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Rachel Murphy

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

RACHEL MURPHY

Welcome to the 2024 NPMS Summer newsletter!

We hope all our volunteers and supporters have had an enjoyable summer, and of course everyone and their squares were not too impacted by high temperatures. Records thus far have been mixed, but there are certainly a number of scorched sites, with the met office confirming 2025 as the hottest summer on record. As always, a heartfelt thanks for all your efforts and time this year, from the whole NPMS team.

And what a milestone year it is! 2025 marks the 10th anniversary of the NPMS and we are looking to celebrate with our volunteers and supporters. This autumn, we'll be highlighting the incredible achievements of our volunteer community by hosting a day of celebrations, both in London and Northern Ireland (p.2). We hope all those that can, will join us to find out how ten years of NPMS data are helping us understand the health of plants and habitats across the UK and to celebrate the incredible power of citizen science. Information on how we are supporting volunteers to attend these events are on page 2.

The NPMS Annual report 2024, also released earlier this season, takes a special look at the achievements of the scheme and its volunteers over the last decade, and highlights the key scheme milestones from its development and design phase through to our anniversary year (p.11). NPMS data continues to underpin national and continental research, contributing to ReSurveyEurope and informing emerging EU pollinator monitoring initiatives. Within the latest report you can find out more on current uses and ongoing analyses of NPMS data, along with how NPMS data is shared and available for research.

More recent scheme news and opportunities can be found in this newsletter edition, from further improvements to the website (p.11), to new members of the staff team and our upcoming involvement with the **Citizen science for Advancing Racial Equity in Environmental Research Super-consortium** (p.12).

We've had a great time this season in-field and online engaging and training new volunteers, and up-skilling and meeting with existing surveyors. We hope to see more of you in person soon. It is a real joy to see so many folk enjoying and learning about wild plants. Thank you ever so much for your communications, feedback and encouragement throughout this year so far. Please do not hesitate to keep in touch with further queries or stories support@npms.org.uk



Glenarm Reserve, N. Ireland

NPMS 10th Anniversary Celebrations!

The NPMS turns 10 in 2025, and we are looking to celebrate with our volunteers and supporters. We hope you will join us for the day in either London or N. Ireland this October. With speakers, workshops, a panel discussion and more. Find out how ten years of NPMS data are helping us understand the health of plants and habitats across the UK, and how data are used by nature conservation organisations; hear from other volunteer surveyors about their experience of the NPMS; and find out about the support that's available to everyone who registers for the scheme.



To look forward to...

- ❖ Talks from partner organisations including
 - Growth of the scheme and achievements
 - What does NPMS tell us?
 - Trends so far
 - How NPMS data is used and by whom
- ❖ Volunteer voices
- ❖ Why NPMS is important for developing policy
- ❖ Why collecting botanical data is important for other nature-focused organisations
- ❖ Optional workshops and support sessions
- ❖ Interactive learning and networking opportunities
- ❖ Meet the team! All partner organisations will be represented

And More!



How can we help?

This is a free event and we are pleased to offer the following support to attend:

- A limited number of travel subsidies (up to £20) are available to volunteers that request it, on a first-come-first-served basis. Simply indicate your interest at point of booking.
- We're pleased to offer support and cover poster printing costs for those wishing to display.
- Both sites are accessible venues, supporting equal access and inclusion

Please get in touch if you have any further accessibility queries about this event.



For more details and Booking:

London event
Saturday 18th October

[Visit](#)

Oxford Island NNR, N. Ireland
Saturday 25th October

[Visit](#)



Sand dune indicators training with Budding Nature: Kenfig NNR



Plot Portrait

My NPMS Volunteer journey: Philip Vangucci

As we celebrate this milestone year for the scheme, it has been a real pleasure to catch up with volunteers that have been involved in the scheme since the start. Indeed, in the case of volunteer Philip, we could even say he has been part of the team even longer, since before the scheme actually became the NPMS it is today. Over the last decade however, Philip has amassed near an incredible 2,000 botanical records over the course of 89 surveys. A truly remarkable achievement and greatly valuable contribution to the NPMS data set and botanical monitoring.



Prior to participating in the NPMS, I took part in the Plant Life UK vegetation survey.

My five NPMS plots are located across the coastal dune system at Morfa Harlech, North Wales. It is a splendid area in which to work, overlooked by Harlech Castle and the Rhinog Mountains; I can even see Yr Wyddfa, Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales and England.

Since 1975 I have lived and worked here after graduating in Botany and Zoology and a PGCE. As a Deputy Head of an LEA Outdoor Education Centre, I ran Field Courses for Primary to sixth form students, so I know the dunes very well. Therefore, when the opportunity arose to get involved in the NPMS survey at Harlech I jumped at the chance.



Five survey plots were selected to cover a mix of habitats within the fixed dunes / dune grassland zones, including dune slacks - the damp hollows between dune ridges.

