



National Plant Monitoring Scheme

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SPRING NEWSLETTER 2021



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

SARAH SHUTTLEWORTH

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter 2021. Last year felt like a false start for so many things, especially for the NPMS. We had such a great training schedule all planned out only to be cancelled just as we were ready to press go!

Despite these hurdles, the NPMS rallied and produced a great online programme, and some volunteers still managed to survey at least once.

This year with the pandemic still present in our lives we have decided to focus on developing our online training even further. We have increased capacity for all our online training even further for example; allowing up to 500 attendees. See our feature on our new online events programme on PAGE 03.

Last year we announced how NPMS data contributed to a new UK Biodiversity Indicator. We now have a video and infographic explaining what this means and how your skills, time and data made this possible. See the feature about this on PAGE 02



Our main aims and focus for this year is to re-inspire and re-engage all of you, whether you are new to the scheme or you have been with us since the beginning, this year is a chance to really get to grips with the methods, your plots and get a handle on habitat identification. Maybe you signed up but haven't managed to start. We are here this year to help with any of the things that might have been holding you back before.

THIS ISSUE

Indicator Explained
PAGE 02

Landowner Access
PAGE 02

New Training Programme
PAGE 03

'Appy Days
PAGE 03

PoMS
PAGE 04

Habitat Hotspot – Woodland
PAGE 05

Species Spotlight – Buttercups
PAGE 05

Are You Going Plotty?
PAGE 06

Get Involved
PAGE 07

LANDOWNER ACCESS

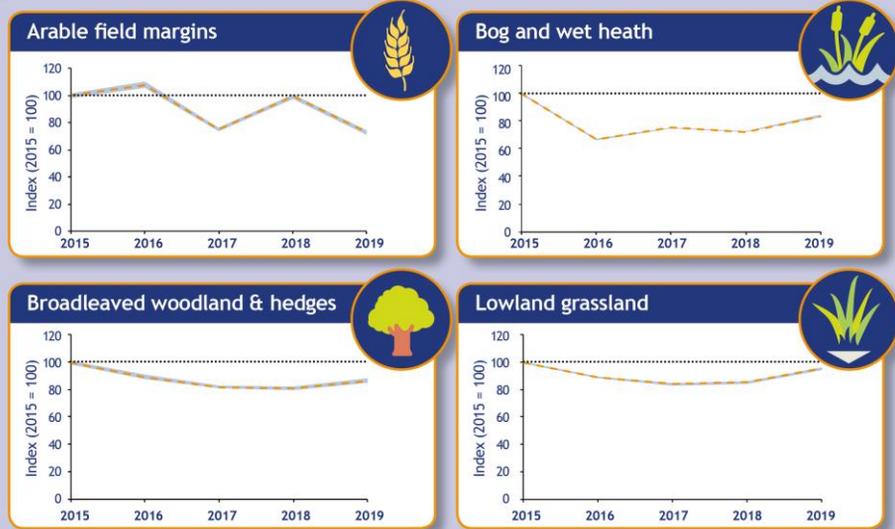
One of the first steps in the scheme is to get landowner permission for your survey plots. Identifying the landowner can be as simple as using google maps and searching for addresses or nearby businesses. Many of these can then be contacted via email if they have a website or a postal address using our downloadable letter or NI postcard. If you are still having trouble finding the landowner then simply knocking on doors (being Covid19 aware of course) or posting the letter through letterboxes with your contact details could give you some leads.

In Scotland regulations are slightly different due to The Land Reform Act 2003 (which came into force in 2005), which gives everyone rights of access over land and inland water throughout Scotland, subject to specific exclusions. These rights are sometimes referred to as 'freedom to roam'. To find out more detail visit this page. www.gov.scot (www.gov.scot) If you would like to contact anyone about access to your square in Scotland then it is recommended that you contact the Access Officer for that area.

Lastly, you might find the landowner has questions about the scheme. We can assist you with any questions and a copy of the public liability insurance if needed. Please do contact us if you are still struggling with landowner access. We have additional tools we can use to help you, so please get in touch.

UK Biodiversity Indicator C7. Plants of the wider countryside

This indicator measures change in the abundance (% cover) of plant species that are used to assess a healthy habitat in the UK.



What is the indicator for?

The UK is fortunate to have lots of information about its biodiversity, which is collected across a whole range of species and habitats, including plant data from NPMS citizen scientists. This information provides an essential source of evidence for reporting biodiversity change and the impact of policies and actions to conserve biodiversity.



Heard us last year buzzing about the **UK Biodiversity Indicator** but not really sure what it means? Then check out the new **video** on our **YouTube channel** that should explain it all.



'Appy Days

Did you know we have an app? You can input your plant data in the field! No more soggy ☁️ paperwork or pages flying off in the wind. 🌀 No signal? No worries! You can use it without and it will automatically 📶 upload when back in signal range. Need help to use it, then drop us an email or attend one of our data training events. Just remember to set up your plots on the website first.

