

Managing access with dogs in protected areas to safeguard breeding birds

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Summary

This guidance has been developed for protected area managers and access officers, and is intended to help integrate access with dogs with safeguarding protected breeding birds. Its primary focus is on nature reserves and other designated sites, but similar management needs may arise in some sensitive areas in the wider countryside. Many of these approaches are also relevant to wintering birds.

A number of key principles are central to management for visitors with dogs, and indeed to all visitor management. Attempts to influence the behaviour of dog owners will be most effective if they work, as far as possible, in sympathy with the needs of these users. Site management will also need to be approached flexibly, with a willingness to adapt in the light of experience and feedback, and to communicate effectively with dog owners.

The foundations of effective visitor management normally rest on good site planning and design, based for example on the provision and location of paths, interpretation facilities and other infrastructure. A second key focus for management will be to promote responsible behaviour in line with the Code, for example by requesting “extra care to avoid disturbing more sensitive birds...particularly during their breeding season” or asking that dogs be kept “on a short lead or close at heel” in sensitive areas. SNH’s national education campaign includes a range of materials which can help to convey Code messages.

In cases where this has been shown to be insufficient to meet conservation obligations, additional informal measures which go beyond the normal requirements of responsible behaviour, such as requests to keep dogs on leads or away from particular areas, could be discussed with the access authority and SNH. If all other approaches are shown not to be working, formal regulatory measures such as byelaws may also be considered. Reckless disturbance of breeding Schedule 1 birds is a criminal offence and should be addressed in conjunction with the police.

Introduction

Outdoor recreation provides important benefits to people's health and quality of life, and allows people to experience nature at first hand, helping to foster understanding of the natural world. Dog walking is the main reason why many people visit the outdoors and more than 40% of all visits by Scottish adults are accompanied by dogs. Dog owners also visit the outdoors more often than non-owners and are more likely to do so without other people, partly because of the sense of security that a dog can provide. Access with dogs is therefore a key part of many people's outdoor recreation and makes an important contribution to the aims of protected areas.

At the same time, poorly-controlled dogs can disturb wildlife and erode the experience for other visitors. When managing places with sensitive breeding birds, the overall aim is therefore to maximise the positive and minimise the negative effects of access with dogs. This guidance has been developed by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and partner bodies to help achieve this, and is intended for protected area managers, access officers and others with an interest in management for access and nature conservation.

This guidance is set in the context of Scottish access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (LRA) and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (the Code), and key nature conservation legislation, in particular the Habitats Regulations and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (NCA), which combine to provide a modern framework for access management. The primary focus of this guidance is on nature reserves and other protected areas, but similar management needs may also arise in some sensitive areas in the wider countryside. The emphasis is primarily on breeding birds, but the key principles apply equally to wintering birds.

There is a wide range of existing guidance on visitor management at sites of natural heritage importance. Some of this pre-dates Scottish access rights, but most of the key management principles reflect human behaviour rather than the legal framework and have not been greatly altered by the access legislation. Key sources are listed in Annex 3.

General principles

The LRA confers rights of access to most land and inland water in Scotland for informal recreation. These rights must be exercised responsibly, and land managers have to manage their land responsibly with regard to access. The Code provides guidance on responsible behaviour for both parties. The LRA also confers a duty on local and National Park authorities (known as 'access authorities') to uphold access rights. These authorities therefore have key roles in local access provision and management, and are important sources of advice and assistance, with help where needed from local access forums. Further information about Scottish access rights and contact details for local access officers can be found at www.outdooraccess-scotland.com. SNH can also advise on access management with regard to nature conservation and local contact details can be found at www.snh.gov.uk.

A number of key principles underpin all site management aimed at dog owners, and indeed at other groups of visitors.

It will be important to start from a clear overview of the numbers of dog owners who use the area, the way in which they use it, and the relative significance of the benefits and problems which result. This structured assessment should be evidence-based and provide an objective foundation for management planning and discussion with others.