One plot sits in the middle of a golf course in rough grassland alongside the fairway I have a considerable collection of lost golf balls!

Plot set-up

From the south corner of each plot, which the quadrat is laid out using a compass bearing (for the first side), 4 corner stakes, and a length of cord marked at 4x 5 m intervals. I also choose to use a 1x 7.07m length for the hypotenuse, to construct 2 right-angled triangles. I usually leave the hypotenuse cord in place during the survey as it conveniently divides the area in half; this makes assessing abundance more manageable especially if there are two surveyors. I always use photocopies of the original NPMS recording sheet and write out the species names on all five plot sheets; this helps me to focus on each plant as well as trying to remember how to spell its scientific name correctly (*Rosa spinosissima* is always a challenge!).

With the previous year's record sheet on my clip board beneath the current one, I can efficiently cross check abundance estimates. If they are markedly different, I will recheck my current assessment to ascertain whether the difference is due to real change or error. Of course, as I make my way through the check list of species others will be discovered and added .





Plot Portrait

Philip Vangucci Continued

I try to visit the dunes a few times before the first survey in June to check on the early flowering plants such as Cuckoo Flower and some grass species that can be more difficult to identify or find later in the year. Even so, there are still some ‘awkward’ individuals where I resort to ‘Streeter or Stace’ to refresh my memory; sometimes it necessitates amending previous records.

I try to visit the dunes a few times before the first survey in June to check on the early flowering plants such as Cuckoo Flower and some grass species that can be more difficult to identify or later in the year. Even so, there are still some ‘awkward’ individuals where I resort to ‘Streeter or Stace’ to refresh my memory; sometimes necessitating amends to previous records. Returning to the same plot every June and August provides an opportunity to observe and get to know a small defined patch of land with its community of plants and animals over a long period of time; witnessing the changes in response to weather, drought, flooding and physical disturbance by animals including badgers, rabbits and us. Some plants are found in the same spot year on year, others disappear and reappear years later, and some like Creeping Willow and Clematis vitalba are on the move and spreading. This year Devil’s Bit Scabious popped up in one quadrat, the first sighting there in 10 years.



Sarah Shuttleworth

There are many paths throughout the dunes created by holiday makers and dog walkers and badgers; these paths change direction and/or degree of usage over time. Three quadrats are crossed by paths resulting in trampling and a marked impact on species distribution. Interestingly, the three paths crossing my quadrats did not exist when the quadrats were established. The upside is that I get a chance to chat with the walkers as they are always curious to know what I’m doing, so I tell them about NPMS and conservation. We, the surveyors, will also inevitably cause some trample damage, though I minimize going inside the quadrat. Even so, the minor damage caused can sometimes be discernible a year later.

During my ten years of surveying there was one experience I will never forget, that evokes a mix of sadness and joy. It relates to a quadrat that sits in a large slack (about the size of three tennis courts) which is ringed by dunes. The vegetation is lush with a carpet of Marsh Pennywort. Several species of orchid grow there including a few Bee Orchids. Sadly the site has been increasingly damaged by the irresponsible behaviour of people using it as a venue for ‘mini raves’.



Philip Vangucci

The consequence is litter, broken bottles, beer cans and the like scattered everywhere, and fire pits have also been dug. I often remove trash from the quadrat before undertaking the survey. The problem has been reported, but the damage continues. However, a few years ago during my June survey I approached the site, and coming over the crest of the dune what I saw below were masses and masses of Bee Orchids. There were hundreds all in pristine bloom, it was a most spectacular display! That sight will always stay with me, such beauty in the midst of such squalor..... indomitable nature.



Bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*: Philip Vangucci

The benefits to me of involvement in the NPMS is that it provides an opportunity to contribute to the conservation of the UK flora while participating in a Citizen Science project. And of course, it allows me to hone my botanical skills and spend time amongst the wildflowers I love.



Plot Portrait

My NPMS Volunteer journey: Liz Askins

We are also delighted to hear from NPMS survey volunteer, Liz on the beautiful Isles of Scilly. Liz signed up to support the NPMS with her square on St Mary's back in 2015, before heading out on her first survey in 2016. In this time Liz has amassed over 950 botanical records for the NPMS, over the course of 96 surveys. Liz has shared her lovely coastal plots via our NPMS support Facebook group and our Newsletters over the years. – They only make us a tiny bit envious!.....

At the very start of the National Plant Monitoring Scheme I was determined to add the Isles of Scilly to the map. I had been living on the islands for seven years and botanically it is really interesting. Varied habits crammed in tiny islands, the largest only 6.58 square kilometres, mild climate and sat in the Atlantic Ocean. The UK mainland is nearer France than to the islands.



