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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

RACHEL MURPHY

Welcome to the 2025/26 NPMS Winter newsletter!

A very Happy New Year to our volunteers, supporters and anyone interested in finding out more about the National Plant Monitoring Scheme. We hope this most recent edition finds you well, warm and hunkered down from the bitter yet wet and wintry conditions we're experiencing. As ever, we are sending sincere thanks for all your efforts and time throughout 2025.

We had a fantastic time celebrating our 10th Anniversary and hearing from many volunteers, stakeholders and experts using NPMS data and methods to monitor the health of our habitats.

The NPMS has already achieved a great deal in its first decade thanks to the dedication of volunteers. At this significant milestone we've reflected on those achievements and the impact of the scheme to date (p2). It is also vital to look ahead at exciting and ambitious plans for the next 10 years. Including expanding our reach in under-recorded regions, including N. Ireland and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Also to improve coverage across vital landscapes, such as raised bogs, montane habitats and at-risk coastal habitats. All while maintaining our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, and building/maintaining existing relationships with large-scale landowners. No small task, but we're up for the challenge. And with more data and growing accuracy, we're able to contribute to a growing suite of studies, resources and monitoring outputs (p10). Indeed, NPMS data have already been used in >650 studies to date.

It has been a pleasure compiling this edition and hearing from so many contributors on how they are connecting with and learning about wild plants. Thank you for your updates, feedback and stories. We're looking forward sharing more with you, meeting with you and of course botanising with you in 2026! Keep in touch: support@npms.org.uk



Image: Nathalie Esselin



Ava Marley

PlantlifeUK Centre for
Ecology & HydrologyBotanical Society
of Britain & Ireland**JNCC****NIEA**An Agency within the Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs
www.dera.gsi.gov.uk



Enjoy our NPMS10 celebrations

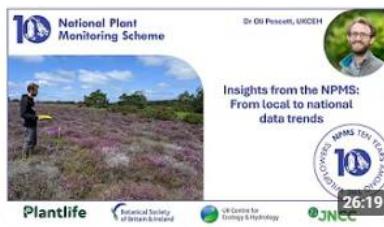
Throughout the summer and autumn, we celebrated our 10-year anniversary - Enjoying online and in-field events, and hearing from both volunteers and stakeholders. Thank you to all those that joined us and contributed!

You can now watch our short celebration videos and all the presentation recordings from the online event, on the [NPMS Support YouTube Channel](#).

Each session presentation has been shared individually, so take your pick and find out more about all aspects of the scheme and NPMS data. From insights gained from NPMS records, to how NPMS supports local nature monitoring and strategies. Even a Question-and-Answer session: Where volunteer and stakeholder questions are posed to panelists Chris Cheffings (JNCC), Dr Rachel Murphy (Plantlife), Prof. David Roy (UKCEH) and Julia Hanmer (CEO, BSBI) about the scheme's design and outputs. Also reminding us why now is a great time to get involved in plant monitoring.



NPMS: 10 years in the making, 10 years in the field - with Chris Cheffings, JNCC



NPMS10: Insights from NPMS data, from local habitats to national trends



NPMS10: From Data to Decisions - How the NPMS supports the National Trust's Nature...

Volunteer voices

The most popular session of our NPMS10 celebrations, from participant feedback and with the highest number of event video views, was the wonderful [Volunteer voices](#).

Chairing the session, volunteer support officer Karen Fisher introduces illustrated presentations given by existing NPMS volunteers on their experiences with the scheme and out in the field. Followed by a whistle stop tour of the UK, with a moving slideshow of volunteers on their plots up and down the country. We love sharing your stories and thanks to everyone who contributed.



There are a number of ways you can share your volunteer voice with us. From Newsletter contributions, short videos for social media or YouTube, blog post ideas, or contributions to our new [volunteer Plot Portrait poster collection](#). We'd love to hear any ideas you have.



Plot Portrait

My NPMS Volunteer journey:

Alison Fisher



My kilometre square follows the valley of the Fallowlees Burn, in mid-Northumberland and is owned by the Wallington Estate. In 2018 when I had been studying botany for 5 years, our tutor mentioned the NPMS. Several squares were available in the north-east. Very soon I was assigned a square and trained in a small village hall one weekend. It was the beginning of a big learning curve.

I have always surveyed with someone else. There are many jobs to do in a plant monitoring day apart from surveying actual plants. My late husband Peter drove us to the square, invented Heath Robinson ways to measure plots with string, drew immaculate maps and took GPS readings. He also knew a lot about botany. To my great sadness, he passed away in August 2024.



Image: Peter Fisher, taking a moment to take in the view.

I thought that was it, but a keen botanist friend, Helen Murrell, kindly stepped in. We have started this year to share the experience of monitoring plants together, whether we are interpreting complex protocols or eating sandwiches. We carry on, trying to name habitats, (this being by far the most difficult task) and accurately record information about species. Two heads are better than one.

