

From: Friends of Quantock, Quantock Hills AONB

The Biggest Ever Quantock Wildlife Survey 'Quantocks Wildlife Watch'



Members of the public are being asked to take part in the biggest wildlife survey ever seen in the Quantocks. Friends of Quantock, in conjunction with the Quantock Hills AONB and the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme are asking the c4,000 people using the Quantocks every day to get involved in the 'Quantocks Wildlife Watch'; a long term citizen science project which will help prioritise the future management and wildlife conservation for the Quantocks.

The project will use the iNaturalist application developed by National Geographic and the California Academy of Sciences to capture the varied and diverse range of wildlife found on the Quantocks. People are asked to register on iNaturalist and simply photograph any living species they see; plants, animals, insects, fungi, lichen etc. on or around the Quantocks and use the iNaturalist application to identify and record it. The application geolocates the photograph and helps identify what it is, whilst also making the record available to all users. The mapping of all sightings allows individuals to explore where others have recorded things e.g. the best spots for certain butterflies or plants etc.

Recorded sightings, which iNaturalist calls 'observations', will provide important information to the organisations and land owners involved in the management and conservation of the Quantocks and will also contribute to important national wildlife monitoring programmes.

Robin Stamp, Friends of Quantock project lead says “There are many species on the Quantocks we know very little about in terms of distribution, location, density etc; there are probably some we do not even know are there! The more we know about what wildlife we have, the better we can protect it.”

Friends of Quantock is the only conservation charity for the Quantocks and owns some of the land within the Quantock Hills AONB. The charity wants to use the Quantocks Wildlife Watch to help prioritise future conservation efforts whilst helping people understand quite how special the Quantocks are. It is anticipated not only will the project benefit the wildlife of the Quantocks, but also benefit the individuals taking part; helping people develop their knowledge of the wildlife around them, not to mention the mental health benefits of getting immersed in nature.

Iain Porter, Quantock Hills AONB manager says ““The AONB Service is pleased to be working with and supporting Friends of Quantock with the Quantock Wildlife Watch. The initiative will enable our communities to not only record the wildlife they see but also to provide incredibly valuable data to inform management that will conserve and enhance the Quantock Hills and wider landscape into the future.

We have already used the data captured when made aware of an invasive species in one of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Left unattended it would have caused significant damage to the fragile habitat and through iNaturalist the project team were able to locate and remove all of the invasive plants and protect the area from further harm.”

Robin states, “We are asking the regular walkers, dog owners, the day visitors; everyone; just add a few observations each time you are out, especially if you notice something new. Give your walks a focus, one day plants, another day insects etc; it is incredible how many insects you can see when you really look for them. Make your walks more interesting and know you are providing valuable information too.”

Together through greater understanding, everyone can play a part in the future conservation of our Quantock wildlife.

If you would like to find out more about the project, or how to get involved visit www.friendsofquantock.com or email info@friendsofquantock.com.