

Recording butterflies online and through apps

By Anthony McCluskey, Conservation Officer

Thanks to technology it is easier than ever to send in a sighting of butterflies. Thousands of records are received this way every year now, and it has helped open the world of butterfly recording to people who may never have recorded an insect. But how can you go about it?

The recording system called iRecord is used by a growing number of organisations to provide a place where anyone can send in record of any wildlife. Butterfly records can be entered in a number of ways; in this article, I will describe to you how to use the iRecord website, and the iRecord Butterflies app.

Let's start with the website. The web address is unfortunately still clunky: www.brc.ac.uk/irecord, you can also find it through a search engine. On that first

page you should follow the clear instructions to create a new account (here's a tip: write your username and password down in your recording notebook!).

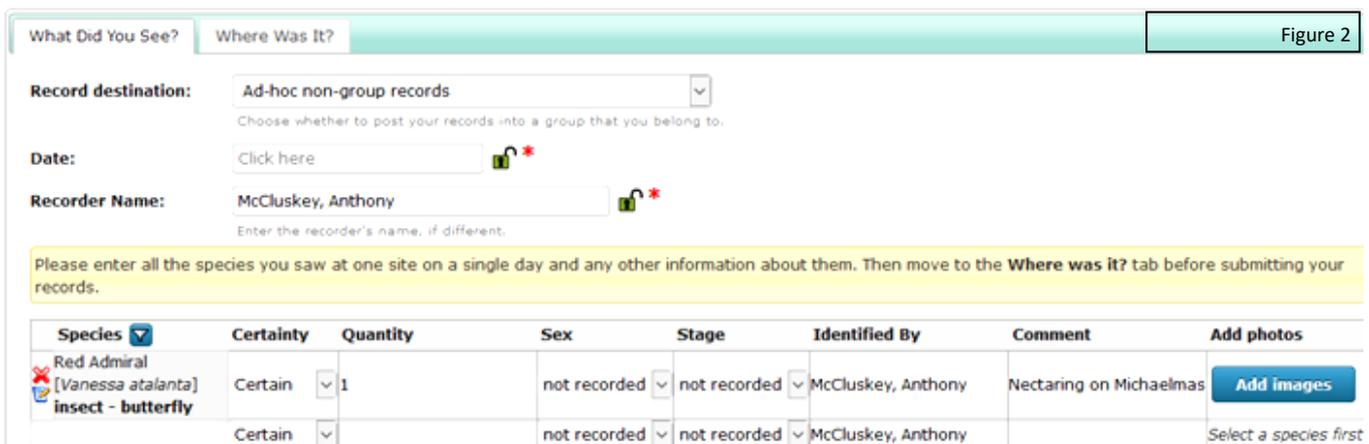
Following this, when you log in you will see a bar with various options. Bring



Figure 1

your mouse over Record and a list of options will appear (see figure 1). To submit a single record, choose Enter a casual record; to enter multiple records for a single site on a single date choose Enter a list of records; and to enter records for multiple sites on a single date, choose Enter records at several places.

If you choose Enter a list of records, you will be brought to a page with two tabs (see figure 2). The first is called What did you see? First of all you need to enter the date you saw it. Then in the boxes below you can type the species (this has an auto-completed function so you can easily find all you need). Also enter the number seen. The other fields (sex; stage; identified by) I usually leave blank. You



What Did You See? Where Was It?

Record destination: Ad-hoc non-group records
Choose whether to post your records into a group that you belong to.

Date: Click here

Recorder Name: McCluskey, Anthony
Enter the recorder's name, if different.

Please enter all the species you saw at one site on a single day and any other information about them. Then move to the **Where was it?** tab before submitting your records.

