



# NFBR

NATIONAL FORUM  
FOR BIOLOGICAL  
RECORDING



**Newsletter 69: April 2026**

# Contents

|                                                                                                                            |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| View From the Chair – Three Conferences and a Strategy Launch                                                              | 3  |
| A Celebration: Data for Nature – Thursday 7 and Friday 8 May 2026                                                          | 6  |
| From Records to Results: How LERCs Turn Data into Action                                                                   | 7  |
| Celebrating 50 Years of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme                                                                 | 10 |
| Increasing Inclusion in Biological Recording                                                                               | 17 |
| A Competitive Edge                                                                                                         | 19 |
| New Year Plant Hunt 2026: a Record Number of Participants, Many Taking Their First Steps in Botanical Recording            | 21 |
| NBN Trust Update for NFBR – March 2026                                                                                     | 23 |
| How Natural History Collections in Museums Help Conservation                                                               | 26 |
| Freshwater Jellyfish                                                                                                       | 28 |
| Poll-A-Gen Project Update                                                                                                  | 30 |
| Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs); Why Recorders Matter                                             | 33 |
| Rare Camel Spider (Solifugid) Discovered on Anguilla Island                                                                | 36 |
| Seven New Species of Spider Discovered in Anguilla, and 21 Other Caribbean Spiders Have Their Distribution Ranges Expanded | 38 |
| Two excellent biological recording compendiums published                                                                   | 40 |
| News Snippets                                                                                                              | 42 |

## Cover picture:

*Muscari neglectum* (Grape Hyacinth), monitored by the Wychwood Flora Group in Chadlington, Oxfordshire. Image by Rachel Russell



# View From the Chair – Three Conferences and a Strategy Launch

*Simon Pickles, NFBR Chair and Director of North and East Yorkshire Environmental Data Centre (NEYEDC)*

There are times in any professional life when you can take a broad view across your field, and others when a major piece of work quite rightly demands such sustained focus that the wood can be obscured by the trees. Over the past two and a half years, my life has been dominated by the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). The NFBR Council meeting last September provided a valuable opportunity to step back and reconnect with the wider landscape of activity. It highlighted just how much momentum there is across our sector, and how rapidly things are evolving. In response, I made a conscious effort to re-engage more widely—attending several conferences and a strategy launch, and reconnecting with colleagues and networks. The common thread running through these events was that each involved networks that use data generated by biological recorders.

First up was the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) conference; New Improved and Different. Local records centres across the country are responding to the challenge of supporting the upsurge in interest in data to support nature recovery. The conference had three main foci: responding to new data needs, reflected in the updates given by each region at the beginning of the conference, harnessing new technologies for example dealing with data generated through AI pipelines alongside traditional records and doing the work of an LERC more effectively and efficiently, with issues like dealing with debtors and adopting sustainable business practice.

The second was the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary National Biodiversity (NBN) conference in November. It was, an absolute pleasure to meet up with so many old friends from national schemes and societies, research institutes, local records centres and the wider biological data community and to catch up on all the work being done around data management and flow. The conference began with a celebration of the last 25 years and what has been achieved by the NBN, but this quickly moved on to a look forward, which again emphasised new technologies and the need to harness data to support nature recovery. I was pleased that the contribution of traditional biological recording was recognised as was the need to continue to support and nurture the biological recording community. This was the first conference under the new NBN CEO Gareth Thomas, and I am pleased to say that since the conference a new series of regular meetings between ALERC, NBN and NFBR have been initiated, and I hope to give some further information arising from



that collaboration in the next newsletter.

December saw the launch of Natural England's [Science, Evidence and Analysis Framework 2025 – 2030](#). I was surprised to find that this was the first large gathering of Natural England science staff in 20 years and, once again, it was good to catch up with old friends. The conference was upbeat with a palpable positive energy. Natural England's scientists seemed to be in good spirits despite all the difficult external pressures. The Framework outlines 4 strategic outcomes:

- Recovering Nature
- Building Better Places
- Improving Health and Wellbeing
- Delivering Security Through Nature

It defines 18 areas of research interest and defines 21 intended outcomes including *“Empower public engagement through citizen science to foster transparency and building trust in environmental decision making by involving communities directly in data collection and interpretation”*. The most interesting part of the meeting for me was getting an overview of the Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) investment programme, Defra's largest research and development programme and one which has facilitated their largest ever environmental data collection effort, with the release of the [first tranche of data](#) in December 2025, and further releases planned over the next 2 years. It seems that, going forward, more data than ever will be needed to support nature recovery and that it is unlikely that an increased proportion of this will come from government funded work. I was delighted when the final comment from the launch panel was a sincere thank you to all the amateur naturalists that had made data available to Natural England over the years and enabled much of their work.

