

# BRC recording schemes meeting, 23 March 2019

*Feedback from verification workshop led by Martin Harvey and Andy Musgrove*

## Workshop topics

Four focus topics were suggested to start the group discussions, which also ranged more widely around support for the verification process within iRecord and elsewhere.

### Topic 1: Verifier recruitment

The numbers of incoming records are increasing beyond the capacity of the existing pool of verifiers. An obvious solution is to recruit more verifiers, but in order to maintain high data quality those verifiers have to be matched to records that they are able to reliably verify. What can we do to recruit, train and support new verifiers?

### Topic 2: Verifying records in the absence of photos or specimens

Recording schemes have always had to deal with records that are sent in as 'plain' data, with no specimen or photo evidence. In many cases these records can be accepted, especially if they come from known recorders. But with online recording it is much more likely that you will receive records from recorders who are unknown to you. It is of course possible to contact recorders and get to know them better but this takes time. Are there other methods we can apply to help verify these records?

### Topic 3: Automatic verification options

At the moment iRecord has a mechanism for highlighting records that fail the relevant 'record cleaner' rules (based on distribution, phenology and difficulty of identification). A few schemes have chosen to apply these rules in an automated way, to flag uncontroversial records as "considered correct" without a person having to apply a verification decision. Similarly, BirdTrack applies automatic verification procedures to records that pass all their checks. Is there a wider role for automation to reduce the burden on human verifiers, and to target human resources at those records most in need of critical examination?

### Topic 4: Options for recorder communication

How can recorders make verifiers' lives easier – what makes a record easy to verify, and how can we communicate that to recorders? Should we ask for more detail in records, or insist on photos in some cases? Where is the balance between getting the level of detail we want while not making things so complex that new recorders are put off?

## Main points from the discussion

Unsurprisingly the four starting points initiated some wide-ranging discussion, which was captured by the workshop facilitators. The table below summarises the points that arose most frequently.

Proposal	Category	Notes
Make list of iRecord verifiers available, at least to other verifiers	Verifier support/recruitment	Needs to be handled carefully (and with consent from verifiers) so as not to put undue pressure on verifiers
Make download formats more flexible	Verifier support	The current csv download format provides a lot of information but is unwieldy for some verifiers; proposal is to allow a wider choice of download formats

Proposal	Category	Notes
Make it easier for a verifier to review records that fall within their filter but have been verified by someone else	Verifier support/recruitment	Shared verification is working well for a number of recording schemes on iRecord, but verifiers would like to be able to more easily review what decisions have been made within their taxon group and/or region
Enable use of standard replies and signatures for verifier comments	Verifier support/Recorder communication	
Ask for more supporting info with records, e.g. identification resource used, and provide more guidance to recorders on what makes a good record (e.g. supporting evidence, named recorder and determiner, named location etc.)	Verifier support/Recorder communication	The whole biological recording community has a role here, to continue altering recorders to what level of information and evidence is needed; within iRecord the recording forms should be more flexible to allow this to be captured
Provide clearer messages (e.g. via pop-ups or other messaging) to encourage recorders to support records with relevant evidence where needed	Verifier support/Recorder communication	Need to strike a balance between providing useful info and not getting in the way for regular recorders – NatureSpot provides a good case study
Organise verifier training events/webinars	Verifier support/recruitment	A role for BRC around iRecord and data quality/availability, and also for the wider community
Enable rulesets to be reviewed/customised more easily	Verifier support/Automatic verification	There is scope for improving the rulesets using further taxon and region customisation

### Further options for iRecord and verification

Several options were put forward to continue the debate with the aim of improving the available tools for verification.

- Within the iRecord website there are discussion forums available for feedback, including a forum that is available only to verifiers
- BRC is happy to receive emails ([irecord@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:irecord@ceh.ac.uk)) or to talk in person.
- BRC intends to provide more regular email updates to verifiers
- Next autumn we intend to hold a meeting specifically on the topic of verification. This is likely to be held at CEH's offices within Lancaster University, and we will also explore options for wider sharing via webinar or video recording. We would like to feature case studies from recording schemes using the verification tools – if you'd like to offer a presentation on this topic please get in touch.

Contact iRecord: [irecord@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:irecord@ceh.ac.uk)