BIAZA Glow Worm Patrol 2026

Glow worm survey guidelines:

Glow worms are listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. Reasons for decline include light pollution, habitat fragmentation and changes in agricultural practices. However the current distribution of glow worms in the UK is not fully known. Surveying is a great way to help map the distribution of glow worms in your area and seeing them is a **truly magical experience!**

Step 1: register

Register by emailing admin@biaza.org.uk

Step 2: check records

Glow-worms can be found in a wide range of habitats from roadside verges, woodland to fields and sand dunes. They are often found near railway lines and areas that have been relatively undisturbed for many years such as churchyards and old park land.

Look at existing records in the area on or surrounding your zoo site on NBN Atlas and iRecord. This should give you a good idea of where to target surveys. You could focus on either updating existing records if they are old or on areas adjacent to the existing sites where glow-worms are known to be.

Look at the dates of old records to see when the females are likely to start glowing in your area. This is usually between the end of June and the start of August but can vary depending on where you are in the country.

Glowing female

Glow Worm Larvae

Have a look at the map on page 3 to see if they have been recorded in your proximity.

Adult

Step 3: check suitability

Once you have identified your areas it is a good idea to walk them in daylight to ensure it will be safe to do so in the dark and to work out a suitable transect route. The route should take no longer than 1-2 hours to walk.

A risk assessment can then be written and landowner permission gained if needed. Look out for wandering glow-worm larvae as you go and they may be out finding a good spot to pupate.

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Glow worm survey guidelines:

Step 4: bring support

Recruit some volunteers to go with you. The more pairs of eyes the better especially working at night.

Step 5: Survey!

Ensure all surveyors have hi-vis and torches (torches are unnecessary for looking for glow-worms but help make surveyors more visible to passing traffic and make navigating the sites safer in the dark conditions).

Walk the planned transect route after it gets dark – normally around 10pm in July. Walk slowly looking in the low grass and hedgerows. They can be surprisingly difficult to find in the longer grass but are unmistakably once spotted.

Take a photo if possible and a 6-8 OS grid reference location of each female spotted. Note down the habitat and any other details of interest including any males or larvae seen. The larvae can also glow but not continuously and not as brightly. If you see many in one location (such as a field or lane) just take one OS grid reference and note down the numbers.

Surveying usually stops around midnight. Go to sleep!

Glowing female

Mating Glow Worm Pair

Tip

The light of the larvae is much dimmer than the adult female- it's always worth an extra look to make sure.

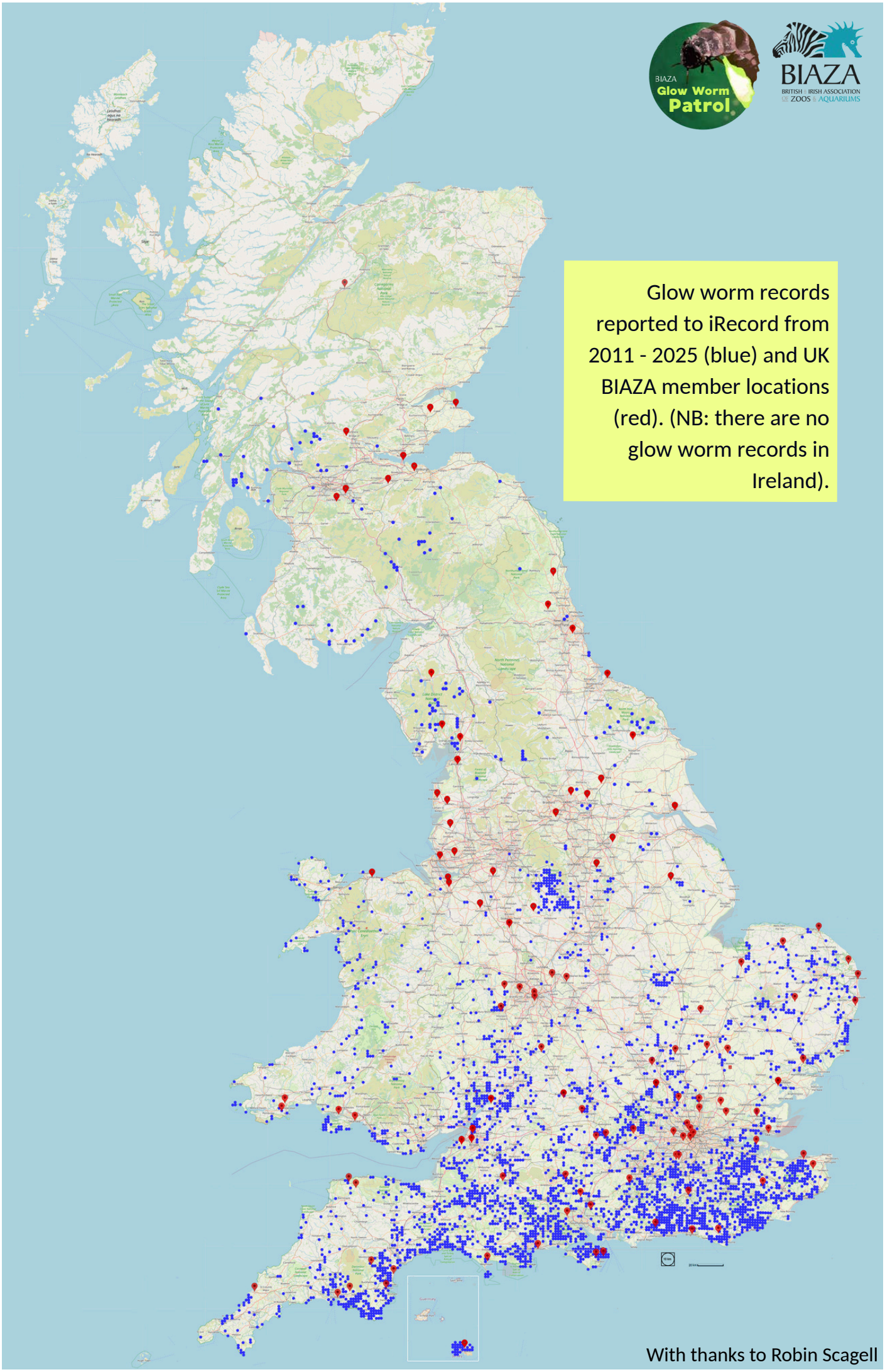
Final Step: Record

Add all records (presence and absence) to the UK glow-worm survey project on iRecord.

Further information:

UK Glow-worm survey [link]

The Glow-worm by John Tyler [link]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BRITISH & IRISH ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS
Glow worm records reported to iRecord from 2011 - 2025 (blue) and UK BIAZA member locations (red). (NB: there are no glow worm records in Ireland).
With thanks to Robin Scagell