The final conference was the British Ecological Society hosted National Environmental Monitoring Conference. Aimed at early career researchers and with a morning session 'Closing the Gaps' and an afternoon session focusing on 'Vision to Value' this was, for me, a horizon scanning opportunity and a chance to compare the direction of travel within the academic community with that of Defra and its arms-length bodies.

Four very different events and a huge amount of insight and information. Knowledge may be power but, in this case, ignorance was bliss. I briefly pined for the LNRS immersion but then thought better of it. From amongst the information overload, a few themes emerged that I think have bearing on biological recording:

- There is a greater interest in the use of data to support nature recovery, particularly at the local level, than ever before.



- To reverse nature loss and facilitate recovery will require more data and in some cases new types of data.
- New technologies are evolving very quickly. Some are fully mature, whilst others are still only at the proof-of-concept stage, however, the frameworks in which they can be used together to create data that addresses real world questions are only just emerging.
- There is an acceptance that new technologies will not supplant traditional field recording in the near future.
- There is an expectation that a large proportion of the data required to inform decision making will continue to be collected by volunteers and that this community can grow to meet the demand.

Since Christmas, both the Yorkshire Naturalists Union and North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre have begun canvassing their local recording and wider ecological data communities about these issues and in particular the capacity and willingness of volunteers to generate data to inform nature recovery. I hope to share our findings with NFBR in the next issue. In the meantime, I am shifting information gathering efforts from the data needs of nature recovery to the needs and aspirations of the biological recording community and hope to get in touch with many of you over the coming months. If you are interested in a chat, please drop me a line at [chair@nfbr.org.uk](mailto:chair@nfbr.org.uk).

Very best wishes and hope to see as many of you as possible at the conference next month.

*Simon Pickles*



# A Celebration: Data for Nature – Thursday 7 and Friday 8 May 2026

## *Giselle Sterry, NFBR Executive Council member*

This year we are celebrating 40 years of the National Forum of Biological Recording (NFBR). 'NFBR 40th Celebration: Data for Nature' will highlight the different data we need to rescue the UK's natural environment.

Anyone with an interest in recording wildlife, using biological records and / or wanting to learn more will find the conference a useful event. Talks range from the what, where and when of how it all started, to data use in practice now, to the challenges of AI plus engaging the next generation.

Whether you are a seasoned recorder, new to the community or want to find out more about the NFBR everyone is welcome to attend and join the celebration.

### Benefits of attending

- it's a celebration – who doesn't love an excuse to celebrate!
- a **two day in-person** conference plus field trip on day 3 to Saltwells National Nature Reserve
- plenty of opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues, make new connections, re-establish contacts
- fabulous speakers and talk topics
- central England location great for public transport connections
- plenty of hotel accommodation
- discount code for NFBR members attending both days
- amazing value conference even at full price (but why wouldn't you want to join the NFBR anyway?)
- **Ticket price includes hot drinks and lunch on both days**
- access to signed copies of two recently published 'must have' recording guides
- our next in-person event isn't planned until 2028 – so do make sure to get this Conference booked in
- *possibility* of cake

Party hats optional!

Book Now !! <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/nationalforumforbiologicalrecording/2046207>



# From Records to Results: How LERCs Turn Data into Action

*Deb Muscat, ALERC National Coordinator*

Behind every map, species atlas and conservation decision are the people who collect the records. Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) play a crucial role in turning those observations into trusted information that influences real-world decisions. For recorders, that means the species lists, spreadsheets and field notes you submit are not just archived — they are actively shaping how nature is protected and restored.