Linked to this, it is important to clearly understand the issue from all perspectives, including the views, motives and expectations which underpin the behaviour of dog owners themselves, and management is likely to be much more effective if it works, as far as possible, in sympathy with these aspirations. This applies to all aspects of visitor management, including site planning and design, and the behavioural messages conveyed to dog owners – as the messages that managers may want to give are not necessarily those that dog owners are most likely to respond to. In general, visitors respond best to positive messages and to land managers who make them feel welcome.

Finally, effective communication is essential to develop mutual understanding between site managers and dog owners, to foster support for the aims of the protected area and to help encourage the desired behaviour. A wide range of on- and off-site communication methods can help reach the target audience, including interpretation, signs, leaflets, electronic media, themed events and face to face liaison with visitors. This will require ongoing commitment and may need an adaptive approach, monitoring the effectiveness of management and exploring new avenues if success is not achieved at the first go.

A well-established range of techniques can be used to manage visitors in protected areas and different combinations of methods may be appropriate at different sites. The framework of Scottish access rights provides a loose hierarchy of possible approaches as follows.

1. **Site planning and design**, based on the provision, location and adaptation of visitor facilities, will often provide an important foundation.
2. **Promoting responsible behaviour** will often also be a key feature of management.
3. **Additional informal measures** can be explored in discussion with the access authority and SNH, if 1 and 2 prove insufficient.
4. **Formal regulatory measures** can be used if experience shows that these are needed to underpin the above.

All of the above approaches depend on effective communication with visitors. The following sections of this guidance consider each stage of this hierarchy in turn.

1. Site planning and design

A range of well-established site planning and design approaches can play a key role in positive visitor management. These include the provision and location of infrastructure such as car parks, paths, viewpoints and interpretation facilities, measures such as signage and screening, or differential promotion of particular areas, to influence people's use of the site. Such approaches could be relevant to both new and established provision, and it may be appropriate to review existing infrastructure in the light of experience and, where possible, to adapt or relocate it. These methods can be used to manage the capacity of the site and draw people away from particular areas, perhaps guided by a zoning approach to visitor management, with due care not to restrict the exercise of access rights. These approaches can pre-empt potential disturbance by influencing visitors passively, with no need for conscious behavioural decisions on their part.

Certain types of visitor provision can be particularly effective in facilitating compliance with requests to keep dogs under proper control. Visitor surveys demonstrate that one of the key aspirations of dog walkers is the opportunity to let their dog off the lead, and steering this activity towards suitable areas can encourage dog owners to keep their dog under close control in more sensitive parts of the site, or to avoid these areas altogether. This may be harder to achieve on smaller sites, although it may sometimes be possible to work with neighbouring land managers to meet this need. Other site planning measures, such as

providing bins for dog waste, can also encourage visitors to behave responsibly, both by making it easier to do the right thing and by demonstrating that they are welcome on the site.

These principles also apply at a wider strategic scale and not just to the actual location concerned. Site managers could therefore work with others, in particular the access authority, to promote appropriate provision in the surrounding area through mechanisms such as development plans, outdoor access strategies and core path plans. In doing this, however, it will be important to bear in mind the importance of visitors to the aims of protected areas and not to simply divert all recreational use to other places.

2. Promoting responsible behaviour

A key feature of management on many sites will be the promotion of responsible behaviour among dog owners. The Code includes a wide range of guidance about responsible access with dogs which provides the basis for these behavioural messages.

Paragraphs 3.43-3.48 provide general guidance regarding the natural heritage, including the need to avoid *“intentionally or recklessly disturbing...birds”*, *“not lingering if...your presence is causing significant disturbance (to birds)”*, and taking *“extra care to avoid disturbing more sensitive birds...particularly during their breeding season”*, noting that this may be a criminal offence. Paragraph 3.55 expands on this with respect to dogs, indicating that they should be kept *“on a short lead or under close control”* where ground nesting birds are breeding and that *“these areas include moorland, forests, grassland, loch shores and the seashore”*.

The footnote on page 43 of the Code clearly and explicitly defines ‘short lead’ and ‘close control’ as: *“a short lead is taken to be two metres and ‘under close control’ means that the dog is able to respond to your commands and is kept close at heel”*. If necessary, these messages could therefore be conveyed more precisely using these definitions, for example by asking that dogs should be kept *“on a short lead or close at heel”*.