Where do we go? From Greenleighton Farm you follow the right of way across the moor for 1 km to access the first plot by a faint path. As you come closer to the square, heathland species such as lousewort, black sedge and mat-grass are easy to spot. Natural England is advising farmers on re-wetting parts of the moor with grip (drainage channels) blocking to restore the bog habitat. We hope that the biodiversity will improve, and we will eventually see rarities such as sundews and bog asphodel.

Once we cross the moor we drop down to the square. Fallowlees Burn flows west to east at c. 1000' altitude through a small valley. To the north of the Burn conifers have been planted, and to the south deciduous native trees are growing plus many wild flowers and grasses. You can see the conifers on the photo of plot 4, below. The square is not perfect. Some years impenetrable bracken overwhelms the tiny rights of way from July onwards, where sheep and roe deer have nibbled the young plants, stopping delicate wildflowers from growing.



Image: The author, on plot 4.

Plot 4 is a steep square, and the plants show evidence of a hard time with drought, wind or excessive rain. The increasing periods of drought have affected the growth of trees, and some are being felled. Storms like Storm Arwen in 2021 have blown the weaker trees down. Felling exposes the understorey to more light, which benefits the spring plants. The year after Arwen there were hundreds of heath-spotted orchids adjacent to the survey square, which we reported. Now there are far fewer as the new trees grow taller.



Plot Portrait

Alison Fisher cont.

I have mentioned the difficulty of identifying a habitat. Just how difficult can be seen from my field notes for Plot 4, from the 2022 survey. "There is an abundance (about 70%) of both *Calluna vulgaris* heather and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry, growing with occasional *Dactylorhiza maculata* heath-spotted orchid. These three are typical of Broad habitat **Heathland** and Fine habitat Dry Heathland.



Image: Heath-spotted orchid, Alison Fisher

But there are also occasional *Anthoxanthum odoratum* Sweet vernal grass, and *Blechnum spicant* Hard-fern. The latter species are more typical of Dry acid **Grassland** habitat. However, the heather and bilberry are much more abundant, and heath-spotted orchid is a heathland species. Also, the stunted shrubs are more heathland than grassland. Conclusion; main habitat is **Heathland**; fine habitat is **Dry Heathland**".



Image: Hard fern, Alison Fisher



Image: Sweet vernal grass within plot, Alison Fisher



Image: Heath bedstraw within plot, Alison Fisher

The National Vegetation Classification has been developed to help botanists define what species and topography are typical of certain habitats. There are 155 specific habitat types recognised, each having its own name, alpha-numeric code, and description. It is a lifetime's study. NPMS simplifies this by having 11 broad habitat lists. Each broad habitat is divided into more specific habitats, such as Heathland, which is split into Dry Heathland and Dry Montane Heathland.

Note: Habitat classification and designated sites
NPMS are hosting a free online webinar on this subject, with ecologist Neill Talbot - This February! See **page 7** for details and booking links.



Plot Portrait

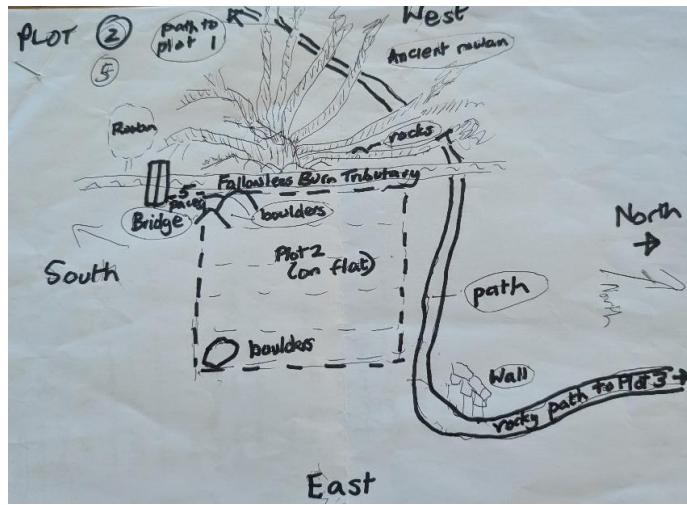
Alison Fisher cont.

A new plot for 2025:

Helen and I decided that we needed a new plot this year, as Plot 2 is difficult to access and the habitat replicates that of Plot 1. From Plot 3 there is a small path up the valley which leads to a dip. At the bottom is plot 5. The plot is square, measuring 5m x 5m. It is overshadowed by an ancient rowan tree – see photo below.



Alison Fisher



In plot 5 square we found five hedgerow species. Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Barren strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*, Lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*, and Common nettle *Urtica dioica*. On the photo of plot 5 you can also see marsh and fen species, in particular soft rush, *Juncus inflexus*. Ferns *Dryopteris* ssp are also visible however they are so ubiquitous that NPMS do not include them in the habitat species lists. The NPMS broad habitat here is Broadleaved woodland, and Fine habitat is Hedgerow of native species.