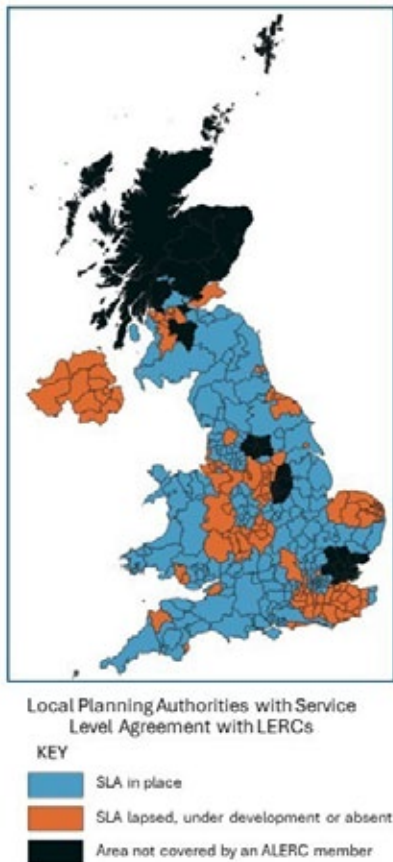
## Data in Action

One of the most important uses of biological records held by LERCs is within the planning system. Data collected primarily by volunteers helps ensure development, considers wildlife and avoids or mitigates impacts on important habitats and species.

The Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) network now covers 89% of UK planning authorities and has formal service level agreements with 63% of them providing information on sites, habitats and species. Originally providing local authorities with spreadsheets and PDFs, LERCs are providing information as Geographic Information System (GIS) layers, habitat suitability modelling, heat maps, etc. And this goes further in [London](#), where Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL) manage information on open spaces, green infrastructure even private gardens.

Over the last four years, LERCs have seen an 11% increase in data searches requested by developers and ecological consultants (Figure 2)— which ALERC estimates equates to more than £5 million per year from the corporate sector that contributes to their running costs.

However, there is still more work to do. Recent analysis by ALERC, building on research carried out in London in 2016, compared the number



*Figure 1: Local Planning Authorities with service level agreements with LERCs*



of planning applications within LERC areas with the number of commercial data searches. The findings suggest that around 18–22% of planning applications should be informed by biodiversity data, yet currently only around 8–10% include a LERC data search.

To address this, ALERC is using the [factsheet Unlocking Better Planning Decisions for Nature](#) to work with CIEEM and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to explore how biodiversity data can be better embedded into planning workflows.

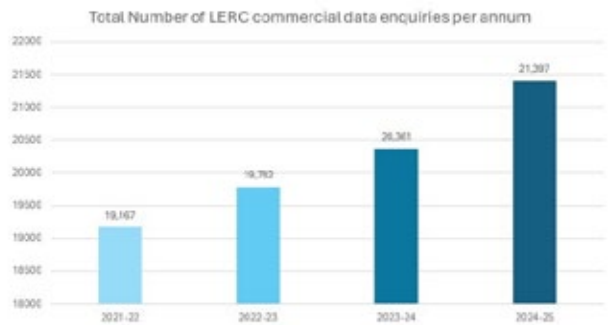
Over the past couple of years, LERCs across England have been working with local authorities on Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). These strategies draw heavily on biodiversity data and local expertise to identify priorities for habitat restoration and species recovery. In many areas, LERCs have played an important role in explaining data licences, data sensitivity and the practical implications of the [QFAIR](#) data principles. While sometimes challenging, this process has raised the profile of LERCs and the value of local recording. It has been recognised by Natural England that a major strength of LERCs in this process, other than data management, analysis and mapping, was their ability to bring together local experts and verifiers to develop robust species lists and ensure local knowledge was properly represented. LNRS have also enabled some LERCs to develop new services. For example, Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) has developed a Local Nature Recovery Strategy report service, helping diversify income streams while supporting local authorities.

In Northern Ireland, the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR) provides another example of how recording feeds directly into policy. Their Species Surveillance Officer worked with colleagues in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) on Habitat Regulations Reporting. It reviewed and [reported the conservation status of 32 species and 50 habitats](#) across NI.

## Filling the Gaps

A core role of any LERC is identifying gaps in coverage and working with recorders to fill them. Both experienced and new recorders play a key role in improving the evidence base.