Requests which lack credibility are likely to be ignored and messages will be most effective if they appear realistic, fair and proportionate to dog owners. This principle underpins much of the advice to land managers in the Code. Any such requests should therefore:

- be confined to specific locations where they are genuinely required;
- apply to the minimum necessary area for the minimum necessary time, and;
- clearly state the reason for the request.

The behaviour of other dog owners also influences the credibility of a request and if a ‘critical mass’ of users can be encouraged to comply, others are more likely to follow suit.

The relevant messages from the Code are being promoted extensively at national level through SNH’s access education campaign, which includes dog owners as a key target audience and refers specifically to areas where ground-nesting birds are breeding. A range of leaflets, posters and other campaign materials is available at <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/help-and-information/marketing-and-resources/dog-campaign-resources/>, and a sign template referring to ‘breeding wildlife’ is available on the SNH website at <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A302827.pdf>. Signs alone may not always be the most effective approach and supporting messages could be integrated with other publicity and interpretation relating to the site, perhaps in conjunction with wider information about the natural heritage, using a variety of media as above.

On-site staff may have a key role in friendly day to day liaison with visitors to help convey these messages and some of the SNH campaign materials (in particular the ‘dog passport’ available at the above link) are intended to provide a basis for this type of face to face discussion. There may be considerable scope for more organised outreach work, for

example through themed events, guided walks or local user groups aimed at dog owners. Many dog walkers are regular local visitors and some could perhaps be recruited as ambassadors of responsible behaviour to exert peer pressure on others.

Careful site planning and design, and promoting responsible behaviour, are likely to form the bedrock of visitor management in most protected areas. These methods should be applied flexibly, with a willingness to adapt if success is not immediate. These decisions should be guided by feedback from dog owners to better understand their responses to your management measures. In some circumstances, however, these methods may be complemented by two further types of approach, which are discussed below.

3. Additional informal measures

If the above approaches have been thoroughly explored and have been shown to be inadequate to meet conservation obligations, site managers may consider additional informal measures - which are referred to in paragraphs 3.45 and 3.46 of the Code. Such proposals would be likely to involve 'stronger' requests to visitors which ask for dogs to be kept on short leads (without a 'close control'/'close at heel' option) or kept out of particular areas.

Any such measures would depend on consensus and must be discussed with the relevant access authority, which may involve the local access forum, and SNH. If the proposal is potentially contentious, wider consultation may also be needed and this decision can be guided by discussion with the access authority. The supporting case for such measures should include evidence that a problem exists and cannot be adequately addressed in other ways. This implies that methods based on site planning and design, and promoting responsible behaviour, should have been thoroughly explored - and that if they have not proved wholly successful, the reasons for this have been clearly understood. The use of additional informal measures is discussed in more detail in Annex 1.

4. Formal regulatory measures

A range of regulatory options is available if needed, and may include the use of general provisions in existing legislation. These are generally measures of last resort.

On-site staff can, if needed, ask visitors who behave irresponsibly to modify their behaviour or, failing that, to leave, and an interdict could be sought against a known individual who persistently behaves irresponsibly. Visitors who recklessly allow their dogs to disturb breeding birds listed on Schedule 1 to the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are committing a criminal offence, and other wild birds are also protected to varying degrees (see Annex 3). It may be possible to refer to relevant legal measures to reinforce behavioural messages to dog owners, which will probably be most effective as an adjunct to a positive overall message. If necessary, action could be taken in conjunction with the police.

Various byelaw powers, resting with SNH, access authorities and other bodies, could also be used to regulate access at particular locations for nature conservation purposes. Any proposal to create a byelaw would need to be taken forward by due process in conjunction with the relevant authority and in consultation with all relevant interests. The use of these formal measures is discussed in more detail in Annex 2.

In conclusion, managing access with dogs in protected areas will usually need a positive approach based on site planning and promoting responsible behaviour, and underpinned by effective communication with dog owners. This may require sustained effort and an adaptive approach, but the potential rewards lie in safeguarding breeding birds, building support for protected areas and fostering wider commitment to nature.