Image: Liz Askins

The survey area is dry heathland. I started on paper forms and now it is speedier on the app. At first I was rather confused, but I now have a routine (coffee at plot three) and sometimes a friend will lend a hand. Thank goodness I can explain that a domin scale adds up to more than 100%. It is a very scenic public area and holidaying walkers often stop and ask what I am doing. So the word is spread and maybe someone will get involved when they get home. The locals will also have a chat, but as far as I know, the other three squares are still available.

Area management lapsed a bit over the years. The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, who manages the land has a new Conservation officer and work on the ground has now picked up, with the area regularly being cut and grazed by conservation cattle. A lot of the plants recorded are European Gorse, Bracken and Bramble. That doesn't mean there are not other flowers, such as Tormentil, Ling, Bell Heather, Rock Sea-spurrey and English Stonecrop. I get the occasional Small Copper Butterfly, Oil Beetle and Hummingbird Hawk Moth too.



Liz Askins

▲ English stonecrop



Liz Askins

▲ Thrift

So, Spring and Summer I grab my bag of measuring twine, Guidance Notes, coffee flask and ID book (although I am confident that I know all the usual plants now) and spend a pleasant couple of hours seeing how my plots are doing.

Indeed, 3 NPMS survey squares remain available across both New Grimsby and St. Martin's islands within the archipelago, all awaiting adoption by a keen volunteer. You can view these squares along with all available squares nationwide on our [Squares Near Me page](#).



Habitat Hotspot – Kevin Walker, BSBI

Arable

In this habitat hotspot we focus on arable, that is land cultivated annually to grow root or cereal crops for human or animal consumption, as well as small-scale cultivation on allotments and in gardens. Traditionally, arable habitats have been eschewed by botanists, largely because they are difficult to access but also because of a perceived lack of botanical interest due to the intensity of management. Thankfully, this view is changing due to their increased prominence in conservation prompted by catastrophic declines of many species as well as the increasing awareness of the importance of plants on arable land for other taxa, most notably birds and pollinating insects.

Whilst very few sites are designated for their arable plant interest alone, large areas of arable land are being managed to sustain arable weed assemblages, especially in 'hotspots' such as the Breckland region of East Anglia, the chalk of southern England and coastal regions in the southern and western parts of England and Wales. In recent years there has also been increased focus on arable plants in parts of eastern Scotland and in the Highlands and Islands, where small-scale cropping around crofts is increasingly becoming a thing of the past. Britain even has some 'high profile' arable plant reserves, such as Plantlife's Ranscombe Farm in Kent, the National Trust's West Penwith reserve in Cornwall and Somerset Wildlife Trust's Fiveheads Arable reserve in Somerset. These sites show how arable fields were managed historically, and the assemblages of now rare species that this type of management supports.



Ecologically, the key feature of arable land is annual cultivation which means that plants have to complete their life-cycle within 12 months, like the crop itself, as well as being able to survive 'fallow' periods as seed in the soil. Consequently, arable plant communities are dominated by short-lived species, usually annuals, that produce copious amounts of seed, often over an extended period. As most crops are now sprayed with chemical weedkillers and fertilisers, most species are confined to areas where management is less intensive and so the best places to look are field margins, field corners, gateways, and areas 'set aside' for wildlife such as uncropped, cultivated strips, pollinator margins and game cover. As a general rule, arable plant communities tend to be richer on lighter soils, such as on sands, chalk or limestone, where the land is less fertile and more free-draining. Whereas heavy 'claylands' tend to be less promising.



From an agricultural perspective, weeds reduce the productivity of the crop and so are generally not tolerated by farmers, unless they are paid to manage land specifically for them, for example as under agri-environment scheme options. Before the advent of chemical weedkillers and improvements in seed-cleaning introduced during the 1930s and 1940s, weeds were very much part of the cropping cycle with 'pestilential' species such as **Corncockle** *Agrostemma githago* and **Cornflower** *Centaurea cyanus* souring the flour used to make our daily bread.



▲ Corncockle



▲ Cornflower

Images: © Kevin Walker

Habitat Hotspot – Arable cont.



◀ Rye Brome, *Bromus secalinus*
© Cath Shellswell

With the rise of chemical weedkillers from the 1940s onwards, however, such species have undergone catastrophic declines on a national scale and in some areas crops are now virtually weed-free. Although some species are making a comeback due to herbicide-resistance such as **Black Grass** *Alopecurus myosuroides*, **Rip-gut Brome** *Anisantha diandra* and **Rye Brome** *Bromus secalinus*.

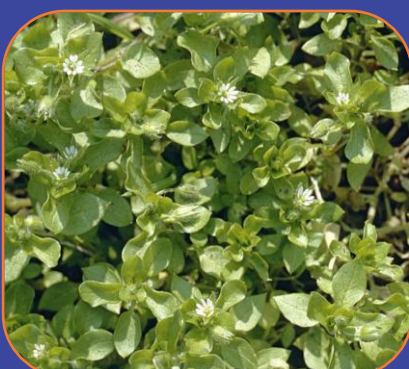
Today, the weeds you are most likely to encounter are very common species that can tolerate high fertility and complete their lifecycle between herbicide applications such as **Fat-hen** *Chenopodium album*, **Goose-grass** *Galium aparine*, **Pineappleweed** *Matricaria discoidea*, **Annual Meadow-grass** *Poa annua*, **Common Chickweed** *Stellaria media* and **Greater Plantain** *Plantago major*.