In south-west Scotland, for example, volunteers working with the South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre (SWSEIC) are encouraged to visit [“Squares of the](#)



*Figure 2: LERCs have seen an 11% rise in data searches requested by developers and ecological consultants*



**Month”** – 1km squares with no records.

Urban areas are another common gap. Many LERCs are now generating new data through participation in City Nature Challenge, encouraging recorders to focus on towns and cities. The Environmental Records Information Centre for the North East of England (ERIC North East) has taken this a step further, running their challenge across the whole of the North East — including 10 km into the North Sea.

West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC) is taking a community-focused approach through its Your Wild Patch project. Working with local communities, the initiative aims to discover what wildlife is living in neighbourhoods and how these records contribute to the wider biodiversity picture across west Wales. Alongside this, the West Wales Wild Watch programme will visit a range of different habitats in the area offering relaxed recording sessions with species identification training for beginners.

These initiatives not only fill data gaps but also bring in new recorders and strengthen links between existing recording communities.

### Supporting Recorders

LERCs also support recording communities in a variety of ways. Conferences, workshops and networking events help strengthen local recording networks, celebrate achievements and encourage collaboration.

Many LERCs work with natural history societies and recording groups to produce atlases, identification guides, newsletters and online articles. These publications showcase recorder effort and reveal trends in species distribution and abundance — often highlighting the long-term value of consistent recording.

Training is another important area. LERCs regularly support identification workshops, survey projects and skills development. Recent training examples include: Field Identification Skills Certificate (FISC), GIS training using QGIS, and Local Wildlife Site surveys.

Of course, capacity varies widely. LERCs range from having less than one member of staff to teams of ten or more, so not all are able to offer the same level of support. Even so, signing up to newsletters or following your local LERC is often the best way to hear about opportunities as they arise.

### More Than Data

It's easy to think of LERCs as simply holding data, but in reality they are active hubs supporting recording communities and translating records into action. Recorders, verifiers, coordinators and volunteers all contribute to a shared effort that is increasingly shaping decisions affecting wildlife.

Every record adds to the picture. Every recorder makes a difference.



# Celebrating 50 Years of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme

*Jo Milborrow, Butterfly Monitoring Officer at Butterfly Conservation*



In 2025-26, the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme ([UKBMS](#)) celebrated its 50th anniversary, recognising fifty years of volunteer-led butterfly monitoring that contributes to one of the world’s longest running invertebrate monitoring schemes.

The scheme officially began in 1976 when 39 transects were set up on nature reserves in England and Wales and has now grown into a nationally coordinated network with more than 3,500 sites monitored for butterflies each year throughout the UK. There are more than 2,600 traditional transect routes active across the UK, and this still includes half of those original sites, with a handful having contributed data in every year of the scheme to date.

