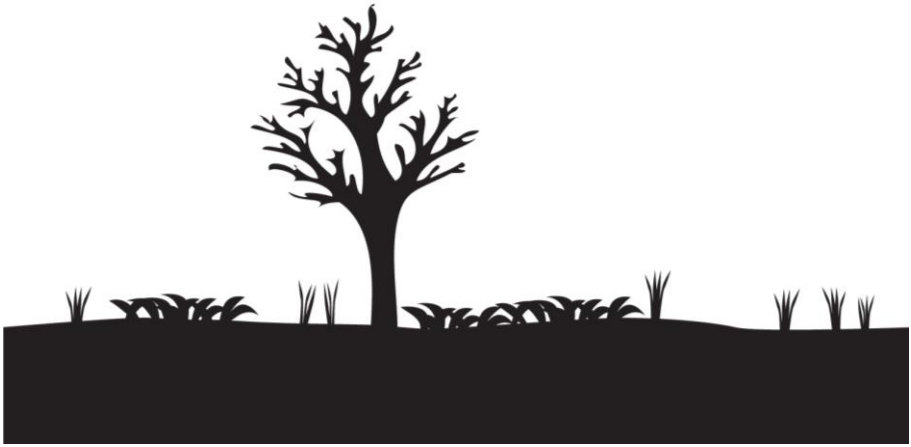
TRACK A TREE

recording spring in the woods

Field Workbook

Identification and fieldwork tips

Example field recording forms



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

WOODLAND TRUST

NERC SCIENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Contents

In this workbook you will find:

- **Tips for species identification and recording**
- **Safe fieldwork guidelines**
- **An example site and tree information recording form**
- **An example phenology observations recording form**

Tips for species identification

The tree and flowering species you can record are described in the Track a Tree field guide. For further information we suggest you check out the list of **online resources** that can be found on our website links page:

www.trackatree.org.uk/resources

You may also wish to use species identification **guidebooks** to help improve your knowledge of the plants found in your local woodland.

We also recommend **iSpot**, which is an excellent online identification tool. You can upload a picture of an unknown plant (or animal) via the iSpot website or smartphone app and the community of iSpot users will help identify it.

Things to look out for

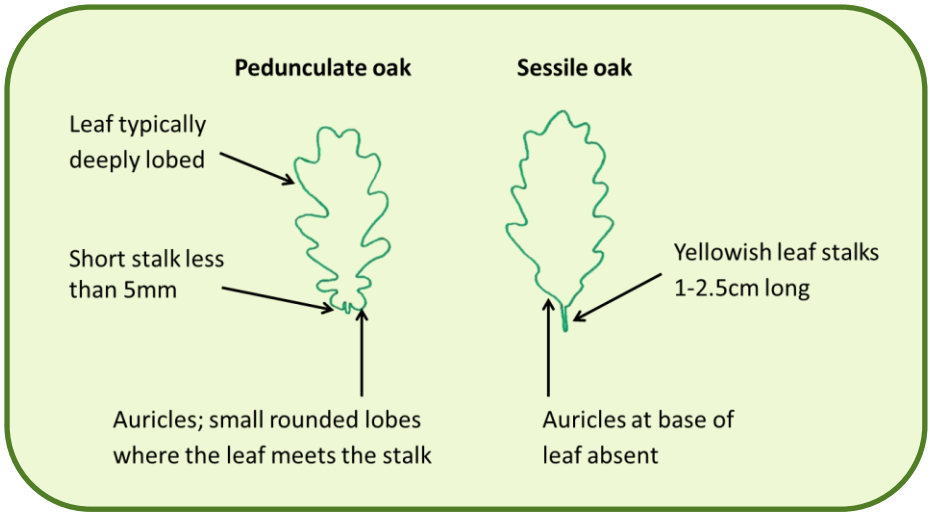
The species that feature in Track a Tree have been chosen to reflect different types of tree and relatively common and easily identifiable flowering species. You can see the full list of these species in the Track a Tree field guide.

There are however, a few species that are more easily confused with other similar species. Here are a few extra things to look out for when you are identifying your trees and flowering plants.

Oak species identification

It can be difficult to tell the difference between Pedunculate and Sessile oaks in winter. If there are any **dead leaves** or **acorns** remaining on or directly beneath the tree these can help you identify your oak.

Pedunculate oak leaves have very **short stalks** and are **deeply lobed**, while Sessile oak leaves have **long stalks**. The diagram below shows some typical oak leaf shapes to look out for.



The **acorns** of Pedunculate oak are on **long stalks**, while those of Sessile oak are **stalkless**. If you find old acorns on or under your tree, the length of their stalk may also help with identification.

Please note: Pedunculate and Sessile oaks can **hybridise**, and hybrids may have characteristics of each species. If your candidate tree shows signs of hybridisation and you are not confident of its species, please select another candidate tree to track.

Remember you can edit the tree species in the online form after you have first submitted it. You may wish to check your initial identification after the tree's leaves emerge later in the spring.

Silver birch identification

Silver birch can be confused with the similar species Downy birch (*Betula pubescens*). The twigs of Silver birch are **hairless** with small dark warts, while Downy birch twigs are smooth but covered in **fine hairs**, as seen in the pictures below.

Silver birch

Downy birch

Please note: Silver and Downy birch can also **hybridise**. If you think a candidate tree may be a Downy birch or a hybrid, please choose another tree.

Recording Ash budburst

Be careful when recording Ash budburst. Its coral like flowers burst before the leaves. Please look carefully to make sure you record **leaf budburst** only.

Leaf budburst

Flower budburst

Ash flowers are striking and appear from black buds like those that produce the leaves.

Please note: If you are selecting an Ash tree be careful not to confuse its flowers with those of **Elm species**. Elms also produce reddish-purple flowers before their leaves during February and March.

