

A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COLLECTING MOTHS AND OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Issued by Invertebrate Link (Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Invertebrates). The full version of this code is available many invertebrate conservation websites, in volume 15 of *Journal of British Entomology and Natural History* (2002), and on sale from AES Publications, PO Box 8774, London SW7 5ZG.

This Committee believes that the study of invertebrates and the formation of reference collections, complete with their inherent recorded data, are important sources of information which make a vital contribution to the conservation of the invertebrate fauna and to conservation in general. To this end, accurate identification of species is essential and often requires the examination of dead specimens.

Available evidence indicates that invertebrate populations are not generally harmed by the collection of specimens. Collecting may, however, have some potential to harm populations that are very localised or that have been seriously affected by the loss and fragmentation of habitats, caused by changes in land use. Such changes include the decline of traditional farmland management, urban expansion and road development. In view of these considerations, the Committee believes that collecting should always be limited to the minimum necessary for the purpose intended, as well as by full compliance with legal requirements relating to particular sites and species. This principle is enshrined within the following code of conduct, together with guidance on the safeguarding of collections and associated data.

The Committee acknowledges the restraint that is already exercised by most people who study invertebrates in the field. Furthermore it believes that by subscribing to this code they can show themselves to be a concerned and responsible body of committed naturalists who wish to maximise the value of their data for conservation.

1 Collecting – general

- Never take more specimens from the wild than you need for your specific purpose.
- Avoid killing or removing invertebrates from the wild without good reason (e.g. if essential for scientific study or identification, but not for trade).
- Do as little damage to the habitat as possible.
- Take care of your collection and try to ensure its availability for study in perpetuity.

2 Collecting – rare, local and endangered species

- Obey all laws and bylaws that prohibit or control collecting on protected sites or the collection of protected species
- Exercise the utmost restraint if collecting taxa listed as being of ‘Conservation Concern’
- If, for reasons of *bona fide* scientific study, you need to sample populations of listed taxa, do so only if the proposed sampling is known not to be damaging.
- Always report new findings of rare species to the appropriate conservation agencies, records centres and organisers of recording schemes (see item 6).

3 Collecting - traps and lights

- Always use live trapping (without anaesthetics) if possible and release the catch in cool, shady conditions near the trap site after examining, recording and retaining voucher specimens if essential.
- If a trap used for repeated sampling is found to be catching rare or local species unnecessarily it should be re-sited.
- Traps and lights should be sited with care so as not to annoy or confuse other people.

4 Collecting - permissions and conditions

- Always seek permission from the landowner or occupier before collecting on private land, or obtain appropriate permit(s) for access and/or collecting on any site
- controlled by a statutory or conservation body. (Collecting on a Site of Special Scientific Interest requires permission from both the owner and the national conservation agency (Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage and Countryside Council for Wales)
- Always comply with any conditions laid down with the granting of access and the
- permission to collect.
- Always report your findings to the person who gave you permission, at least by commenting orally on the ecological requirements of a few species of interest. If the site is protected or managed for wildlife, send the organisation(s) concerned a full list of the species recorded, annotated with habitat data.

5 Collecting - protecting the environment

- Protect the environment and do as little damage as possible; remember the interests of other naturalists and avoid harm to nesting birds and vegetation, particularly rare or fragile plants.
- If you must collect or dismantle any habitat items (e.g. seed heads, loose bark or dead wood), always leave a good proportion intact.
- If you move habitat items (e.g. water-weed, moss, stones or logs) while searching, replace them unless there is good reason to do otherwise.
- Avoid damage to aquatic habitats from over-vigorous use of water nets or kick-sampling.

- Do not apply 'sugar' to tree trunks or other surfaces that support lichens or that would appear unsightly (e.g. in sight of roads, rides etc.). Consider using 'wine ropes' instead.
- Do not uproot plants or dig up turf without permission from the landowner, as this is generally illegal in the UK. Also, observe the law regarding protected plant species.
- If collecting litter from vertebrate nests or roosts, do so only in compliance with the laws applying to the species concerned.
- Follow the Country Code and comply with all bylaws that apply to the site concerned.

6 Recording - general

- Keep full and relevant data together with all specimens, even if you also duplicate the data in databases, notebooks and other media.
- Species lists, together with habitat and other data, should be sent to the relevant county and national recording schemes, if possible in a database format compatible with the National Biodiversity Network.

7 Rearing and breeding

- If obtaining breeding stock of scarce species, try to do so from established captive colonies, rather than from wild-caught sources.
- If taking larvae or other livestock from the wild, never take more than you can adequately feed and maintain in captivity.
- If you have surplus invertebrates from rearing or breeding, observe genetic and ecological precautions, i.e. do not release them except into their parental population and do not release large numbers back into the population if it is small and localised. (But see the next item regarding properly planned reinforcement or re-introduction.)
- Do not attempt to establish new populations or to reinforce existing ones except within an ecologically sound programme. This would have to be well prepared in consultation with the appropriate conservation agencies, agreed with the owner or occupier of the site concerned and notified to other appropriate organisations, including wildlife trusts and recording schemes. Also, consult *Insect Re-establishment - a Code of Conservation Practice* issued by this Committee.
- Obey any laws relating to the release of invertebrates into the wild; the release in the UK of any non-native kinds is illegal, except under special licence.