I have found being a NPMS surveyor very challenging. Northumberland uplands, even in these days of increased tourism, are remote. There is no road from the farm to Fallowlees Burn. I have found doing plot maps difficult and prefer drawing even though I have little experience as an artist. I find that in my 70s I am not a natural at data entry. However, I have bought a new phone and taken hundreds of photos. I have become fascinated by the botany of this beautiful high acidic place. Every year I find the sight of Simonside, coming into view as you cross the rough moorland as exciting as ever.



In memory of Peter Stuart Fisher December 1949 – August 2024, NPMS volunteer



Support and guidance

Thanks ever so much to all those that engaged in training and events in 2025. Our anniversary year offered a variety of opportunities for our volunteers. In the last 12 months, ~400 participants joined 29 events, including 18 in-field sessions. We are currently offering free volunteer places on our winter mini-series sessions via our [Training and events webpage](#). Where you can find a mixture of [webinars](#) and [interactive workshops](#) available, from field skills to Wildflower poetry (see below).

Planning mode is now in full swing for 2026 season training programme, and we look forward to sharing these opportunities with you soon!

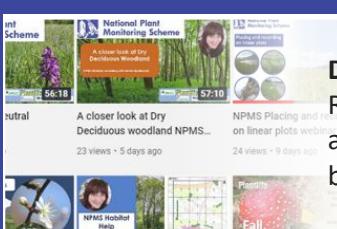


Winter Mini-series...

8 th Jan 12:30-2pm	Intro to NPMS and survey methods Online webinar – With Rachel Murphy
23 rd Jan 12:30-1:30pm	Top Tips for plotting (your NPMS site) Online workshop – With Neill Talbot
4 th Feb 6:30-8pm	Wildflower Poetry Online workshop – With Iris Hill
12 th Feb 12:30-1:30pm	Habitat classification and designated sites Online webinar – With Neill Talbot



We want to support the development of existing volunteers and those who are interested in the scheme. If you joined any NPMS training or engagement session in 2025, either in-field or online, it would be great if you could spare 5 minutes to complete our survey. Your feedback is so valuable and will assist with planning future events.



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:



What if there is a square near me that is already allocated, but it looks like no data has been collected for a while?

There can be a number of reasons a square appears to be currently inactive, with limited recent surveys. It may simply be that the allocated volunteer has been unable to get out to survey recently, but fully intends to pick up those forms again in 2026. Perhaps it has just taken time to locate plots and secure permission to access. Please get in touch with NPMS support if you find there is a square near you that you are very interested in, as we are happy to investigate or even find out if the existing volunteer would like to buddy up to survey.

In some instances, the allocated volunteer may no longer be able to survey their square and just hasn't got round to releasing it yet. Again, we can investigate if this is the case.

In February we will be contacting all allocated volunteers of squares that have been inactive for more than 2 years, simply to check if they intend to survey in 2026, or if they would like to release their square. As such, we are likely to see a number of previously allocated squares become available nationwide this spring. So keep an eye out for any squares that may become available near you.



Is there a simple flyer explaining the scheme that we can share with landowners, local groups and anyone interested to know more?

Following valuable feedback from volunteers, this is indeed something we have put at the top of the priority list, to produce ahead of the 2026 field season. This will be available to download to print from the website resources, as part of the developing access toolkit (more news on this soon). We would also like to include a copy in each hard copy survey pack, sent to newly allocated volunteers. So keep an eye out for news that this is ready for use! Thanks as ever for your valuable feedback in helping us to consistently review and update our support offer.



Botany through art

Inspired by our upcoming wildflower poetry session, in this edition we focus on nature poetry as a creative means of connecting with nature. Exploring, learning and expressing our relationship with the natural world through art.

Here, I simply sit

I breathe in

Absorb

And listen

No agenda.

Nature & I

Iris Hill



Luminary Photography

This February, NPMS volunteers are invited to join artist, Iris Hill to create short wildflower poems and Haiku. This free online workshop will start with a wildflower meadow meditation. We will enjoy poetry and explore journaling techniques to inspire your words to flow. Iris will then lead participants to writing their own poems. All levels of creative experience are welcome. See our **Training events** for further details and to book.

Lisa Gardner is an artist inspired by the natural world. Lisa crafts whimsical artwork under the name Iris Hill in homage to her Nan, who lit Lisa's creative flame and helped it burn bright.

Iris Hill



Iris Hill has kindly offered NPMS volunteers a £5 discount for an online wildflowers of winter, watercolour class this January. More details [here](#) and contact NPMS support for the discount code.



We are lucky enough to count excellent botanist and popular artist **Ben Averis** among our regular trainers and contributors. Indeed, we have several habitat specific training webinars delivered by Ben, available to enjoy on our [NPMS Support YouTube channel](#). Below is an example of Ben's fine line work and poetry, written as part of a collection to accompany habitat training materials he produced for the NPMS in 2020-2021. A perfect visual with the return of the shorter days and bitter frost. From Ben, "*Instead of writing nice happy verse I have taken a more miserable approach!*"

Pine and Juniper

The winters are cold
And flowers are few
The pine trees are old
And the feeling is blue

Juniper leaf
Dark as can be
Needle of grief
On a wretched wee tree

Juniper, pine
Trees of the place
Where the sun don't much shine
And the wind chills your face

It'll frost, it'll freeze
Even summer's not warm
No help are these trees
In the darkening storm

To the pines in the heather
You go at a price
For the murk and the weather
Are not very nice

To enjoy the old pines
In the shivering cool
Is one of the signs
Of a miserable fool

Ben Averis, 2020



Botany through art

Volunteer **Michelle Thomasson** has kindly shared with us her poem written this December. It paints a glorious image of the woodland spring flowers near a favourite tree, which she has called Mama Hornbeam (right).