▼ **Goose-grass** *G. aparine*

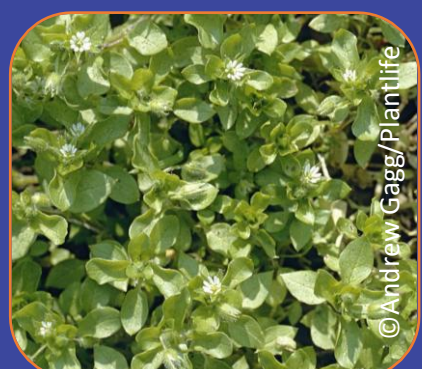


© Luke Morton/Plantlife

▼ **Pineappleweed** *M. discoidea*,

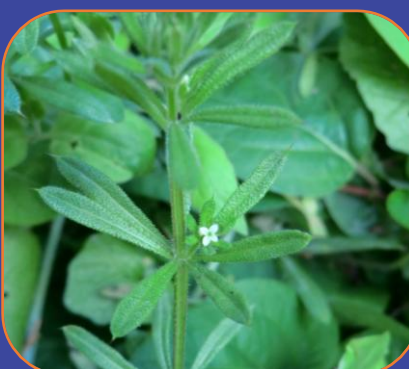


▼ **Common Chickweed** *S. media*



© Andrew Gagg/Plantlife

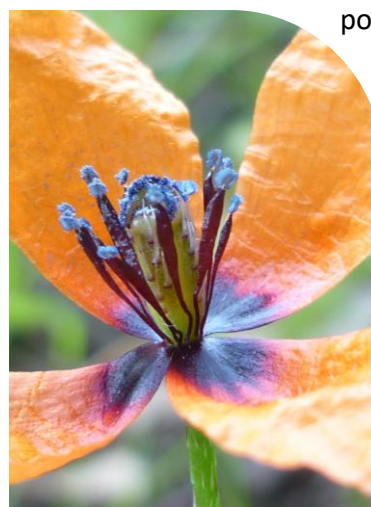
▼ **Greater Plantain** *P. major*



On lighter soils where the soils are less fertile and the management is less intense plants such as poppies continue to thrive, creating spectacular displays, often indicating good fields to check for other species. On chalk and limestone you might be lucky to find rarer

poppies such as **Prickly** *Papaver argemone*, or **Rough Poppy** *P. hybridum*,

◀ **Prickly poppy**,
P. argemone



Poppy images:
© Cath Shellswell

▼ **Rough poppy**,
P. hybridum



Also...

Venus'-looking Glass *Legousia hybrida*,
Round- and Sharp-leaved *Fluellens* *Kickxia elatine* and *K. spuria*,
Dense-flowered *Fumitory* *Fumaria densiflora* (right),
Narrow-fruited *Cornsalad* *Valerianella dentata*, and **Field Gromwell** *Lithospermum arvense*.



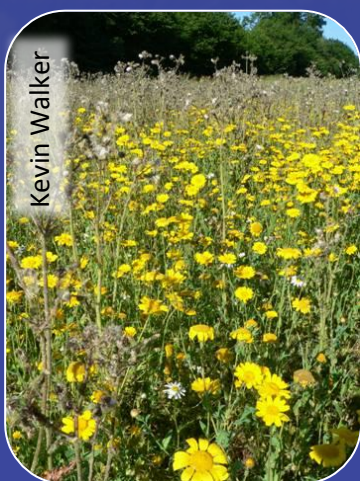
Kevin Walker

Habitat Hotspot – Arable cont.



On sandier soils, more localised rarities might include **Field Woundwort** *Stachys arvensis*, **Small- and Night-flowered Catchfly** *Silene gallica* and *S. noctiflora*, **Corn Marigold** *Chrysanthemum segetum*, and **Loose Silky-bent** *Apera spica-venti*.

▼ Corn marigold



▼ Small-flowered catchfly



Much rarer still are critically endangered arable weeds such as the gorgeous **Pheasant's-eye** *Adonis annua* and the aromatic **Ground Pine** *Ajuga chamaepitys*, both which still hang on at a scattering of sites on chalk in southern England, largely as a result of conservation efforts to preserve the species.