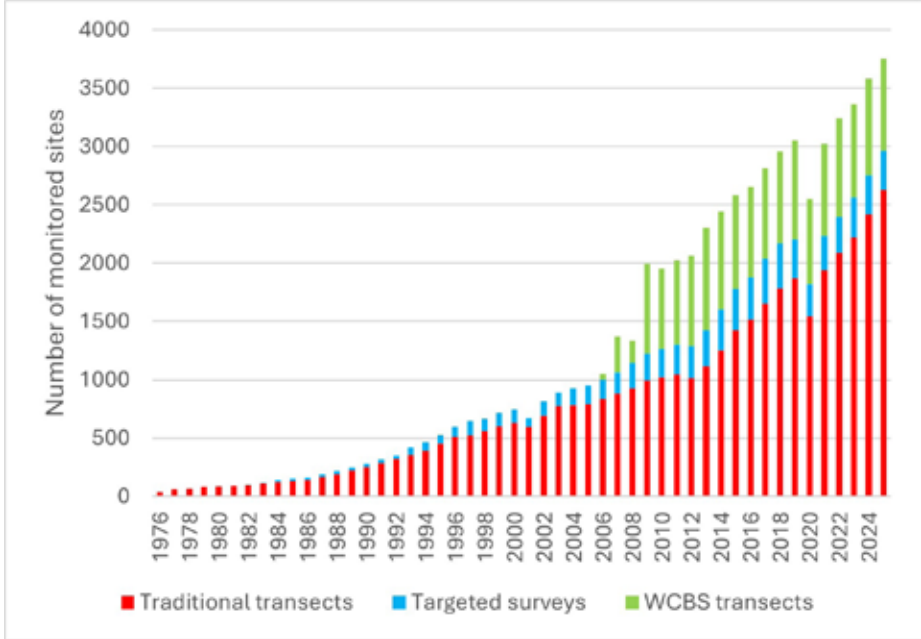
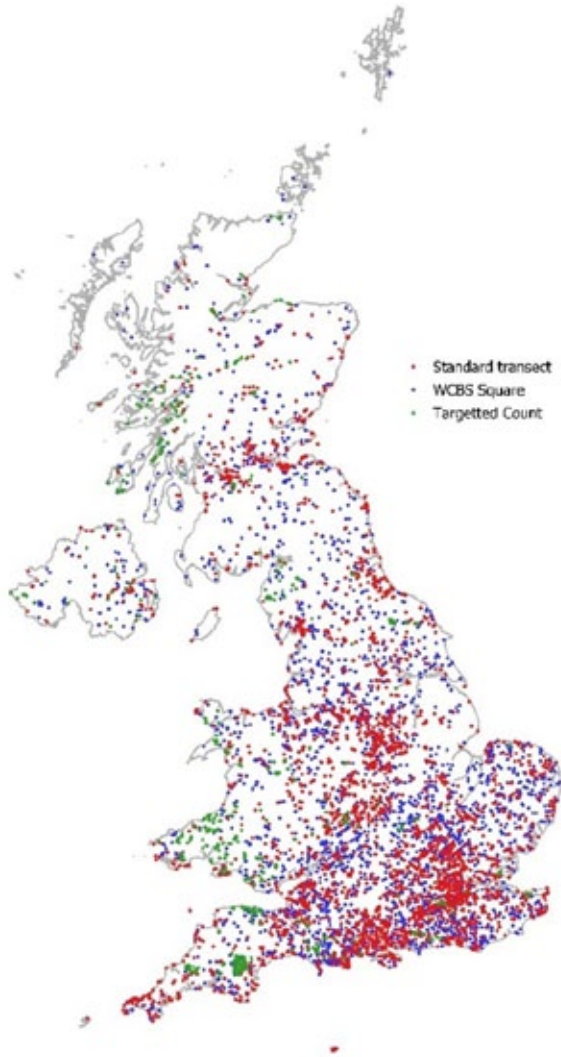


Figure 1. Number of UKBMS surveys each year from 1976 to 2025.



The scheme produces robust annual population trends for 58 of our 59 regularly occurring species, you can view the population trends for each butterfly species by visiting the UKBMS website: <https://ukbms.org/species>



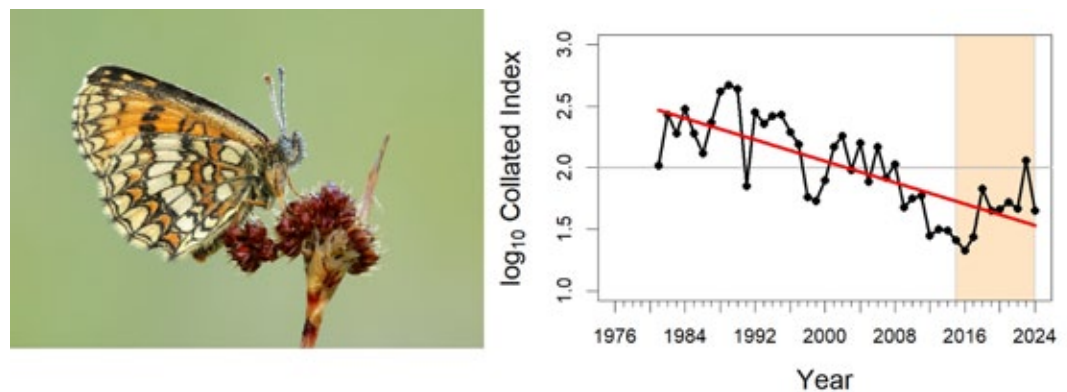
*Figure 2. Map of UKBMS sites 2024.*

Since the scheme began, Transect Surveyors have collected over 10 million butterfly records, which has told us a great deal about how our countryside has changed over the years.