Michelle also shared this image for use on the Attenborough Wild Isles series website. So, even more folk are enjoying Mama Hornbeam's splendour.



Mama Hornbeam

Lights: Late afternoon with a glorious sunset.

Music: The singing of a robin, goldfinch, songthrush and woodpigeons.

Camera: Squirrels bouncing bough to bough, a crunch of muddy boots, centuries of leaves trampled underfoot.

Action: A storytelling of crows announce the way, sweeping by, then circling high, cawing in the grandest of plays.

And there she was, Mama Hornbeam.

Majestic with a golden sunset glow, against her dark, craggy, determined bark, she rose overhead, topped with layers of vibrant greens, reaching out to all, so it seemed.

Three grand trunks splitting into nine, the gnarls and swirls upwards climb. Her branches smooth to greying blues, rising above the setbacks sawn deep into her coppiced limbs, she will strive to be many a person's muse.

Mama Hornbeam soars towards the sky and the light from the ancient meadow, bending the wind and her seeds set high to sail upon it.

A line of young hornbeams trail towards the stream, where the black, cold soil after winter's ride bears spring-yellow primroses, snowdrop whites and sun-yellow celandines along with daffodils wild.

Almost hidden, the little dog violets have a paler smile, while a relative newcomer, the 'here-I-am-crocus' sports lilac petals and rich pollen mustard, early bees' happy find.

Then wood anemones, porcelain white, gift the banks of the stream until the sky starts to close with all the new summer greens.

Just in time, curly edged bells, the bluest of blues repaint the woodland scene, as far as the glades of light can take them.

What a performance Mama Hornbeam, theatre of a hundred seasons and many more.

I won't forget how you helped me to see, helped me to dream, you are a star in earth's spectacular show.

Michelle Thomasson, December 2025



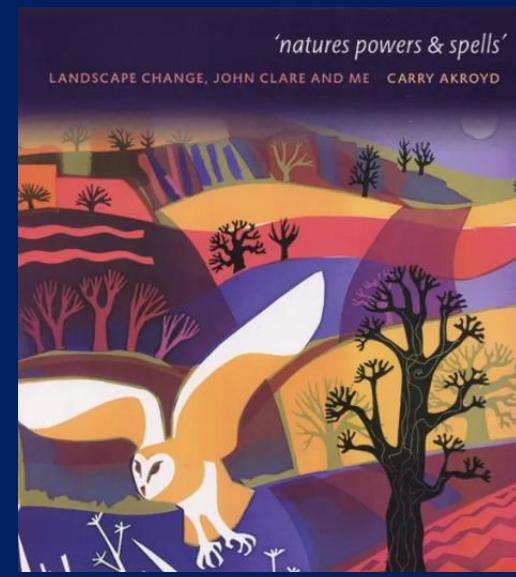
Botany book club

Nature's powers & spells: Landscape Change, John Clare and Me

Carry Akroyd, with poems by John Clare
Published: Langford Press

Carry Akroyd is a painter-printmaker and illustrator whose images explore the relationship between humans, landscape and wildlife. Her interest in history, botany and birds is represented in her contemporary agricultural landscapes. A member of the Society of Wildlife Artists, her favoured technique is an expressive and low-tech approach to screen-printing.

Carry holds an appreciative connection to nineteenth century poet John Clare, whose writing has been a continuing source of inspiration. This book samples work from twenty years; reflecting both her and the poet's observations, of how man affects nature, both two hundred years ago and now. This series of prints comprise a colourful and bold introduction to the poet. After 25 years of creating images relating to the poetry of John Clare, in 2016 Carry Akroyd was invited to be President of the John Clare Society.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Hart's-tongue fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*)

Rachel Murphy (NPMS Volunteer manager)



Identification:

- A simple, evergreen fern, the Hart's tongue has rosettes of shiny, strap-like fronds with pointed tips, up to 50cm long.
- Unlike most other ferns, the fronds are undivided. They do have a slightly wavy edge.
- Short, branching and ascending rhizome lay partly above and partly below the surface of the soil.
- As with most ferns the new leaves emerge from the base, coiled and gradually unfurl to open.

Where:

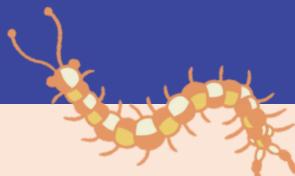
- Widespread in the UK, except in the far North, it is usually found in more base-rich soils and avoids the most acidic substrates.
- It can grow in large drifts in damp, shady gorges and woodlands beneath trees and on mossy branches, as well as between rocks and on walls.



