

# Making Wildlife Data Count

Cofnod has been making wildlife data count across North Wales since 2005. Our latest achievement has been to reach 3 million records on our species database. To celebrate this we'd like to introduce you to 3 recently recorded species and tell you their story and how the records found their way to us. There is a wealth of wildlife out there waiting for you to explore and discover, so why not be part of it and help us get to 4 million! You'll be adding to the region's most comprehensive wildlife database and helping conserve the fantastic natural world of North Wales.

## Data We Hold

**3,000,104**  
species records and counting

### The Widespread Spider

About the size of a 2p coin, the **Walnut Orb-Weaver Spider** (*Nuctenea umbratica*) is a spectacular member of our native fauna, active all year round, and one of over 650 British spider species! Even though the spider is found throughout Britain, it is nocturnal so rarely seen. Susan Loose was out trying to capture a picture of hedgehogs, another mainly nocturnal creature, when she spotted the spider and took this stunning photo, which she uploaded, along with the details of her find, to our website. Susan has entered over 400 different records on our Online Recording System, a website set up for people to share their wildlife sightings. Through this we make the data available to local experts, who help check to make sure the species entered is correct. Richard Gallon, our local spider expert, immediately confirmed Susan's record using the photo she submitted. It's not always possible to take a photo of the species you're recording, but if you do it can really help. Later this year we will introduce a wildlife recording app, allowing you to submit wildlife photos straight from your smartphone.



Walnut Orb-Weaver Spider, Anglesey.  
Photograph by Susan Loose.

### The Rare Fungus

Some species, for example birds, mammals, and butterflies, are widely recorded. Many are easily spotted in parks, gardens, wildlife reserves or even along roads. Others are more difficult to identify and are usually only recorded by specialists. Fungi are one such group.

Charles Aron, one of our local fungi experts, has published a book on the subject: 'Fungi of North West Wales'. Charles recently shared some of his records with us. One of his most interesting finds was a **Milkcap fungus** called *Lactarius flavidus* (too rare to have a common name). It was found growing near Marianglas on Anglesey, and is the only record of this species on our database, demonstrating what Charles' suggests is its "definite conservation value". Interestingly the 'milk' given off from the fruiting body, the mushroom or toadstool, turns violet on exposure to the air, which Charles describes as "quite spectacular".



*Lactarius flavidus* (a Milkcap fungus), Anglesey.  
Photograph by Charles Aron

Every year there are opportunities to find out more at specially organised 'Fungi Forays'. Keep an eye on our website during the autumn as we publicise where they are.

## The Exotic Damselfly

The third record we'd like to share with you is of a species you won't find in any books about UK wildlife. Elizabeth Jones of Old Colwyn, was amazed to discover a damselfly in her house in March, much earlier than you'd expect to see one flying. Elizabeth sent a photo to the North Wales expert Allan Brandon. After some head scratching Allan was surprised to discover it was a **Marsh Bluetail Damselfly** (*Ischnura senegalensis*), an exotic species common to Asia and Africa. The one Elizabeth had seen emerged from aquarium plants, recently introduced to an indoor turtle tank. The Damselfly is unlikely to survive here as it is too cool, especially in March. Allan confirmed this was "*the first record of this species recorded in North Wales, but four others have appeared in the UK so far this year!*"



Marsh Bluetail, Malaysia.  
Photograph by Allan Brandon.

## An Important database

The 3 million records on our database cover nearly 19,000 species. Some are common, some are rare; some are native, some are not; some are easily identified whereas others need expert opinion. We welcome all wildlife records; even ones you think are common as we never know if they will become rare. New species regularly join our established wildlife, and it is important we record these 'Invasives' as they can sometimes cause harm. There are hundreds of dedicated wildlife recorders regularly passing their sightings to us. However there are many records that never find their way to anyone and cannot be used to help make better decisions for wildlife. With your help this can change.

## Ways to get involved

There are many ways you can get involved recording wildlife. Attending one of the many public BioBlitzes (a 24 hour wildlife recording event) running this summer might be a good place to start. Our website provides information about these and other events as well as courses and specialist wildlife recording days. Details of various local expert recorders or groups can also be found on our website and by registering you'll receive our monthly e-newsletter, giving you details of what's on locally. You can also submit wildlife sightings through our Online Recording System, making it easy to keep a record of the wildlife you've seen.

Cofnod is pleased to be involved with a number of wildlife recording projects focusing on specific species. The latest one asks you to tell us where you've seen Curlew, one of Wales' fastest declining farmland birds.

Please take time to let us know what wildlife you've seen and make your records count towards the next million.

If you are interested in any of the species featured in this article, you can find further information either from our website ([www.cofnod.org.uk](http://www.cofnod.org.uk)) or those listed below. Also if you'd like to see what wildlife occurs near you, please use our free online mapping service Aderyn ([aderyn.lercwales.org.uk/](http://aderyn.lercwales.org.uk/)), which gives you access to the wealth of wildlife data across Wales.

British Dragonfly Society: [www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/](http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/)

Allan Brandon's North Wales Dragonfly Newsletter - [www.cofnod.org.uk/News](http://www.cofnod.org.uk/News) (search for "Dragonfly")

Spider Recording Scheme: [srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Welcome](http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Welcome)

British Mycological Society: [www.britmycolsoc.org.uk/](http://www.britmycolsoc.org.uk/)