▲ Pheasant's-eye



▲ Ground Pine

One question that botanists frequently return to is where arable species lived prior to the rise of agriculture in the Neolithic period. We have good evidence to suggest that some were simply introduced, possibly as contaminants of seed brought from Europe by early farmers. Botanists have a term for these, archaeophytes, plants that were introduced to our shores by man before the discovery of the New World (to distinguish them from ornamental and timber species introduced via trade). Many of these species may have originated from Central Asia and Mesopotamia and were moved around Europe with humans as agriculture spread. Good examples include **Corn Cockle** *Agrostemma githago* and **Cornflower** *Centaurea cyanus*, which are now more frequently seen as the colourful constituents of wildflower seed mixtures in urban areas than on arable land. On the other hand, we suspect that some arable plants are native to Britain, originating from habitats that are naturally disturbed, such as river gravels, sand dunes, shingle, scree slopes, limestone pavements and open sandy soils inland, from where they spread into agricultural habitats.



Our arable flora has developed over thousands of years, resulting from the transport of seeds as contaminants from around the globe as well as ingress of native plants from naturally disturbed habitats. Sadly, it is now a much-diminished habitat but it still retains great interest for the botanists, especially on lighter soils and where farming has been more sympathetic to its presence. Perhaps we will never know the precise origin of many arable plants but that does not mean that we can't appreciate the colour that they bring to arable habitats that at first glance appear devoid of plant life - Unless you know where to look that is!

You can watch our previous Arable field margins webinar recording, with ecologist Hannah Gibbons, [HERE](#)





Support and guidance

So far 2025 has been a busy and active season when it comes to our training programme. We've thoroughly enjoyed engaging and training new volunteers, as well as meeting with and up-skilling existing surveyors through a variety of training and development opportunities.

Thus far, more than 270 volunteer participants have joined 21 training events, and we've seen further engagement via additional events and showcases. But there is still more to come!



We hope of course that you will be able to join us for our 10-year anniversary events this autumn (p2), which will offer a fantastic opportunity for networking and discussing your surveys with the team.

It will also soon be time to look out for news of our annual winter mini-series of talks and workshops. Volunteers will be alerted when these are available to book on to via our [Training and events webpage](#).

Upcoming training and events...

| | |
|--|--|
| 25 th Sept 6-7pm | NPMS Plot creation and data entry Online workshop – With NPMS support team |
| 18 th and 25 th Oct | 10 Year Anniversary celebrations London and N. Ireland (See page 2) |
| 4 th Dec 12:30 | Intro to NPMS and survey methods Online webinar – With Rachel Murphy |

NPMS Local support

Are you a member of a local recording or interest group?

Please get in touch if your local group are interested in hearing more about the scheme and opportunities near them.

Whether an online talk, a newsletter piece or any other ideas you may have to bring awareness of the scheme to new people. We have provided a number of talks with real success and would be happy to help.



Don't forget...

Recordings of all our training webinars and other helpful guidance videos can be found on the [NPMS YouTube channel](#)

Subscribe to our NPMS Support YouTube channel to be alerted to the latest videos



Frequently asked questions:



I have indicated that I'm interested in buddying with another local volunteer. How will I know if there's anyone near me?

Yes. Linking up and being in touch with other local NPMS volunteers to share tips or even buddying up to survey jointly is now much easier. If this is something that interests you, you can go to **'my account'** and click **'edit'**. Further down the page you can tick the **'buddying interest'** check box then scroll down and **'save'**. This will indicate that you are potentially open to being in touch with fellow volunteers. This indication can only be seen by NPMS staff admins, and you can amend your choice anytime by simply unticking and saving. NPMS support often receives enquiries from volunteers wanting to reach out to other local volunteers, so this new development enables us to quickly and easily see which volunteers may be open to it. Even if your account shows you are interested in buddying, we will never share contact details without the express permission of both parties. Also, note that volunteers requesting to link up for the purpose of buddying and peer-support, do so knowingly as a self-led activity and at their own risk.



I have made an error with my data entry and want to delete my survey. How can I do this?

Don't worry if you've made an error with your data entry, it can easily be corrected or deleted. Go to the main menu then **'create plots and enter data'** from the sub menu underneath select which ever recording form you use to survey (wildflower, indicator or inventory). This will bring up a list of all your surveys previously entered. To the right-hand side by each survey you'll see **'edit this survey'**. Selecting this for the appropriate survey will enable you to make any changes or, if you go through all of the pages, at the end of the final page you will see the option to **'delete this survey'**. Don't forget, you can always contact support@npms.org.uk for help and advice.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Stinking chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*)
 Rachel Murphy (NPMS Volunteer manager)



Indicator species in:
 Arable field margins
 NPMS fine scale
 habitat type



© Bob Gibbons/Plantlife

Identification:

- Stinking Chamomile is a member of the daisy family, Asteraceae.
- The stems are upright and branched, ranging in height between 30–60 cm.
- It's leaves are pinnate, with very fine lobes. They grow directly from the stem, up to 6 cm long, and are normally hairless. However, soft, fine hairs can sometimes be found on the upper surface.
- The leaves produce an unpleasant, sickly odour, when agitated, hence the unfortunate common name.