Rachel Jones

The undersides of the mature fronds have very prominent orange/brown spore-producing structures called sori, arranged in horizontal stripes of 1-3cm and are borne in pairs. These usually become ripe around July/August.

These can be considered reminiscent of centipedes' legs, leading to the species name 'scolopendrium' (Latin for centipede!)



Rachel Jones

 **Did you know?**

- Hart's-tongue is an indicator plant of ancient woodland.
- The fronds contain compounds that have been used in medicines and cosmetics. Uses have ranged widely from cough medicines, treatment of high blood pressure and digestive problems. The fronds were once used as a relief for burns, when wrapped around the painful area.
- A hart was an old name for a deer. As such the hart's-tongue fern gets its name because it is thought to look like a deer's tongue.
- It has collected alternative local names i.e. cow-tongue in Co. Donegal, long leaf in Hampshire and seaweed fern in Surrey. Even snake tongue in Devon.



Kate Hind



SCHEME NEWS

NPMS Data included in National Vegetation Plot Database

Dr Oli Pesott, UKCEH

National Plant Monitoring Scheme data have been included in the recently launched National Vegetation Plot Database for Great Britain (GBNVPD). This newly created database acts as the centralised repository for vegetation plot data from Great Britain, the Isle of Man, the Bailiwick of Guernsey, and the Bailiwick of Jersey.

As of May 2025, the GBNVPD contains 277,070 samples from 200,733 plots (208,399 plots when including all nested areal scales), from 63 constituent datasets, surveyed between 1949 and 2024. The NPMS currently contributes 23,742 samples covering 4,931 plot locations (data up to 2023). The NPMS is also the largest annual contributor of samples to the GBNVPD since 2015.

The GBNVPD is intended to become the central store for British quadrat data, and will no doubt go on to underpin many exciting analyses and provide numerous insights into our changing environment. All NPMS volunteers should feel extremely proud of their contributions!