Whilst transects form the backbone of the UKBMS, those data are supplemented by additional methods, including targeted counts for priority species and, since 2009, data from the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS). This latter scheme is based on the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) protocol developed by the BTO, with two parallel transect routes being set up in randomly generated 1km squares across the UK countryside. Each WCBS square is walked at least twice per year at the height of the butterfly season, we are always looking for more people to take on a WCBS square so please see below details on how you can get involved.

Long-term trends show that 22 of our butterfly species are in significant decline across the UK while 17 have significantly increased since monitoring began. This situation becomes more nuanced once you drill down to the data from individual countries. In England the situation is worse, with 24 species in decline against 15 species on the increase. Results from Wales and Northern Ireland also show more species in decline than increasing. However, the outlook is much more positive in Scotland where only three species have suffered long-term declines while 11 species have significantly increased.



*Figure 3. UK population trend for Heath Fritillary from 1976 to 2024, including trendline in red and the short-term trend (10 years) highlighted by the orange bar. Photo – Heath Fritillary: Iain H Leach*

The list of most heavily declining species across the UK is a great cause for concern, covering a mixture of habitat specialists and, formerly, more widespread species. Heath Fritillary has declined by the greatest amount (89% since 1981), but Small Tortoiseshell and Wall have also both declined by over 80% in the long-term.

Factors driving these declines are varied and complex, but include the loss of important semi-natural habitats to development or land use change, agricultural intensification and habitat degradation through changing management practices. Climate change is also having a negative impact on some species either directly or indirectly through impacts on their foodplants or pathogens.



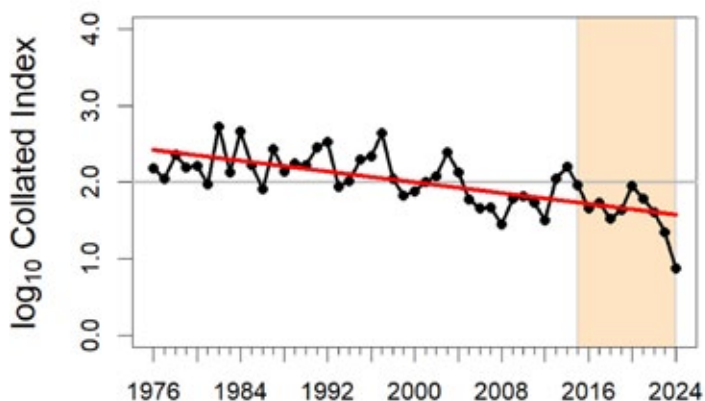


Figure 4. UK population trend for Small Tortoiseshell from 1976 to 2024, including trendline in red and the short-term trend (10 years) highlighted by the orange bar.  
Photo - Small Tortoiseshell: Bob Eade

In contrast, the long-term increases in Scotland undoubtedly highlight one of the positive impacts of climate change, with several species expanding their range northwards in recent years and continuing to establish new populations. Great examples of this are the Orange-tip, Peacock, Ringlet, Speckled Wood and Wall (bucking the national trend).

