may more precisely pin-point where the record was made.

Other datasets – some sets of records are stored separately from the main database but are included in searches as appropriate, these include badger sett records from Somerset County Council's Highways Department, and records from the Environment Agency of water vole and fish species.

4 Confidentiality

Records of a few species are regarded by SERC as confidential. If the search identifies any of these species the enquirer will be informed and invited to make a request for the details to be released. On receipt of such a request SERC will apply its confidentiality procedures and release details if it is able to do so. The enquirer will be informed as to the decision. Special conditions may be applied to the treatment by the enquirer of any confidential data supplied.

5 Copyright

The copyright of records supplied is retained by SERC or the original recorders. The data are supplied to the enquirer for use only in the context of the case on which the enquiry was made. It may not be published or supplied to third parties without the written consent of SERC.

6 Data sources

Data are compiled by SERC on an ongoing basis from all available professional and voluntary sources. These sources include the various specialist recording groups that operate in the county, linked to SERC and the Somerset Wildlife Trust, for which SERC acts as a clearing house for the supply of data. There is therefore no need for users to contact these groups separately.

The data search is undertaken only on data held and compiled by SERC at the time the enquiry is made. No new field survey is undertaken. SERC can be commissioned to undertake new field survey in some circumstances.

7 Data Quality and Interpretation

All users of biological data should be aware of the interpretation limitations of the data supplied. Habitat and species recording coverage is far from complete in time and space and further field survey may be required to determine the presence of important features. It is possible to supply only records that have been collected and validated. The ecological condition of a site may have changed since the available records were collected – clearly this is especially the case for older records. The available records may often therefore be viewed as a guide to the present condition of a site or area rather than a definitive statement of its value.

Data supplied by SERC has been verified (in terms of identification accuracy) and validated (in terms of geographical accuracy and other accuracy attributes in the data capture process) as far as possible. Errors cannot be totally eliminated, however, and users are asked to check with SERC if possible errors are noted in the data search results. SERC will advise the user of significant validation or verification issues with the data supplied.



SERC does not advise enquirers on actions that might or might not be taken as a consequence of the data identified in the search. If enquirers require further advice they are advised to contact the Somerset Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the relevant Local Authority, or a relevant consultancy.

8 Charges and Payment Terms

The charges SERC makes for processing requests are to cover the time it takes staff to extract, analyse and supply data to the enquirer. This is not a charge for the data. SERC reserves the right to recoup a proportion of the costs of acquiring and managing data from its users, within the scope of maintaining charges at a reasonable level. A proportion of income from this source is used to promote voluntary recording activity in Somerset.

Some requests are normally exempt from charges; these include those from individuals and organisations seeking information for activities, such as wildlife recording, management of sites for nature conservation, and/or academic research.

Prices are quoted on an individual basis;

- Our standard minimum charge is £90 + VAT for a standard site and species search.
- Requests for additional information may incur additional charges.

Terms of Payment:- strictly 30 days from date of invoice

9 Requests

Enquiries must fill out a Data Request Form, which can be returned to: data.supply@somerc.com

Alternatively the form can be sent to the following address:

Somerset Environmental Records Centre
Tonedale Mill
Wellington TA21 0AW
Fax: 01823 652411

Commercial requests must include a reference number or order number.

10 Turnaround

Data searches will normally be supplied to enquirers within 10 working days of receiving an order, or acceptance of the quote in the case of commercial requests. Shorter turnarounds may be possible but a supplementary fee will be chargeable to guarantee delivery by a certain date.

11 Search Results

- The results from data searches come as site reports, tables of records, and maps.
- The results are returned via email, normally as either PDFs or Excel worksheets.
- Copies of data in GIS format are usually only available to partners and other service level agreement holders, or to their contractors for certain projects under the terms of a project specific licence.
- Copies on paper or CD can be supplied, but this may incur a charge to cover additional costs.