The open access paper can be found at <https://doi.org/10.3897/VCS.160378>

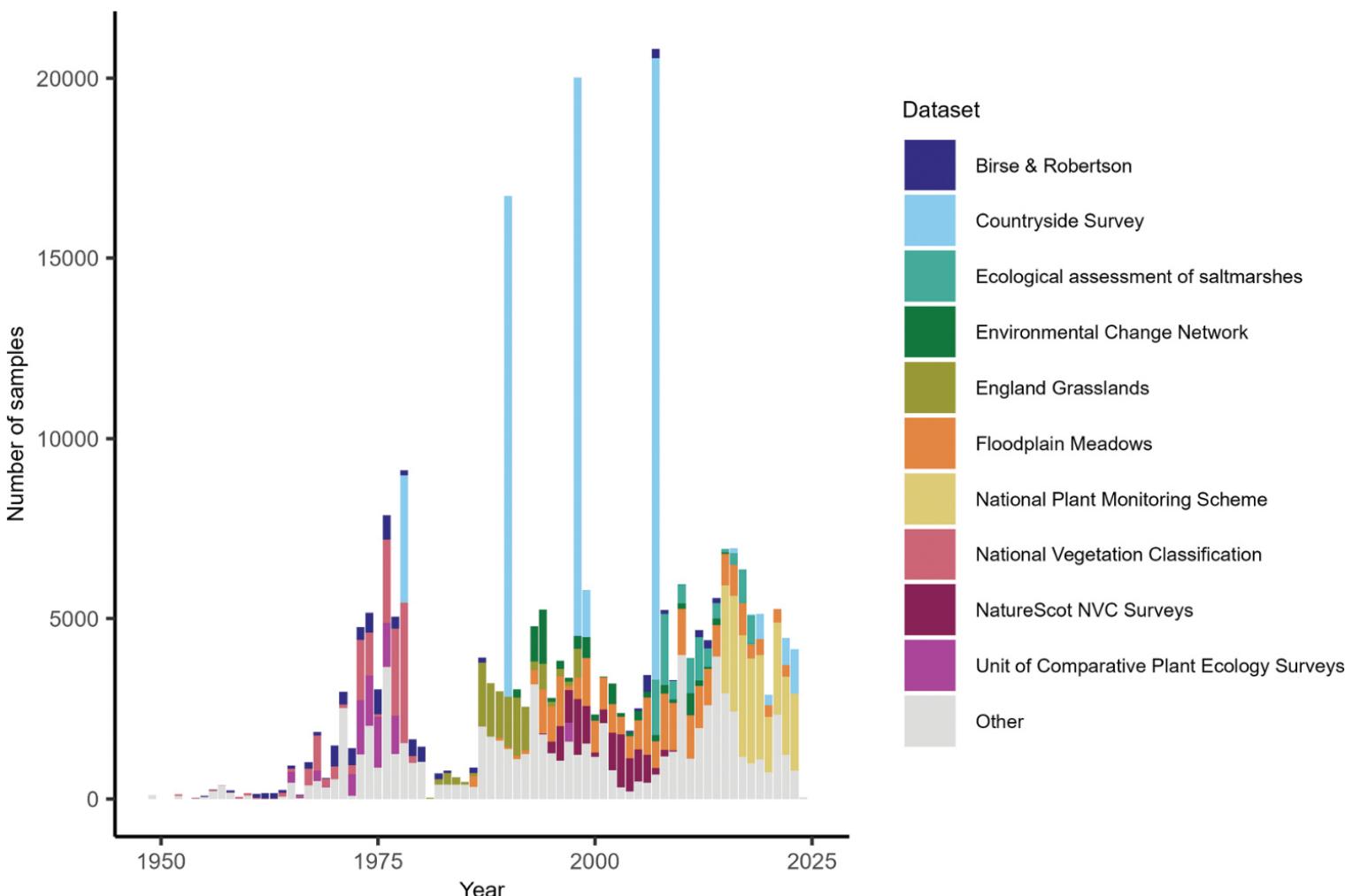


Figure above: The number of vegetation plots recorded by year for the top ten largest and all other datasets. NPMS data are shown in beige.



SCHEME NEWS

NPMS Data Verification

Dr Oli Pesott, UKCEH & James Harding-Morris, BSBI

Over the past two years, NPMS partner BSBI has been working steadily to increase the number of vascular plant verifiers active on iRecord (the platform on which NPMS records are verified). When this effort began, we had around 70 verifiers supporting the NPMS. As of November 2025, we now have 150 verifier roles filled across the UK, providing coverage for 84 of the 114 UK vice-counties (the traditional units for biological records management). This growth represents a major step forward in our ability to give timely, expert feedback to recorders and to maintain the high standard of plant data that underpins the National Plant Monitoring Scheme.

Verifiers play a crucial role in checking plant records submitted through the NPMS website. To support the expanding team, we've developed [new guidance materials](#) and delivered a series of training sessions to help verifiers gain confidence with the platform, understand verification workflows, and share good practice. Similarly, we are also [helping verifiers](#) to provide useful feedback to surveyors, supporting their development wherever possible.

We plan to continue growing the verifier network with the goal of achieving full county coverage across the UK. In many areas we hope to recruit multiple verifiers per county, ensuring resilience and helping to spread the effort. This will help maintain responsiveness as the popularity of NPMS and plant recording continues to grow.

As the verification network grows, NPMS surveyors may receive occasional queries regarding their records. These may take the form of emails or of notifications that are displayed through the NPMS website. In some cases, surveyors may be asked to amend a record or provide further details; in others the verifier may simply be notifying the surveyor about an update that they have made to your records directly. Either way, we hope that this feedback will be valuable to NPMS participants, both in terms of skill improvements and in terms of understanding the contributions that NPMS data are making to our knowledge of our islands' floras at small scales.



If you're an experienced botanist, interested in contributing your expertise to the data verification effort, we'd love to hear from you. Expanding the verifier network adds strength to the whole recording community, and your support could make a real difference.



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

In our last [Newsletter](#) we highlighted our plans for involvement in [CAREERS](#) - A research and engagement project focused on making environmental research and careers more inclusive, working alongside the YCEDE - a Yorkshire consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education and UKTePop partners from a variety of UK monitoring schemes. This pilot phase has explored some of the barriers and enablers to accessing environmental research, education and citizen science for people from diverse ethnic communities, through practical action.



This included running a successful and enjoyable NPMS and botanical monitoring day for students at Plantlife's Three Hedges Woodmeadow Reserve in the Autumn, alongside other project field days, focus panels and feedback activities.



The project team are now evaluating phase outcomes, data and best practice for opening access to education, volunteering and careers. We look forward to disseminating findings across the environmental sector via our partners, funder, Leadership Team and co-creation panels.



SCHEME NEWS

Three government biodiversity indicators based on NPMS data!

Dr Oli Pesott, UKCEH & James Harding-Morris, BSBI

NPMS surveyors are no doubt aware that their painstakingly collected data feed into the headline UK Biodiversity Indicator “Plants of the Wider Countryside”. This has [just been released for 2025](#), incorporating NPMS data up to 2024. Whilst this is still an “official statistic in development”, the statistics for positive indicators in the Arable, Bog & wet heath, Broadleaved woodland & hedges and Lowland grassland NPMS broad habitats are close to their long-term averages, with the largest increases seen in Arable (index 109% of 2015 baseline) and Lowland grasslands (107% of baseline). Bog and wet heath has seen a slight decrease (a 5 percentage point drop in the average abundance of the positive indicator species being monitored).

