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Surrey
Wildlife Trust

Species Identification



What is Species Identification?

Species Identification is the process of figuring out what kind of plant, animal, or organism you're looking at. Its like solving a puzzle using clues from what you see, hear or even sometimes smell.



Why is it important

It is so important to have a clear picture of the species that are around us, and live in an area, so we are able to help protect the ecosystems and encourage biodiversity. It also helps with conservation by keeping a track of endangered species, and any rise or fall in numbers of species.



Key clues to look for

- **Physical features:** Size shape, colour, patterns, number of legs, types of leaves etc (binoculars or a magnifying glass can help with this).
- **Behaviour:** How it moves, eats, or interacts with its environment.
- **Habitat:** Where you found it, woods, ponds, park etc.
- **Sounds and smells:** Bird calls, insect noise, or plants scent.



Tools to help you

There are lots of tools to help with identification, especially when you are getting started. Here are some you may wish to use:

- **Apps:** There are some informative free apps for species identification. Some good ones to use are Seek, iNaturalist for quick id's with a photo, or Merlin Bird ID for bird song.
- **Field guides:** Use these with pictures and descriptions.
- **ID Keys:** Using step by step questions that guide you to the right species.

Remember you don't have to get it right every time. The fun is observing and learning. Even experts make mistakes – its part of the process.