Annex 1: Summary of management principles and possible approaches

Key principles

The key principles guiding management are:

- evidence-based evaluation of the issue
- effective communication with dog owners
- positive approaches informed by input from users
- credible requests (minimum time and area) and;
- a commitment to monitor and review at all stages

Possible approaches

Management will normally be based on:

Site planning and design

- selective promotion of particular parts of the site
- provision, location and design of infrastructure such as car parks, paths, signs, screening, viewpoints and interpretation facilities
- provision and location of off-lead areas and other dog-friendly facilities
- input to wider strategic plans

AND/OR

Promoting responsible behaviour

- signs, information panels, leaflets and web pages
- routine face to face contact with visitors
- themed events and guided walks, and;
- local user groups aimed at dog owners (members could influence other dog owners by peer pressure)

Additional informal measures¹

If monitoring and review of the above measures suggests a need, it may be possible to consider stronger local messages (going beyond the normal guidance in the Code), provided these are phrased as requests, agreed by the access authority and SNH, and meet the tests set out in Annex 2. These might for example ask for:

- dogs to be kept on leads at particular times and places, or
- dogs to be kept out of particular areas at particular times

Formal regulatory measures¹

Where necessary, usually as a last resort, it may also be possible to work with the relevant authorities to pursue formal regulatory approaches:

- interdicts
- criminal proceedings for reckless disturbance
- Dog Control Notices
- byelaws
- management rules

¹See Annex 2

Annex 2: The basis of additional informal or formal regulatory measures

Additional informal measures

If approaches based on site planning and design, and on promoting responsible behaviour, have been thoroughly explored and evidence indicates that these have been inadequate to meet conservation obligations, site managers may at that stage consider additional informal measures. These are referred to in paragraphs 3.45 and 3.46 of the Code. Such proposals would be likely to involve 'stronger' requests to visitors which ask for dogs to be kept on short leads (without a 'close control'/'close at heel' option) or kept out of particular areas.

Any such measures would depend on consensus and must be discussed with the relevant access authority, which may choose to involve the local access forum. They should also be discussed with SNH, which has a national advisory role with regard to the natural heritage and, where Natura interests are involved, with the relevant competent authority (either SNH or another public body, if that body is responsible for management of the site) – to ensure that the measure is justified and proportionate with respect to access rights and nature conservation obligations. If the proposal is potentially contentious, wider consultation may also be advisable, for example with local community or other interest groups, and this decision can be guided by discussion with the access authority.

If implemented, such measures would be informal in nature and would not have a direct or specific statutory basis. This has two key implications:

- Firstly, any related requests to dog owners would be purely advisory and could not be worded in a directive or instructional way.
- Secondly, such measures could, in principle, be open to legal challenge under sections 14 and/or 28 of the LRA. Their robustness to such challenge would largely depend on clear evidence of need and proportionality, and on the consensus in support of their adoption – in particular on the support of the access authority.

The supporting case for such measures should, in principle, include evidence that a problem exists and that this cannot be adequately addressed in other ways. This implies that methods based on site planning and design, and promoting responsible behaviour, should have been thoroughly explored - and that if they have not proved wholly successful, the reasons have been clearly understood. The use of these additional informal measures is therefore subject, in principle, to the same tests that would apply when seeking formal regulatory measures such as byelaws (see below), but the burden of proof and the degree of consensus required will, in practice, reflect the scale and contentiousness of the proposal.

Requests of this type would be subject to the principles of minimum necessary time and area as set out in the Code. Such measures have not been used widely, but have been adopted by the Cairngorms National Park Authority in some areas of particular sensitivity for capercaillie, where simple seasonal signs ask visitors to keep dogs on leads between 1 April and 15 August – which was justified by the need to meet Natura obligations. Such messages could also be conveyed, of course, using other media, perhaps in the context of wider background information about the site and its management. As with behavioural messages based on the normal guidance in the Code, effective communication with visitors will be crucial to the effectiveness of such measures.