Sue McBean

▲ Distinguished from Scentless Mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*) by its strong smell.



▲ Told from Corn Chamomile *Anthemis arvensis* by it's foetid smell and shape of scales between individual flowers.

Where and when?

This pioneering species will grow on a wide range of soil, but specifically prefers disturbed, heavy soils including clay, marl and clay-loam. It can also be found in calcareous free-draining soils, and clay caps on top of calcareous loams. It tends to be found in disturbed unmanaged areas, arable fields, coastal dunes and road verges in relatively warm, lowland areas with low rainfall.

Stinking Chamomile is an annual herb that flowers May - October, generally reaching a peak in July. There may be a later a flush of flowers Sept-October on regrowth from cut shoots resulting from crop harvest.



Fact file:

- Either fresh or dried, Stinking Chamomile can taint milk if eaten by dairy cows.
- In the past, dried flower heads have been used as an insecticide and as a mouse repellent!
- Seeds have been known to stay viable in soil after being buried for 25 years.
- It is believed to have been introduced to the UK, from northern Europe during the iron age. Though it is found throughout the UK, the majority of records are located in the south.
- Modern, intensive farming practices, such as improved seed cleaning techniques to remove seeds from cereal crops, introduction of fertilisers and broad spectrum herbicides and loss of field margins, have resulted in a population decline since the 1950's.



Nathalie Esselin





SCHEME NEWS

Introducing Jo & Kim: Botanical Skills Training Officers

The NPMS partnership has recently welcomed two new BSBI Botanical Skills Training Officers, who joined as part of the DAERA funded Botanical Skills Project, to deliver botanical training in Northern Ireland. Hear more from Jo Mulholland and Kim Lake on their roles and plans in our recent blog interview [here](#). Both will be at our N. Ireland October event.



Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

The NPMS welcomes Cristiane Forgiarini

My name is Cristiane and I am the new botanical data analyst of the UK Centre of Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH). I have a PhD in Botany and since very early on in my career I have been exploring different floras around the world. At the Atlantic Forest and the Pampa biome I got more involved with conifers and species of the botanical family Iridaceae respectively. During part of my PhD and postdoctoral studies in Germany I explored the Bavarian flora and worked with common and endangered species. Currently, at UKCEH, I am part of the Biological Records Centre (BRC) team, under the supervision of Dr Oliver Pescott. I have been supporting iRecord and the NPMS. I also have been enjoying exploring the beautiful British flora and understanding the taxonomic differences between genera/species of the UK. I am very excited to contribute to the community of botanists around the UK in collecting botanical data for the NPMS. Cristiane will also be attending our N.I. event.



CAREERS - Citizen science for Advancing Racial Equity in Environmental Research Super-consortium

The environmental workforce lacks ethnic diversity at every level. The CAREERS group have been successful in receiving 9-month funding from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) to scope approaches to inspire and enable people of colour to be part of the future talent pipeline.

The team:

YCEDE - a Research England/Office for Students-funded collaboration of five Yorkshire universities and >12 partners widening access to postgraduate research for people of colour.

UKTEPoP - a partnership of 16 UK organisations using citizen science to monitor our environment with a joint commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Specifically involved in CAREERS are scheme representatives from RSPB, Butterfly Conservation and the NPMS).

The pilot phase will explore how existing citizen science schemes are enablers for, and have barriers that limit, people of colour to engage with environmental fieldwork, focusing on current students because environmental subjects are among the least ethnically-diverse.

Festival of Nature

We were excited to join a host of exciting national and local organisations at the Bristol Festival of Nature, this summer. Organised by the Natural History Consortium, this event attracts thousands each year, keen to find out about and take action for local wildlife. It was a great opportunity to chat to other organisations, as well as introduce new audiences to the scheme and wave a flag for citizen science. Throughout the festival it was a pleasure to chat to ~300 attendees. We'll be keeping eyes open for further regional events across the UK in 2026.

Festival images: © Ania Shrimpton

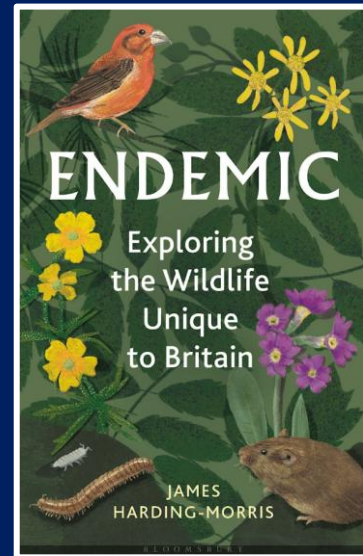




Author: James Harding-Morris

Published: Bloomsbury Wildlife

Published this month, this new book introduces us to some of the most rare, obscure and utterly British species, found nowhere else on earth. Not only does Harding-Morris tell the stories of endemic plants, animals and fungi, but also meets some of the experts devoted to their study or their survival.