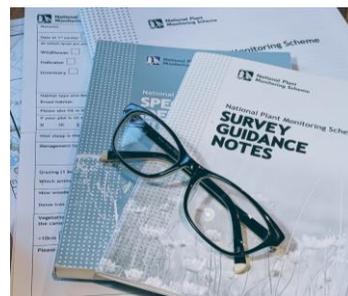
Save on paper, postage and space!

'Appily Ever After



NEW TRAINING PROGRAMME

As many of you would have seen, we now have our **new** online training programme for 2021.



This year we have increased attendee capacity for the webinar style events to **500**. Therefore, you shouldn't find any that are booked up. Equally each one will be recorded and added to the YouTube channel afterwards, so no worries if you cannot make the date. We kicked off with our first one in Mid-March on NPMS Methodology, and the video of this is on our YouTube Channel already.

We have added some new habitat modules too, with the addition of Dry Calcareous Grassland, and Freshwater and Coastal habitats with a new presenter for Freshwater and Arable Field Margins too. Questions will be welcomed for a session at the end where the presenter and myself try to answer as many as we can.



We are still going to run our data surgery sessions and volunteer virtual meet ups, which are also bookable on the website under Training Events.

We have taken on board some of the feedback about training and are hoping to further expand with the use of several miniseries on the YouTube channel, including 'Don't Loose the Plot over Plots', 'NPMS Getting Started – Desk Based Start Up', 'Classes for Grasses', 'Habitat Habituation' and several Species Focus sessions. We will also be running some Facebook and YouTube live sessions of surveying in the field.





READY TO BUZZ INTO ACTION THIS SPRING? PoMS NEWS

By Pauline Campbell (DAERA)

During the past year we have found how increasingly important nature is to our health and well-being. In order to fully appreciate and understand the complex matrix of essential interactions between wildlife and the habitats they need, we need to gather more information. Fortunately, as National Plant Monitoring Scheme (NPMS) volunteers, you know the value of collecting data by following standardised methodology, and the benefits this type of survey can deliver.



We are now delighted to rollout a survey of our pollinator species as Northern Ireland has officially joined the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS). PoMS consists of three key elements:

- Supporting pollinator **research** projects such as interactions between species and crop production, and the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions.
- **Flower-Insect Timed Counts (FIT Counts)**, a 10 minute count of all visiting pollinators to a 50cm square. This survey can be done anywhere there is flowers pollinators are using. You do not need to identify each species, just count how many bees, butterflies, hoverflies, etc. that land in your selected square. These surveys were launched in Northern Ireland last year, with over 85 counts added to the national database so far!
- 1 km square monitoring surveys using **pan-traps** to collect specimens over a six hour period following specific methodology. A randomly generated network of squares, based on semi-natural and agricultural habitats, are selected as a subset of the **NPMS squares**. These are visited three times each year. This gives more power and understanding to the data. Collected samples are posted off to be identified, logged and kept for DNA analysis down the line. We are excited to launch this survey in Northern Ireland in April 2021.

“We will be working closely with NPMS volunteers whose 1km squares are selected for PoMS pan-trap surveying; contacting landowners to secure additional land access permission for these more intensive surveys, and encouraging NPMS volunteers to become involved with PoMS.”



If you would like to find out more about PoMS and/or would like to be involved, contact pauline.campbell@daera-ni.gov.uk or visit the PoMS website [PoMS UKCEH](https://www.ukceh.gov.uk)

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

THE BUTTERCUPS (PART OF RANNUNCULACAE)

So many of you may have already seen the wonderful displays of Lesser Celandine recently, these are part of the same family as buttercups. The first members of the buttercup family to flower are Bulbous Buttercup and Goldilocks Buttercup. The Buttercups are considered very "simple", evolutionarily speaking and this is why you will find them near the beginning of most field guides as they are usually arranged based on evolutionary timelines.



Meadow Buttercup



Bulbous Buttercup



The quaintly named Goldilocks Buttercup is usually easy to spot. It is a woodland plant and an early flowerer. It's most characteristic feature is that it's petals are all of differing size and shape on each flower. This makes it look a bit like a flower that has had some of it's petals pulled off. However upon closer inspection you will see that they are simply very irregular.

Bulbous Buttercup is another early flowerer, and it's leaves can look like or similar to Meadow or Creeping Buttercup. However a reliable way of identifying Bulbous Buttercup is by the sepals (the smaller, usually green, petal like structures underneath). They are reflexed towards the stem, meaning that they all point downwards rather than cupping the underside of the petals like in Meadow or Creeping buttercup. Creeping and Meadow Buttercup can sometimes be tricky to tell apart. There is usually a difference in overall look in Meadow Buttercup, as it's often taller and more delicate looking. It's leaves are also more deeply divided than Creeping Buttercup. The stalks of Meadow Buttercup are not furrowed, whereas in Creeping Buttercup they are. So next time get up close and personal with the stem and see what you can spot! Tag us on any social media posts of what buttercups you can spot this spring? Maybe challenge yourself to find a Bulbous or Goldilocks Buttercup for the first time? #NPMS2021