Under Section 29 of the LRA, SNH can put up signs asking visitors not to exercise access rights in particular ways or places in order to protect the natural heritage. A related power exists under Section 41 of the NCA, allowing SNH to put up signs to inform people about sensitive natural heritage interests on land which is subject to a Natura designation, SSSI

notification, nature conservation order or land management order. Both types of sign are essentially advisory in nature. Disregard for such guidance could, however, be taken as evidence in a judicial determination about responsible behaviour or prosecution for reckless disturbance. In practice, the same information can be conveyed by any sign and it is likely, in most instances, that the above purpose could be fulfilled equally well by informal signs which have been agreed by the key parties without the use of these powers.

The implementation of any additional measures of this type should be monitored as appropriate to assess:

- changes in the number and distribution of visitors;
- the extent to which they comply with the request, and;
- the status of the natural heritage interests that the measures are intended to protect.

Although it will rarely be possible to detect a simple cause-effect relationship between visitor behaviour and conservation status, such monitoring will help to develop an evidence base to inform future management decisions. These might include withdrawing or modifying the measures concerned, or seeking a formal regulatory approach, perhaps based on the use of byelaws.

Part 4 of the Code notes that land managers can ask the public to follow particular routes around areas where land management operations are taking place and can, if necessary, use informal and temporary signs to do this. Further information is provided by SNH's *Signs guidance for land managers*, which is accompanied by sign templates for common land management operations (see Annex 3). This option applies equally to operations such as tree planting or scrub clearance which may be linked to conservation management. This very informal approach is appropriate to *short-term* requests which relate to the time and area required to complete a specific operation, but should not be used to divert the public away from particular areas for longer periods, such as the breeding season, to protect conservation interests.

Formal regulatory measures

A range of regulatory options is available if needed, and may include the use of general provisions in existing legislation or the introduction of specific regulatory measures with regard to particular locations.

Although legal action will always be a last resort, an interdict (a civil court order) could be sought against a known individual who persistently behaves irresponsibly; this could be pursued through a summary application to a sheriff. This approach may be a useful backstop measure, for example, when dealing with regular visitors (often local residents) who show ingrained patterns of irresponsible behaviour which are difficult to influence in other ways.

Various lines of action could also be considered, in conjunction with the police, based on the criminal offence of reckless disturbance of protected breeding birds. Such action might include exploring options for increased surveillance, or informal measures to address individual incidents, such as a verbal or written warning from the police – with criminal proceedings as the ultimate sanction. Local authorities can issue Dog Control Notices under the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 where dogs are deemed to be out of control and failure to comply with such a notice is a criminal offence.

Various byelaw powers, resting with SNH, access authorities and other bodies, could also be used to regulate access for nature conservation purposes. These powers are summarised in SNH's *Brief guide to laws relevant to outdoor access in Scotland* (see Annex 3). The byelaw

approach is well established and widely understood by the public, although very few current byelaws in protected areas specifically regulate access.

Any proposal to create a byelaw would need to be taken forward by due process in conjunction with the relevant authority and in consultation with all relevant interests. The case for the byelaw would need to address a number of key tests, in particular:

- it must be appropriate and proportionate in relation to the natural heritage issue concerned;
- it must not unnecessarily restrict access rights, and;
- there should be evidence that other visitor management approaches have been considered and have either failed or have been rejected for clearly justified reasons.

Byelaws will not necessarily provide a simple resolution to management issues. These measures are established by a statutory process, including formal consultation and Ministerial approval, which may require two years or more to complete. Byelaws will only be effective to the extent to which they can be enforced and much of their potential value will lie in underpinning and reinforcing positive visitor management by other methods. In most instances, continued investment in site planning and design measures, and the promotion of responsible behaviour, will therefore be a more effective use of resources. The use of regulatory measures can also be contentious and may not necessarily present nature conservation or protected areas in a favourable light. Very careful consideration would therefore be needed before deciding to seek a byelaw.

The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 provides for the establishment of management rules on land which is owned, occupied or managed by a local authority. This approach may be appropriate under these circumstances and the key principles, and tests to be met, would be similar to those which apply to byelaws; further information can be found in SNH's *Brief guide to laws relevant to outdoor access*. The NCA allows Ministers to make Nature Conservation Orders to conserve natural features of special interest, but these are more suitable for preventing physically damaging land management operations than for restricting public access.