Species	Certainty	Quantity	Sex	Stage	Identified By	Comment	Add photos
Red Admiral (<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>) insect - butterfly	Certain	1	not recorded	not recorded	McCluskey, Anthony	Nectaring on Michaelmas	
	Certain		not recorded	not recorded	McCluskey, Anthony		Select a species first

Figure 2

can add a comment too, such as the nectar plant or behaviour. You may also add a photo from your computer; while it's not necessary it may help when your record is verified. Complete this process for all the species you saw at this location on that date.

Following that, click the Where was it? Tab. Here you need to give the location a name; if you don't know a proper name, something like 'Car park near library' will suffice, as you will also provide a grid reference (see figure 3). The next box down is Enter a spatial reference. This is where you can enter the grid reference (if you know it already). But in most cases it will be easiest to go to Search for a place on the map. This allows you to type a place name, post code, etc., and find where you were!

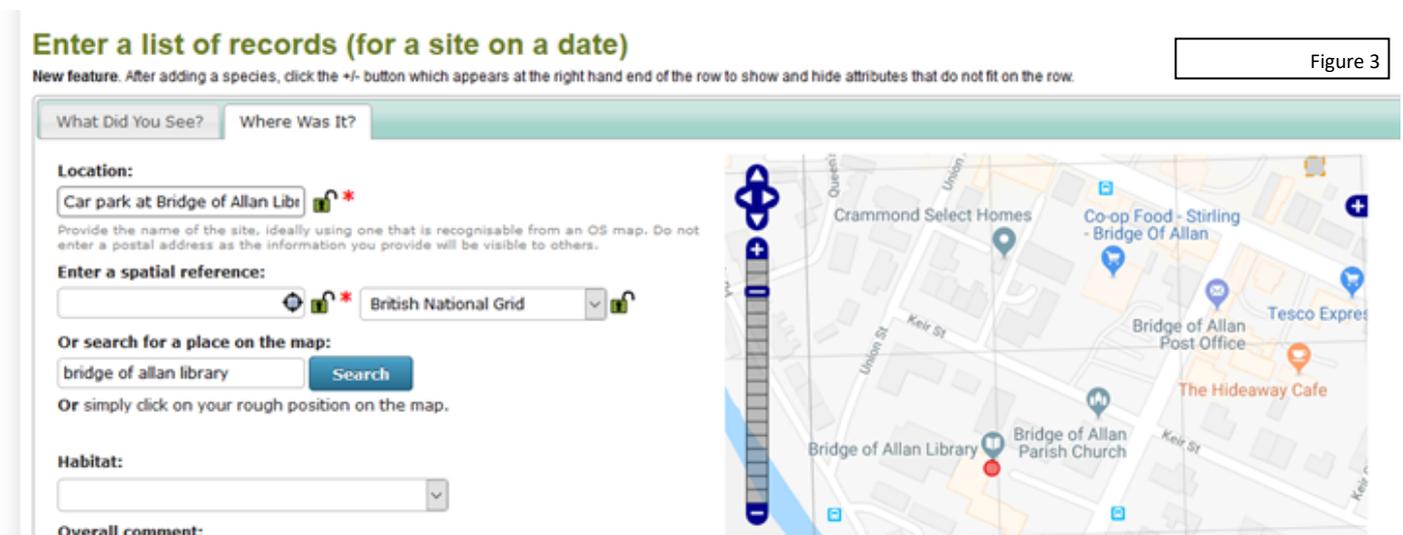


Figure 3

So in my example I have typed Bridge of Allan Library, and the map brings up the library and surrounds. At the top right corner of the map you will see the little plus sign. If you click it and choose Google satellite you will get a better view of the area (see figure 4). If all the butterflies you saw are in a small area, just click the map as it is and it will automatically enter a precise grid reference for you! However if they were over a slightly larger area of say 10m or 100m, just zoom out and click the larger square and it will give you a new 100m grid reference, as you can see in my example. Following that you can go down the page and enter the habitat information if you know it, then just click the submit button and you're done!