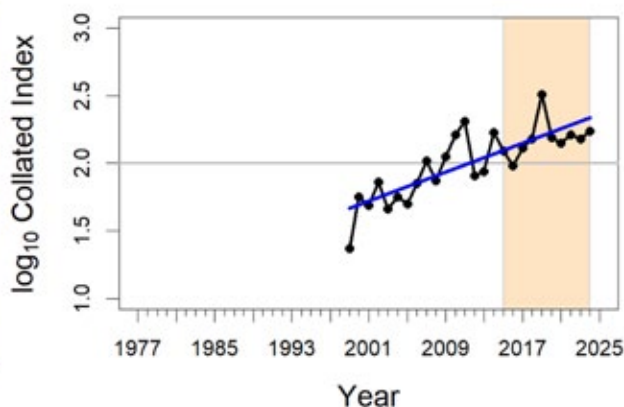
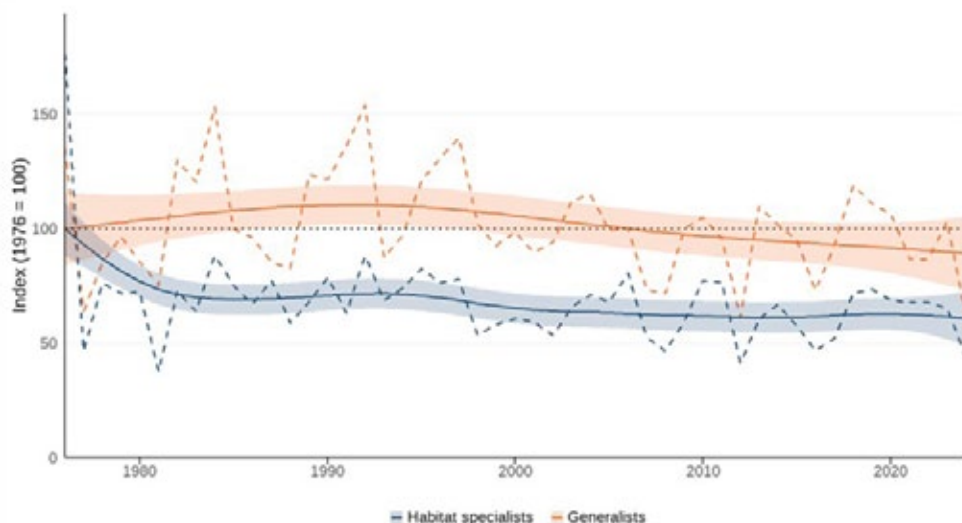


Figure 5. Scotland population trend for Orange-tip 1999 to 2024, including trendline in blue and short-term trend (10 years) highlighted by the orange bar.  
Photo - Orange-tip: Iain H Leach



## How the data are used – Indicators and research

Data from the scheme are also used to produce official Government biodiversity indicators, by combining data across different species groups. These are updated annually with the latest data. The current indicators show that habitat specialist butterfly species are faring worse, showing significant long-term decreases across the UK, while figures for habitat generalists are stable. Further analyses also show significant declines for butterflies on farmland and woodland sites since 1990. To view the latest set of butterfly indicators please visit the Defra website: [Butterflies in the United Kingdom and in England, 1976 to 2024 - GOV.UK](#)



*Figure 6. Trends for the abundance of habitat specialist (26 species) and generalist butterfly species (24 species) in the UK, 1976 to 2024*

## Get Involved

If you'd like to get involved with this long-running scheme we are always looking for more Recorders to help with the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS). This is part of the UKBMS and aims to survey a broad range of randomly selected sites across the UK, taking in all types of habitat. There are 1000 randomly selected 1km squares which are surveyed twice during July and August.

- Explore** - Use the map to explore squares near to you, you can see when they were last surveyed, a site map and a species list - <https://ukbms.org/sites>

Find out all about what is involved in the surveys with this video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNeZr1cv84c>



2. **Connect** – Find your local WCBS Champion, these volunteers help to coordinate the surveys in their area. They can get you set up with a suitable, available square - <https://ukbms.org/regional-co-ordinators>
3. **Register** – Register on the UKBMS website stating which square you will be surveying - <https://ukbms.org/MyData>
4. **Survey!** Carry out at least two survey visits on warm, sunny days during July and August. Find all the details here - <https://ukbms.org/guidance-recording-forms>

The geographic spread of WCBS squares ensures that monitoring reflects the true diversity of UK landscapes, from intensively farmed areas to upland fringes, urban areas, and pockets of semi-natural habitat.