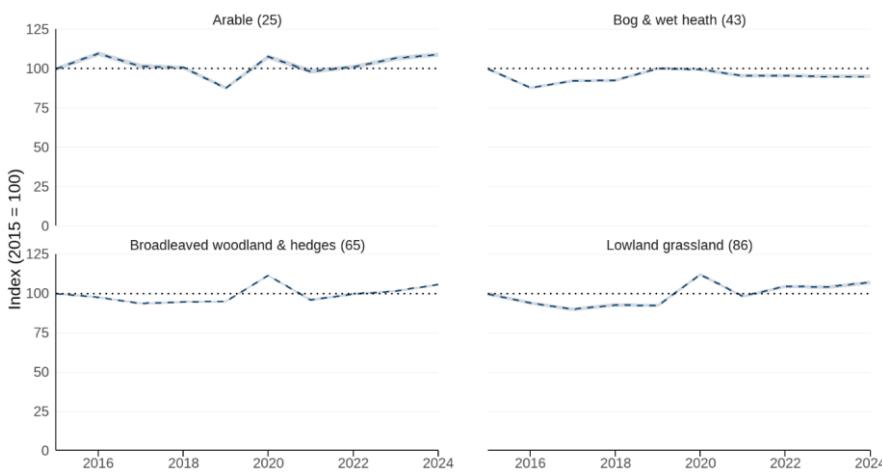


Figure: Abundance of plant species in four UK broad habitat types, 2015 to 2024

This year has also seen the development of a comparable indicator for England alone. This has been published [here](#) and shows similar average trends to the UK statistics. The National Plant Monitoring Scheme also continues to feed information on species’ abundances across all monitored habitats in England to the headline “Indicators of species abundance in England” statistic. This measure attempts to combine information across all taxa for which abundance data are available, showing “deterioration” from 1970 to 2023, but little or no change in the medium- (from 2013) and short- (from 2018) terms. This is also an “official statistic in development” but is intended to track the government’s progress towards meeting the statutory target (Environment Act 2021) of halting the decline in species abundances by 2030.

Expression of buddyng interest...

In 2025 we developed NPMS user accounts to aid volunteer buddying for those keen to link with local volunteers. “Buddying” refers to enabling contact with another NPMS volunteer to jointly conduct surveys or simply benefit from peer support. This feature allows us to more efficiently support those looking to link up. Since this addition, a number of new volunteers have indicated interest in buddying at the point of sign up. But don’t forget, existing volunteers can also update their accounts to reflect this interest if they so wish. Simply head to your account page, select “Edit” and then select the optional “Buddying Interest” box. Contact details will never be shared without an express request and permission from both parties. Linking with other volunteers is a self-led activity managed by the volunteers themselves. For more info, contact the support team.



BSBI Conference 2025

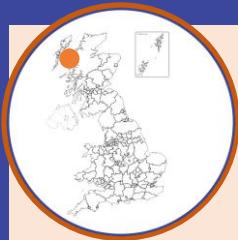


We were delighted to join >200 attendees at the annual [BSBI Conference](#) at Edge Hill University in November. As always, it was a great opportunity to showcase NPMS alongside other fantastic projects, have inspiring conversations and make useful connections. If you are interested to find out what was presented, talks were recorded and are available via this [Conference playlist](#) on the BSBI YouTube channel. You can also view a [selection of the conference posters and exhibits](#).



Field Diaries: Your pics

A bumper helping of great images and reflections that have been shared with us through 2025. We love to receive your photos and stories from out in the field, whether to help with a query, species/habitat ID, or simply to share your plot set up or a fun find. This edition's offerings from across the UK are a real New Years treat!



Lizzie Jones: First, we hear from one of our more remote survey squares in the North Ebudes, Scotland.

On her Bog and wet heath plot on the Isle of Skye, surveyor Lizzie recorded a

variety of species in including Star sedge (bottom left), Common cotton grass (bottom right), Bog asphodel and Cross leaved heath.



David Francis: David shares with us this impressive American skunk cabbage (right), recorded within a wooded river's edge, in his West Cornwall square. Less prominent, on his Arable field margin plot, David demonstrates that tiny can be beautiful with this delicate bud of Scarlet pimpernel. Also spot this dainty field pansy (bottom) – Check out that pencil tip for size comparison!



Craig Somerville: What a difference a month makes. Here we can see the changing view over

Craig's Lowland grassland plot on Islandmagee peninsula. Within the National Trust land, Co. Antrim.



May, 2025



Late June, 2025



Field Diaries: Your pics

Continued...

Tricia Rice:

With the addition of the 2025 season, Tricia has completed 97 surveys for NPMS to date, across her plots in Argyll and Dunbartonshire. During the 2025 season she shared a range of species from her woodland plots, overlapping the Lock Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. We've particularly enjoyed seeing images of the lovely variety of fern species recorded by Tricia this season (below).



▲ Sitka Spruce, *Picea sitchensis*



▲ Wood horsetail, *Equisetum sylvaticum*



▲ Bluebell, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*



A



B

A Lady fern, *Athyrium filix-femina*

B Scaly male fern, *Dryopteris affinis*

C Broad buckler fern, *Dryopteris dilatata*

D Hard fern, *Blechnum spicant*



C



D

Fabulous ferns!

Inspired by Tricia's lovely variety of ferns? Plantlife has recently updated its **Free**, interactive e-learning course [Woodland Fern ID](#). This self-guided course helps to both develop your fern ID skills and learn more about their evolutionary history and cultural significance.





Field Diaries: Your pics

Continued...