Remember to use these definitions for the tree phenology

Budburst: The green of new leaves is seen protruding from between the scales of the swollen and elongated bud.

NB: Judging tree budburst from the ground can be tricky, especially in poor light conditions. Aim to record budburst when you can see a clear change in bud shape that reflects the protruding leaves.

First leaf: When the first leaf is fully open and is recognisably the shape, if not the full size, of the adult leaf. For compound leaves like Ash the leaf must be erect but the leaflets don't need to be.

Recording damaged leaves

If you continue visiting your trees after they have come into leaf, you may notice that **caterpillars** and other insect herbivores have eaten many of the new leaves.

If you have already scored **first leaf** or **partial leaf** and you start to see many damaged leaves, it may be difficult to judge when **entire tree in leaf** is reached. In this situation, please continue to use the **partial leaf** tree phenology category.

Bluebell identification

Our native Bluebell can sometimes be confused with a common garden escape, the Spanish bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*). Please **record native Bluebells only** during Track a Tree.

Native Bluebells have **deep blue**, narrow **tube-like** flowers that are **heavily scented**. Their pollen is a **creamy white**. Spanish bluebells are often a **paler blue**, and have wider **bell-shaped** flowers with **little/no scent**. The pollen of Spanish bluebells is usually **pale blue or green**, but not white.

Bluebell

Spanish bluebell

Please note: Bluebell and Spanish bluebell can **hybridise**, and hybrids show characteristics of both species. If you find Spanish bluebells or what may be hybrids, please **do not record** them.

Remember to count each **flowering stem** as 'one flower', even if it is composed of many flower heads like Bluebells.

Safe Fieldwork Guidelines

Woodlands are usually safe places, but use your common sense while recording, and be aware of potential risks when visiting the woods. Please remember you are responsible for your own safety when participating in Track a Tree.

- **Wear weatherproof clothing and appropriate footwear.** Check the weather forecast before going out, and do not record in stormy conditions or high winds.
- **Go recording with another person or ensure someone knows where you are.** Carry a charged mobile phone if possible.
- **Take care on uneven terrain.** Familiarise yourself with your site and be aware of obstacles such as dead wood or low-hanging branches that may cause trips and injuries. Follow instructions on any warning signs.
- **Beware of broken and hanging branches.** Assess trees with broken branches from a distance.
- **Avoid handling potential hazards.** Wash your hands thoroughly and check for ticks on your return from the woods. Avoid contact with prickly or stinging plants and toxic hairy caterpillars, which can irritate skin. Ensure cuts and scratches are covered and new injuries treated.
- **Be considerate of other woodland users.** Be aware of activities going on around you. Do not record when woodland management is taking place.
- **Look after the woodland.** Avoid disturbing any wildlife. Clean your footwear thoroughly afterwards to avoid spreading pests and diseases.

Example recording forms

TRACK A TREE
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Part 1: Your site and tree information

- Use the Field Guide p17-25 to help fill in this form.
- Please use one sheet for each tree you track.
- Fields marked * are mandatory, other fields are optional.

Site name*	Location	Recorder name*	Date of visit*
Roslin Glen	NT 278 628	C. Tansey	07/03/14

Tree species*	Tree ID*
Sessile Oak	SES_OAK_1

Aspect*
SW

Girth of tree at breast height (m)*
1·34

Canopy measures (m)	
1	4·2
2	5+
3	5+
4	3·9

Understorey area	
1	No. Trees
3	No. Young trees
0	No. Young coppice

Woodland characteristics within 25m of tree		
Density of woodland*		OW: Open woodland
		DW: Dense woodland
	X	VW: Varied woodland
Other characteristics	X	WM: Woodland is mixed species
		WD: Dominated by one species
		WP: Woodland planted in last 30yrs
		RC: Recent coppicing
		HC: Historical coppicing

You can upload a photo of your tree online.

How you selected your tree*	
X	Selected randomly using dice method
	Selected randomly using another method
	The only suitable tree present
	Selected non-randomly

Distance to edge of woodland	
	Less than 50m
X	50-100m
	100m+

Please enter your records online:
www.trackatree.org.uk/startRecording

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Part 2: Your phenology observations

- Use the Field Guide p25-28 to help fill in this form.
- Please use one sheet for each tree you track.
- Fields marked * are mandatory, other fields are optional.

Site name*	Tree ID*	Location	Recorder name*
Roslin Glen	SES_OAK_1	NT 278 628	C Tansey

Key A: Tree phenology

NB: No budburst
FB: First budburst
PB: Partial budburst
EB: Entire tree budburst
FL: First leaf
PL: Partial leaf
EL: Entire tree in leaf

Date of visit*	Tree phenology* *Use Key A*	Amount of tree observed *Use Key B*	Flowering plant phenology* *Use Key C*								Bramble cover *Use Key D*
			Lesser celandine	Primrose	Wood anemone	Wood sorrel	Greater stitchwort	Ramsons	Bluebell	Red campion	
07/03/14	NB	U	6-10	0	0						0%
13/03/14	NB	U	6-10	0	0						0%
21/03/14	NB	U	11-25	1-5	0			0			0%
28/03/14	NB	U	11-25	6-10	0			0			0%
05/04/14	NB	U	11-25	6-10	1-5			0	0		0%
10/04/14	NB	U	26-50	6-10	1-5			0	0	0	0%

Key B: Amount of tree observed

WT: Whole tree
L: Lower branches only
U: Upper brances only

Key C: Flowering plant phenology

If species is absent, please leave blank. If species is present, count how many flowering stems there are:

0
1-5
6-10
11-25
26-50
51-100
Over 100

Key D: Percentage bramble cover

0%
Up to 25%
26-50%
51-75%
Over 75%

Please enter your records online:
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