Communication with visitors will need to clearly highlight the existence of byelaws or other regulatory provisions, and where and when they apply, in order to encourage widespread compliance. Ongoing monitoring of visitors and of the key conservation interests will also be important to allow management to be kept under review, and there is a formal requirement to review byelaws and management rules after 10 years. A recent SNH commissioned research report developed with various partner bodies (*Monitoring Access and Recreation at Sensitive Natural Heritage Sites*) provides detailed guidance (see Annex 3).

Annex 3: Further advice and guidance

The first point of contact to discuss issues on particular sites will normally be the relevant access authority; contact details for access officers can be found at: <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/help-and-information/contact-la-officer/>. SNH can also provide general advice on access and conservation management and local SNH Area contacts can be found at: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/contact-us/how-to-contact-us/offices/>. Further information about protected birds can be found at <http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-species/which-and-how/birds/>.

Additional guidance is available from a range of other sources including those listed below.

A brief guide to laws relevant to outdoor access in Scotland

Natural Heritage Management Series, SNH (2007)

<http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/heritagemanagement/lawsrelevanttoac.pdf>

A concise summary including relevant legislation relating to nature conservation and dogs.

Communication, not conflict: using communication to encourage shared recreational use of the outdoors

Natural Heritage Management Series, SNH (2004)

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A309760.pdf>

An overview of communication methods and media.

Dogs, access and nature conservation

Taylor, K. *et al.* (2005)

English Nature Research Report

<http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/R649>

Guidance on Monitoring Access and Recreation at Sensitive Natural Heritage Sites

Commissioned Research Report, SNH (2007)

<http://www.snh.org.uk/publications/on-line/heritagemanagement/sensitivesites/page01.asp>.

Comprehensive guidance accompanied by case studies.

Management for People

Natural Heritage Management Series, SNH (2004)

<http://www.snh.org.uk/publications/on-line/heritagemanagement/managementforpeople.asp>

Detailed and comprehensive guidance on visitor management at various types of site.

Managing Dogs in the Woods

Jenkinson, S. and Harrop, P. (2007)

Forestry Commission England/The Kennel Club

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-dogs>

People and Dogs in the Outdoors

Jenkinson, S. (2011)

Research report for Cairngorms National Park Authority

<http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/outdoor/developing-outdoor-access>

Promoting persuasion in protected areas: a guide for managers. Developing strategic communication to influence visitor behaviour.

Ham, S. *et al.* (2007).

Sustainable Tourism Co-operative Research Centre, Australia

http://72.41.119.75/Library/Signage/Promoting_Persuasion_in_Protected_Areas.pdf

Public Access and Land Management
Natural Heritage Management Series, SNH (2007)
<http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/heritagemanagement/PALM.pdf>

Scottish Outdoor Access Code
SNH (2004)
<http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/outdoors-responsibly/access-code-and-advice/soac/>
The statutory reference source for responsible access and responsible land management.

Signage guidance for outdoor access: a guide to good practice
Paths for All Partnership/SNH
http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/component/option,com_docman/Itemid,166/gid,155/task_cat_view/
General guidance on common principles applying to a wide range of access-related signs; section 3.8 relates specifically to nature conservation interests.

Signs Guidance for Farmers and other Land Managers: using advisory signs to inform the public about your day-to-day land management operations
Natural Heritage Management Series, SNH (2006)
<http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A302820.pdf>
Guidance on signs linked to land management operations, but including a number of relevant common principles. This is accompanied by a series of sign templates for various situations including sensitive breeding birds: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A302827.pdf> .

Towards responsible use: influencing recreational behaviour in the countryside
Natural Heritage Management Series, SNH (2004)
<http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A309756.pdf>

Understanding the Psychology of Walkers with Dogs: new approaches to better management
Edwards, V. and Knight, S. (2006)
Countryside Agency, Hampshire County Council & The Kennel Club
<http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/academic/psychology/staff/downloads/filetodownload,71757,en.pdf>

Visitor Monitoring Manual
SNH
<http://archive.snh.gov.uk/vmm/aims.html>
Provides practical advice on developing a visitor monitoring strategy including identifying information needs, selecting methods, designing and undertaking surveys, and analysing and interpreting results.