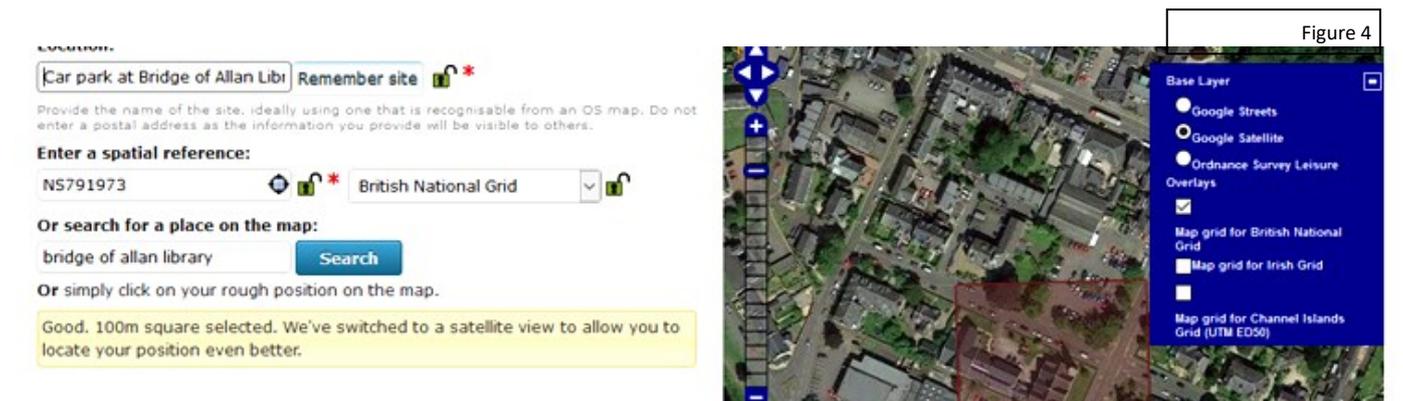


Figure 4



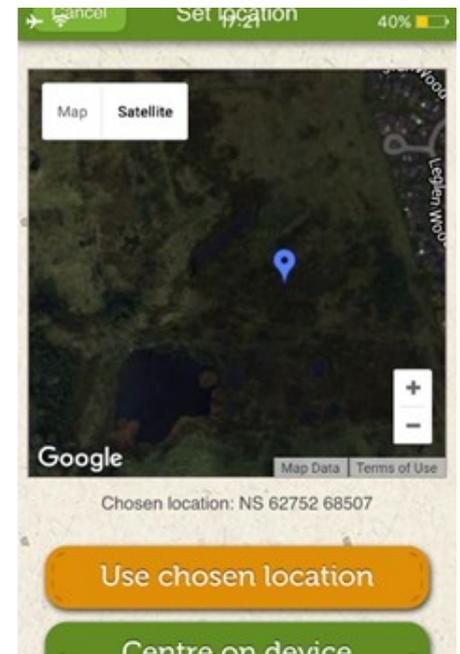
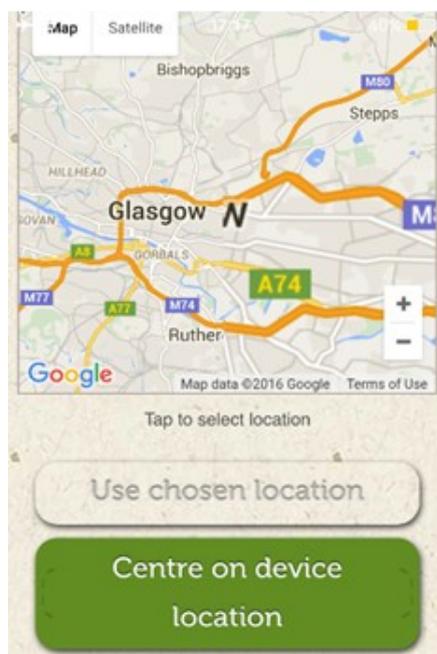
The iRecord Butterflies app can be downloaded for free for smartphones and tablet computers. It can only be used to record butterflies, but has a complete guide to all the butterflies found in the UK. When you download it you will be asked to sign up for an iRecord account. On the front page you'll see the three options listed in the pictured in figure 5. If you



want to record a single species from one place, choose ID/Record a butterfly, but if you want to send in records of several species, or to record as you walk along in a defined area, choose Survey an area. For the rest of this guide I'll be discussing how to survey an area.