Goldilocks Buttercup



Meadow Buttercup Leaf

HABITAT HOTSPOT

BROADLEAVED WOODLAND

Woodlands are one of the first habitats to unfold with life in the season. We have two Broad-scale woodland habitats, Broad-leaved Woodland and Pinewood and Juniper Scrub. **Broad-leaved woodland** is then split into three Fine-scale habitats, **Dry Deciduous**, **Wet Woodland** and **Hedgerow of Native Species**



Examples of **Dry Deciduous** can vary. Oak Woodland with a Hazel understory and ground flora of Bluebells. Beech woodland with Bramble and Dog's Mercury or Ash Woodland with Field Maple and Wild Garlic. **Wet Woodland** however is more typically dominated by Willow or Alder or both, with sedges and horsetails. Differences in woodland communities are dependent on things like geographical location or underlying geology. NPMS **hedgerows** are identifiable physical structures or boundaries, containing native species. **Pinewood** consists of the native conifer woods that are confined to the Highlands of Scotland, where they are dominated native Scots Pine. Ground flora species typically include Heather, Bilberry for example.

More information see [here](#)



ARE YOU GOING PLOTTY?

If there is one part of the methodology that has got people puzzled, it's finding, creating and setting up plots.

So let's spend some time breaking this down. So you have your 1km square map. It has a grid with numbers all over it, either in the centre of small square or on one of the grid lines. Ideally the methodology requires you to select 5 of these numbered plots to survey. Three square ones located in the centre of the smaller squares and two linear ones that are on the gridlines. We also ask you to select the plots that are in NPMS habitat and preferably different habitats. These should be shaded in on your map, however some maps don't have any shading or only a tiny amount. This is because the baseline map data used, is sometimes not accurate or up to date. This is where the square recce and using satellite maps are useful.

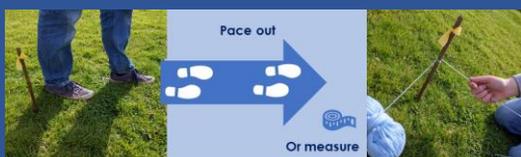
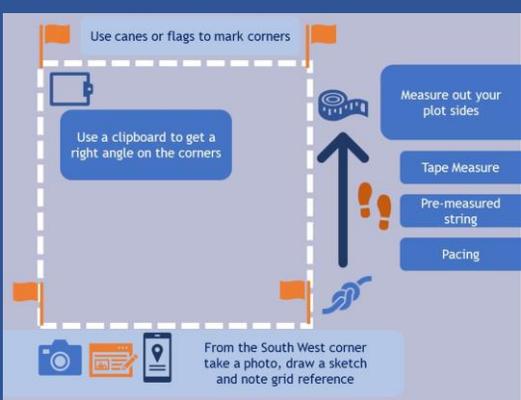
How do you find these numbered plots on the ground? Using the grid crib sheet here [NPMS Plot GridRef](#) you can get the accurate grid reference for each numbered plot. Then using an app on your phone for grid references or a GPS device, you can walk to the correct grid reference on the ground.

If the numbered plot isn't suitable for reasons due to access, safety or no NPMS habitat then use Protocol A in your guidance notes to self select a plot location. This requires you to find NPMS habitat and choose the most representative part of the habitat to set up your plot, bearing in mind all the tips for making your plot as relocatable as possible.

These plots can then be created on the website ready for your survey, see here for guidance on this part [Creating a plot YouTube](#).



When setting up the plot in the field you will need string/wool/cord that is long enough to span 5m on each of the 4 sides. You can pre-measure this to 5m intervals, with a marker at each point or measure on site with a tape measure or by pacing it out. You will also need 4 markers for each corner. I use 4 small sections of bamboo cane with bits of ribbon tied at the end. Plus a clipboard for getting the angle at each corner, so you don't end up with a parallelogram! Using the string/cord, the corner markers and the clipboard you can then mark out your plot ready for surveying.



Check out our 'Don't Loose the Plot Over Plots' YouTube Video that will premiere soon! Click here to subscribe



NPMS Support

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! #NPMS2021 @theNPMS



GET INVOLVED

Plantlife

Great British Wildflower Hunt
you have told us that doing the Hunt increased your confidence in identifying wild flowers. Over this spring and summer, we will bring you four different Hunts with over 70 different flowers to get to know.



Plantlife

No Mow May

Join legions of gardeners and say "no" to the mow this May to help our bees, butterflies, wildlife and us!

Plantlife's #NoMowMay campaign doesn't ask you to do much. In fact, it asks you to not do anything at all...



Recording

iRecord App

Want to record plants not in your square? Or maybe other beasts, like butterflies, moths or fungus? Using this app you can upload a photo and your specific record, contributing to yet more fabulous citizen science



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The NPMS partners would like to take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders who have supported the NPMS in recent years and have organised or attended workshops across the UK who have promoted the scheme.

Thanks also to Andrew van Breda and Karolis Kazlauskis for technical support.

Also a huge thank you for the effort by all our dedicated volunteer surveyors that make the programme possible and a lively community to be part of. The NPMS team are so grateful for your enthusiasm, even during such uncertain times and your welcoming of our new online training support.

Thank you to all the contributors of the newsletter.



We are here to help.
Send us an email or give us a bell.
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