Susie McNaughton:

Susie completed her first surveys for NPMS this season, and indeed, this is the first time this square in east Perthshire has been surveyed.

Of her Bog and wet heath plot (bottom), Susie notes *“Beautiful, healthy, lush. Walking on air moss/peat-making land. Bliss”*.



Lyndsay Pyne:

Another first! This time on the west coast of Alderney. Lyndsay conducted the first surveys for this square in 2025. That now makes all 4 Channel Island squares

allocated and with data attributed. Here we see Lyndsay's Dry heath plot (top). Below, a Maritime cliff and slope plot, within an area burned during fire in 2011, which is still recovering. Here Lyndsay recorded Thrift, Bird's foot trefoil, Heather, Bell heather, English stonecrop and Sea campion.



Simon Kennett:

Simon's dreamy images bring back the summer warmth, from his Arable and Lowland grassland plots in the Kent Downs.



▲ Scentless mayweed



▲ Common sorrel



GET INVOLVED

Submit your data:

Please submit your 2025 season data as soon as possible, for it to be included in the over winter analyses and 2025 Annual Report.

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, NPMS web blog and Plot Portrait posters. It has been a pleasure to increase volunteer voice throughout our communications. If you think you'd like to pen a plot portrait or interest piece, please do not 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. We'd love to help!

Further ways to engage over the winter period:

- 1 **Join any of our upcoming training or engagement events that take your fancy!**

Along with an opportunity to develop skills, these offer an opportunity to engage with other volunteers in our fantastic NPMS community.

- 2 **Enjoy videos from our NPMS Support YouTube Channel**

Missed a previous training webinar? Want to pick up some survey tips? Fancy hearing from some existing volunteers or finding out about how NPMS data have been used over the last decade? We've got you covered!



- 3 **Visit your site**

While it's not yet time to survey, now is a great time to reccy your square, locate those plots and investigate land access permissions.



- 4 **Join the conversation**

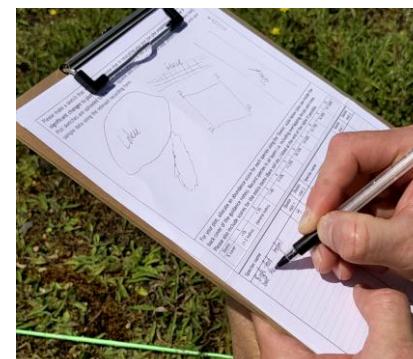
Don't forget to share your NPMS and botanical activities with us on social media. We love to hear how you're getting on. #NPMS



New season recording forms:

New recording forms for 2026 can be downloaded from the [resources page](#) of the NPMS website. If you are unable to print these, we will be sending them out to those who request them during the first week of March.

If you do need us to send new recording forms for the upcoming season, simply head to your account, select the edit tab and tick the box to indicate you would like to Request survey forms, by 2nd March.



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GET INVOLVED

Further opportunities...

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

Learn more about our wonderful wildflowers with the BSBI!

As ever, we are delighted to share the below fantastic free resources and development opportunities available from NPMS partner, the BSBI:



- Helpful tips for [getting started](#) with plant ID.
- Short [plant ID videos](#) and longer [training webinars](#) on the [BSBI YouTube channel](#).
- ID resources for both [beginner](#) and [more experienced botanists](#).
- Botanical training [short courses by a range of providers](#) running across Britain and Ireland to BSBI's in-house [training courses and opportunities](#).

Bookings are also open for the 2026 BSBI [Annual Summer Meeting](#), which is based in Wales this year.



Botanical University Challenge

This fun and friendly annual contest of botanical knowledge between teams of UK and Irish university students starts again next month.



February will see the start of the online knock-out and quarter final rounds, streamed live on the BUC [YouTube channel](#) – Always a fascinating and gripping watch!

This years live semi-final and final will be held at the University of Reading in August, where the team will also be celebrating 10 years of BUC.

The competition will be followed by the Fourth Student Botany Festival, involving 2 days of networking, talks, career session and workshops, for budding botanists, looking to get into the field. We look forward to representing NPMS the at conference and engaging more student surveyors!

Find out more about the BUC and conference on the [website](#), their Newsletter [The Thymes](#), Or follow [@botanicalunichallenge](#) on Instagram

Free online Nature Courses:



Whether a curious beginner, a seasoned volunteer, student, land manager, or simply someone who loves the natural world, Plantlife have developed a growing suite of free online courses for you. From Fungi to our Temperate rainforests, explore the fascinating roles that plants and fungi play in our ecosystems, and how you can help protect and restore the incredible biodiversity around us.

Learn at Your Own Pace with these flexible, accessible courses and deepen your knowledge while gaining practical skills to support conservation efforts in your local area and beyond.



► Nature Courses

Further volunteering opportunities:



From reserve-based working group volunteers, to desk-based advocacy and comms volunteers, the most up to date volunteering opportunities, stories and news from Plantlife can be found on the dedicated Volunteering pages [HERE](#).

THANK YOU!

A huge thank you to all volunteers that make the scheme possible. As ever, 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

Tel: 07399 299770 or 07711 922098

