

# FSC

BRINGING  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
UNDERSTANDING TO ALL

## Code of Conduct

For collection of  
**invertebrate specimens**  
during FSC courses and events

### Summary



**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.**

Heds of Learning Locations should ensure all group leaders, whether Associate Tutors, Education Team or grounds team, are aware of and compliant with this guidance.

Group leaders should, at the start of every course which may include collecting as part of the course content, make course attendees familiar with the FSC Code of Conduct.

The code of conduct has been written through reference to existing good practice across the conservation and entomology sector.

**The FSC requires its Code of Conduct for Collecting Invertebrates to be followed by FSC staff and attendees on any FSC course or activity.**

**Failure to comply with the code may result in attendees being asked to leave the course or event immediately.**

## Background

Field entomologists in the UK have long supported the code for collecting that was published over thirty years ago by Invertebrate Link (previously the Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Insects). This [Invertebrate Link code has now been thoroughly updated](#) to take account of developments in conservation, and is applicable to all terrestrial and freshwater invertebrates; not just insects. The code, of necessity, defines certain activities that should be avoided or restricted but it equally emphasises the need to collect invertebrates in order to gain valuable information, much of which can aid conservation.

*Source: Joint Committee for the Collection of British Invertebrates, 2002. A Code of Conduct for collecting insects and other invertebrates. BR. J. ENT. NAT. HIST., 15: 2002*

## The FSC's Code of Conduct for Collecting Invertebrates

The FSC's Code of Conduct is based primarily on the Invertebrate Link code.

**The FSC requires the FSC Code of Conduct for Collecting Invertebrates to be followed by FSC staff, associate tutors and attendees on all FSC course or activity.**

**Failure to comply with the code may result in attendees being asked to leave the course or event immediately.**

## The FSC Code

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 much localised or that have been seriously affected by the loss and fragmentation of habitats, caused by ever-increasing changes in land use. Such changes include the decline of traditional farmland management, urban expansion and road development.

In view of these considerations, **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 this FSC Code of Conduct, together with guidance on the safeguarding of collections and associated data.

## Field Studies Council grounds

The area around FSC Centres is often of great conservation value. It may also be used intensively by FSC education groups, many of which will be carrying out some collection of biological specimens. We have to recognise the potential pressure this places on populations of plants and animals in the area. Our centres are also very much in the “public eye” and we need to be wary of the un-informed criticism of the activities of our groups and management of the area which can arise and that are difficult to counter.



We also realise that collecting is an important and appropriate part of the educational process for people taking an interest in natural history. To try and minimise these conflicting aspects we ask our group leaders to carefully consider the ways in which they collect biological specimens in relation to the following Codes of Conduct that are based on those produced by various conservation organisations and professional bodies. In particular please consider, carefully, the ways in which you collect specimens in heavily used or very public areas.

## General Code

- No more specimens than are strictly required for a specific purpose should be captured or killed. Even apparently common species may be locally vulnerable.
- Individuals of readily identified species, particularly butterflies, should not be killed or taken, unless required as voucher specimens or for scientific or educational study. If they are not needed for such purposes, they should be examined while alive and then released near the place of capture.
- If the accumulation of scientific data is not a specific aim, consideration should be given to photography as an alternative to collecting.
- Species that do not occur in abundance should not be taken year after year from the same locality.
- Specimens for exchange or disposal to other entomologists should be taken sparingly and preferably not at all.
- Invertebrates should not be collected from the wild for sale or other commercial purposes, or for ornamental display.
- If specimens are sold from captive-bred stock or from old collections, they should be accompanied by data, including details of provenance.
- When obtaining early stages by collecting leaf-mines, galls, seed heads etc., never take all that can be found. Leave as many as possible to allow the population to survive.
- Do as little damage to the habitat as possible.
- Adequate records should always be kept.
- Collections should be properly housed and curated.
- The future value of every collection should be safeguarded. The owner's will should provide for the appointment of a scientific executor, who can offer the collection to a learned society or a museum.



- Full and relevant data should be kept together with all specimens retained; i.e. as attached data labels in the case of dry mounted collections. These data may be repeated and amplified in databases, notebooks and other media.
- Species lists, together with any other data, should always be lodged with the relevant county and national recording schemes. If possible, the data should be entered on a database compatible with the National Biodiversity Network.



## Breeding behaviour

- If the individual is displaying behavior indicative of breeding, do not collect it. Examples of this may include:
  - Solitary bees laden with pollen (i.e. provisioning a nest)
  - Female nursery web spiders guarding egg sacs



## Rare, Local & Endangered Species

- It is illegal to collect certain species except under licence from the relevant authority. Taxa listed as being of 'Conservation Concern' should not be collected except with the utmost restraint. A pair of specimens of any such taxon should be considered sufficient for a personal collection. Species in greatest danger should not be collected at all for this purpose. The taking of larger or annually repeated samples may, however, be justifiable for bona fide scientific study, if it can be reasonably expected to have no damaging effects on the population.
- The collection of rare or local species from sites where they are already known to occur does not generally provide useful data and should be avoided.
- Newly discovered localities for rare species should be reported to the appropriate conservation organisations, records centres and organisers of recording schemes.

## Trapping

- The catch in a trap should be released after being examined, except for any specimens that must be killed for voucher purposes or scientific study. The release should be made in the same locality, but away from the immediate trap site. The catch should preferably be kept in cool shady conditions and then released at dusk. If this is not possible, it should be released in long grass, or other cover, not on lawns or other exposed surfaces. Anaesthetics are harmful and should not be used.
- Live trapping is always to be preferred to the killing of the catch.
- Unwanted invertebrates should not be fed to fish, birds or other animals.
- If a trap used for scientific purposes 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 or to waste police time.



## Protecting the Environment

- Protect habitats. Avoid harm to nesting vertebrates and to vegetation, particularly rare or fragile plants.



- When 'beating' trees or shrubs for invertebrates, do not thrash leaves or twigs and cause damage; a sharp jarring of branches is normally sufficient. Searching, rather than indiscriminate beating, is more environmentally friendly and gives more insight into the lifestyles of the species.
  - When working dead wood or bark, leave a substantial proportion untouched in the locality. Where practicable, detached bark and worked material should be replaced.
- Overturned stones and logs should be gently replaced in their original positions unless very deeply embedded. Check for reptiles and amphibians underneath before replacing stones and logs.
  - Damage to aquatic habitats from over-vigorous use of water nets or kick sampling should be avoided. Aquatic plants which have been searched for invertebrates should be replaced, together with the unwanted animals. Plant material that has been heaped by site managers should be replaced and not scattered about.

- 'Sugar' should never be applied to tree trunks or other surfaces where it could harm lichens or other epiphytes, or where it would be unsightly. 'Wine ropes' should be used in preference to sugar patches.

- Uprooting plants or digging up turf without permission from the landowner is generally illegal in the UK and should not be done. Certain plant species, which are listed as fully protected by law, should not be dug or disturbed in any way without an appropriate licence. For invertebrates in short turf,



damage habitat damage can be avoided and sampling efficiency improved by use of a 'suction sampler'.

- Litter from vertebrate nests or roosts should be collected 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.

## June 2017

### FSC Biodiversity Team

*Field Studies Council Head Office  
Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury. SY4 1HW*

*Tel: 01729 830331*

*Email: [enquiries@field-studies-council.org](mailto:enquiries@field-studies-council.org)  
Web site: [www.field-studies-council.org](http://www.field-studies-council.org)*