Almost half of the chapters are plant-focused; including one which specifically takes place on Plantlife's Ranscombe Farm Reserve, with expert Richard Moyse surveying for Interrupted Brome.




James is not only a passionate nature enthusiast with a lifelong love for exploring the natural world, and a mission to ensure that everyone in Britain and Ireland has the opportunity to fall in love with plants; But the NPMS is lucky

to work with James through his post as the BSBI's Countries Manager. We look forward to hearing more about James' book in our upcoming Winter mini-series.



Beautiful Acer leaf and fern turmeric anothotypes by North Wales Artist Mary Thomas, who loves experimenting with alternative photo processes and the natural world.

 @marytcyanolumen



Botany through art

We received such positive feedback regarding the Botany through art pages of our previous newsletter. Clearly you enjoyed seeing how other volunteers are connecting with nature, exploring and learning through art. Whether you create patchwork meadows, watercolour landscapes, ink sketches or descriptive poetry, get in touch to let us know how you are creatively connecting with the natural world. We'd love to share more examples.

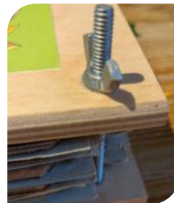
Have a go!...Turmeric anothotype printing

Before the last of the summer sun fades, why not try a fun and creative way to capture beautiful prints while really getting to know shapes and features of different species. Below we list simple steps to creating a sun-sensitive photographic image, using materials found in the home.

Here's a step-by-step guide to creating a turmeric anothotype:

Collect a few specimens of leaves or flowers:

Please take care when collecting specimens and ensure that none are a protected species or from a protected area. Only take what is needed and leave plenty behind. Flat, dry samples work best. If you don't have a flower press simply pop them between sheets of paper inside a large book and weigh down.



Prepare the Turmeric Solution:

Mix a teaspoon of turmeric powder with 4-6 teaspoons of ethanol rubbing alcohol (or vodka) in a glass container. Stir well to dissolve the photosensitive pigment. Then filter the liquid through a cotton cloth or coffee filter. Don't forget an apron!



Coat and dry the paper:

Brush the solution evenly and thinly onto watercolour paper or other paper that can withstand a water rinse. Allow to dry completely in a dark place.

Place and wait:

Arrange your samples on the dried paper and secure them under a glass or heavy plastic clear pane (panes from photo frames work well). Leave in full direct sunlight for 4-6 hours. The brighter the sun, the shorter the time.



Remove and expose:

After exposing the paper for several hours, either spray the paper or gently rinse the print in water mixed with a teaspoon of baking soda.

Dry and admire:

The image appears clearer, with the exposed areas of the turmeric pigment lighter, while the covered areas remain dark.



GET INVOLVED



Submit your data:

Please submit your 2025 season data by the 31st October, for it to be included in the over winter analyses.

If you still have historical data, this can be entered any time to the NPMS database

For any help with entering your data, contact support@npms.org.uk.



Volunteer stories

We love contributions from volunteers towards our bi-annual newsletters and NPMS web blog and you may have noticed we have been working to increase volunteer voice in these communications. If you think you'd like to pen a plot portrait or interest piece, please don't hesitate to get in touch.



Additional volunteering opportunities

Unable to get to and survey an NPMS square? Still hoping to develop your skill set and experience? Perhaps you already have an NPMS square and simply fancy taking on another challenge?

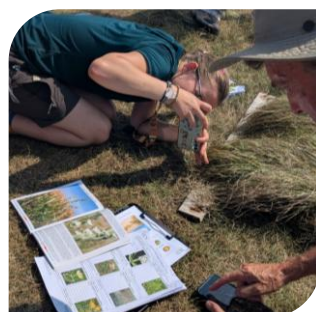
Along with surveyor, there are several other volunteer roles within the scheme. Including:

- ❖ **Data verifier**
- ❖ **Data entry**
- ❖ **Photography**

Contact support@npms.org.uk for further details

NPMS Local support

- **Are you a member of a local recording or interest group?**
- **Want to support more local meets in your area?**
- **Interested in hosting an online talk for a local group?**



Please get in touch if your local group are interested in getting involved with the scheme, or if you would like to support a meet near you.

Help us to celebrate!

Take a look at our **NPMS10 Activity Pack**, full of ideas of activities and challenges for volunteers and supporters, to help share the celebration and the achievements of our volunteers far and wide.



Idea highlights are shown below, for which you can find accompanying resources and guidance on the [Resources](#) page of our website. We would love to see and share your botanising activities!

Survey selfie



Take & share an #NPMSsurveyselfie

Join a training event



Join any of our in-field or online events through the year.

Volunteer video



Share a short video of your plot or yourself in the field

Share your square



Why not write a short piece on your square & survey experience?

Make a plot poster



Display your own poster & story at our celebration events

Window poster



Display our printable anniversary poster!