Once you've chosen Survey an area, you will see the screen in figure 6. You must give a site name, but you can choose to add that to your favourites so it will come up next time. You should also select the approximate size of the area, which ranges from point location (such as in a small garden) to 1km x 1km.

Now, to define the location with a grid reference, you can choose from Get my current location, or Enter using Map (see figure 7). Get my current location only works if you have location services enabled—this is what is used by GPS, navigation, etc. It finds where you are and uses that as your location for your record. This option is very useful if you're out for a walk and see something,

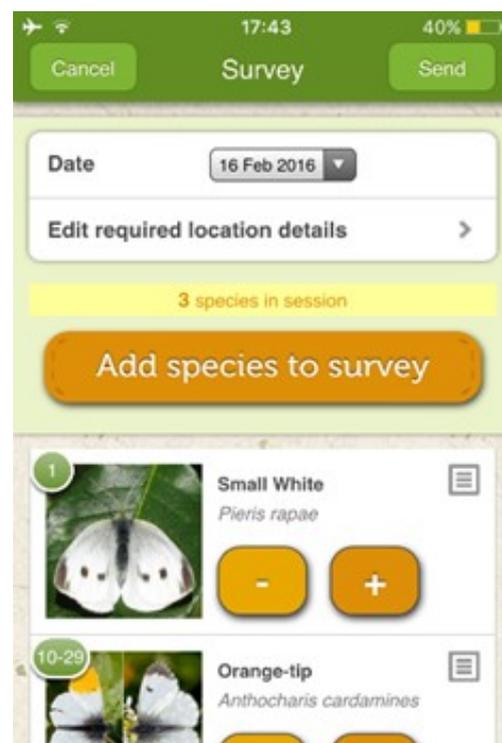


especially if you don't know exactly where you are. The other option is Enter using map. This will bring up a map of the UK, into which you can zoom by pinching the screen and expanding it. You can switch between a normal map or a satellite view.



Once you've found the place where you want to make your record, just tap that point on the screen and you will see the blue pin drop on it. You will also notice that the Use Chosen Location button turns from grey to orange (figure 8), and you can now press that to proceed to the next step.

You will then see a screen similar to that shown in figure 9. It will automatically use today's date for your record, so change that if you need to. Press Add species to survey and you will see a list of butterflies which is arranged based on the likelihood of you seeing them at that time of year. So common and widespread species will be at the top but if you want to see all species, simply scroll down and select Show Additional. For each species you see, just tap the photo. Following that, you can use the plus and minus signs to increase or decrease the number. If you press the little grey square to the top right of the species name box you will be allowed to type in a number, or choose from a series of options such as: 1; 2-9; 10-29; etc. It's best to give an actual number instead of one of those number ranges, as recorders



need to have a real number. Once you're done, press Send. You will then see two options, Send now, or Save and Send Later. You can use the latter option if you want to keep adding records or you don't have a Wi-Fi or internet signal. When you finally do want to send those records, go back to the home screen, press the file icon in the top left, choose My sightings and choose to send your survey. You can also go there to update surveys to which you'd like to add species.

One drawback about the iRecord system is that not all Butterfly Recorders (the people who verify the records and send them to the national databases) download and use the system. While all of the app records are actually downloaded by BC head office and sent out to the relevant Butterfly Recorders, the records on the website rely on the Butterfly Recorder actively going online and verifying them. If you are unsure whether the Recorder for your area is using iRecord, please feel free to contact the Scottish office on scotland@butterfly-conservation.org and we can check for you.

