

# Getting straight to the point

Carl Barimore (BTO NRS Organiser) & David Hodkinson



**Figuring out where** you are in life has become a lot easier, literally at least, with the falling price of GPS devices and rise of smartphone apps and online mapping software. This new technology brings clear benefits for ringing and nest recording.

Accurate grid references are becoming increasingly important for analyses of NRS and ringing data. For example, nest records are now being spatially matched to remote sensing data sets like CEH's LandCover Map in order to gain more information about habitat and weather conditions, both of which can have a significant impact on breeding success. Being able to look at fine-scale movements of ringed birds can also tell us much about the importance of dispersal for populations of more sedentary species and how this is influenced by habitat connectivity, the presence of linking hedgerows, rivers and other features in the landscape.

Ringers and nest recorders have long been using hand-held GPS to collect grid references in the field, not least to avoid having to pore over maps later, and the ability of even the simplest device to record 10-figure grid references brings other practical benefits. Being able to track back to within five metres of a point is ideal for relocating nests in uniform habitat – no more looking for the small marker on the hemlock that's directly down from the third white-roofed building on the horizon! The new online ringing and NRS software will accept higher-resolution grid references and will have mapping tools available for both recording and displaying this information.

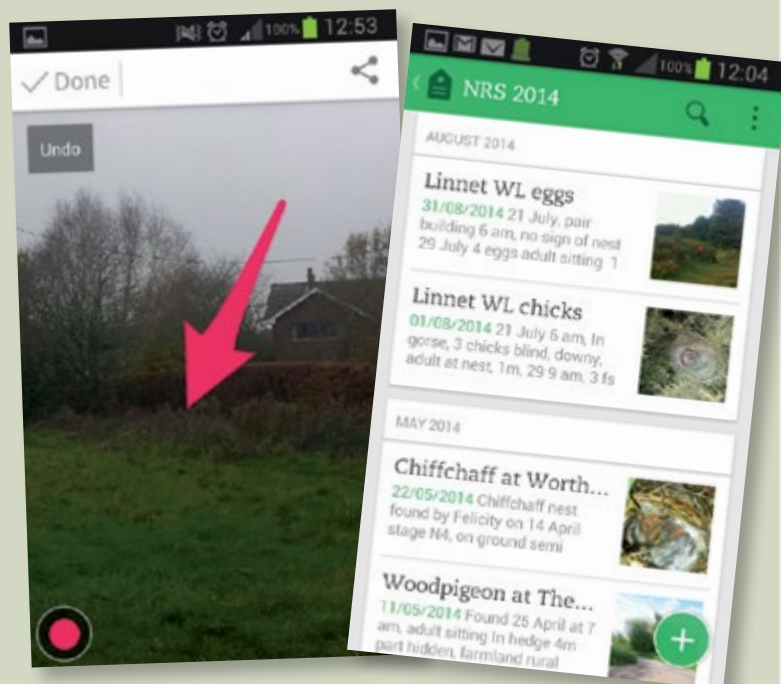
Though dedicated GPS devices can cost as little as £60, some people are turning to smartphone apps that can do the same thing or even more. Recorder David Hodkinson (see box) has been using a simple note-taking app to log grid references, take field notes and, crucially, share nest-finding information with others in the field.

## Using an app to help with group nest recording

**When my mum,** Hilary, and I started nest recording at a new site in 2013, we looked at our diaries and realised we would be doing most of our visits separately. We decided to make best use of our alternate schedules by doing follow-up checks on each other's nests, but if we weren't going to be meeting up, how would we show each other exactly where the nests were, let alone swap visit notes? After ruling out paper maps and trying Google Earth with limited success, we had a look at note-taking app 'Evernote', which we were both already using on our smartphones.

### HOW WE USE EVERNOTE

**Upon finding a nest,** a new 'note' is started and the coordinates captured just like a regular GPS. Text can be added and photographs of the site attached and even annotated with arrows. We've found that this is all we need to locate each other's nests and now we rarely even use markers in the field. A reminder date can be added to the note, which is great for scheduling a follow-up visit, and additional photographs and text added with further visits. Perhaps the best feature of Evernote for us has been the ease of sharing information: we can access, edit and share records online from any device, including a home PC, so there's no need to physically pass along cards or electronic files and there's no risk of losing notes in the field or elsewhere.



Screenshots of smartphone app 'Evernote'. Most features relevant to nest recording are available free; the premium version costs about £4 a month. See [evernote.com](http://evernote.com)

GPS in use, by Hazel Evans