Follow us



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@theNPMS



GET INVOLVED

Further opportunities...

... and projects that may be of interest to NPMS volunteers.

British & Irish Botanical Conference 2025



The [British & Irish Botanical Conference](#) will be on 29 Nov and it's at Edge Hill university in Lancashire this time. The event welcomes everyone who is interested in the wild flowers of Britain and Ireland. You don't need to be a botanical expert or a professional botanist or even a BSBI [member](#) to attend.

Scottish Botanists' Conference 2025

NEW The 2025 Scottish Botanists' Conference will be held at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) on Saturday 1st November.

Watch this space for more information! - [Scottish Botanists' Conference – Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland](#)

SPECIES on the EDGE

Species on the Edge is a collaboration of eight conservation organisations, working with communities across Scotland's coasts and islands to save our rarest and most vulnerable species from extinction.

Species on the Edge believe that **we can all play a part in helping protect the wildlife on our doorstep**. Whatever your daily life looks like, whatever your skills and interests, and wherever you live, there's a way of helping nature that works for you. That's why they've made the 'Help Nature Your Way' hub. Explore, get inspired, **help nature your way** and add your activity to the map to inspire others to join in! <https://speciesontheedge.co.uk/help-nature-your-way/>



© Sarah Bird

Waxcap Watch – How to get involved:



Every year hundreds of volunteers take part in Plantlife's Waxcap Watch, a citizen science programme that helps us find waxcaps and other grassland fungi which are indicators of rare, species-rich grassland.



Knowing where waxcaps and other grassland fungi are thriving helps us pinpoint where fragments of ancient meadows survive, so we can protect them for the future. This year we are providing more learning opportunities both online, and in the field, to learn about the survey, about grassland fungi ID and habitat management. You'll be able to choose from a self-led e-learning course, an online webinar, or one of 10 in-field workshops across the UK. These opportunities will give you the confidence to get out there and take part in Waxcap Watch and will cover:

- How to take part in the survey
- Where to look for waxcaps and other grassland fungi
- How to recognise some of the growth forms of grassland fungi and their identifying features

All opportunities are free, and you will be able to sign up via the [Plantlife website](#) from September.

Date for your diary - Online webinar, 6th October 7pm-8pm



Botanical University Challenge

While this year's competition has now ended, with students from Aberdeen University taking home the winning trophy, there are still plenty of ways to engage with the BUC. This includes the BUC YouTube channel, the annual Student Botany Festival and its very own regular Newsletter "[The Thymes](#)". The fun and friendly BUC community embraces many aspects of botany including plant ID, taxonomy & evolution, ecology & conservation, horticulture, agriculture & forestry as well as plants in culture & history.





Field Diaries: Your pics

Some great images that have been shared with us through 2025 so far. We love to receive your photos from out in the field, whether to help with a query, ID, or simply to share your plot set up, a fun find, or moment of reflection.

First, we share some plot images submitted by surveyors this year, demonstrating a range of habitats visited across the UK. Plot images are incredibly useful accompanying your survey records, both for habitat verification along with being another means of recording change to sites over time.



▲ Surveyor Clare Ablett shares one of her Yorkshire plots, this striking limestone pavement. Here she notes many things have been different this season "Thanks for the encouragement to look at our beautiful part of the world in detail."

▼ Volunteer Dorothy Jeans is lucky enough to visit this beautiful Bluebell wood during her surveys in SE Scotland. Dorothy reports that it is the only part of her survey square which has remained in its original state over the past ten years.



▲ John Uttley shares an image of one of the scheme's most northerly plots during his first survey season with NPMS. A site of dry heathland on the Shetland Islands.

▼ We love this snap of volunteer Jan Sheppard, braced against the spring chill on her heathland plot. This time in North Wales. It's great to catch sightings of our volunteers out in the wild!





Field Diaries: Your pics

Continued...

Some beautiful species snaps here from volunteer Mercedes Acevedo, from her survey plots in NW Scotland during her first season recording with the NPMS. Showing Marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre* (top) and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* (bottom).



Surveyor Caroline Phillips recorded Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (left) and Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustre* (right) at her marsh and fen and freshwater plots this season, together with field assistance from Ruaridh Phillips and Dr Gill Clarke respectively.

THANK YOU!

A huge thank you to all volunteers that make the scheme possible. It has been a busy season so far with both surveys and training events. As always, we are incredibly grateful for your enthusiasm and efforts. Also, thanks to the land holders and stakeholders who support and promote the NPMS.

Thanks to Andrew van Breda, Biren Rathod and Karolis Kazlauskis for technical support, along with our incredibly knowledgeable trainers.

Thank you to all the contributors to this newsletter.

We are here to help. Send us an email or give us a bell.
support@npms.org.uk

07399 299770 or 07711 922098



Don't forget to tag us in your social media plant or plot photos! We'd love to share what you see with the whole NPMS community!
#NPMS and @theNPMS