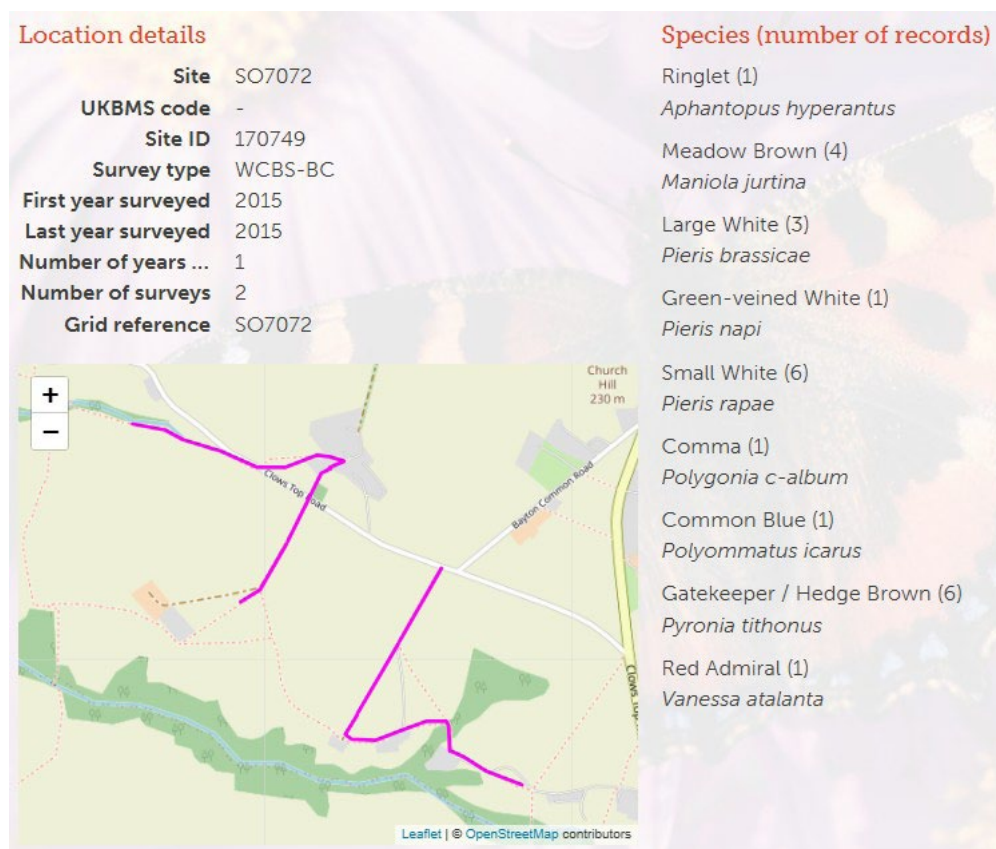


Figure 7. Details of an available WCBS square from the UKBMS website - <https://ukbms.org/sites>



## Want to monitor butterflies in your area?

Alongside the work of the UKBMS, Butterfly Conservation supports and promotes a range of additional butterfly monitoring methods across the UK. These use a variety of approaches, from simple, unstructured observations that anyone can contribute to, through to more involved, repeated survey methods like those used by the UKBMS.

To help local groups, partnerships, and community projects get involved, new guidance has recently been produced outlining the different monitoring methods available. The guidance explains how each approach works, the level of effort required, and how to choose the method that best suits your project, location, or volunteer capacity. The guidance is available to download from the UKBMS website [here](#).

## A Huge Thank You

The UKBMS has always been a volunteer-led triumph. To all the transect surveyors, WCBS recorders, county coordinators, regional organisers, partner staff and everyone who contributes time, expertise, and enthusiasm: **thank you**. Your efforts are the backbone of 50 years of monitoring, and the reason we've been able to celebrate this anniversary with such confidence in the scientific and conservation value of the data.

The UKBMS is supported and managed in partnership by Butterfly Conservation, the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

Follow us on Bluesky - @ukbms.bsky.social Twitter - @UKBMSLive



UK Centre for  
Ecology & Hydrology



Birds  
Science  
People



# Increasing Inclusion in Biological Recording

## *Richard Fox, Butterfly Conservation*

UK biological recording is hugely successful and has many strengths, but diversity of participants is not one of them – recorders are predominantly white, well-educated, older and more affluent. This may bias the spatial coverage of recording but also, more importantly, excludes underrepresented groups from the benefits associated with participation in biological recording, including opportunities to build knowledge and skills, connect with nature and each other, and enhance wellbeing.

In 2024, Butterfly Conservation and the Stockholm Environment Institute at the University of York organised a workshop with organisations running national recording schemes to discuss barriers and opportunities for increasing the diversity of people involved in UK biological recording. A [report of this workshop](#)



*Younger people are significantly under-represented among Butterfly Conservation's participants so, in 2024, a Youth Panel was established to help formulate an approach to involving more young people in Butterfly Conservation's work. Image by Felix Littlechild*



has now been published in the journal *Citizen Science: Theory and Practice*. It highlights examples of progress that has been made so far by eight organisations which run species recording and monitoring schemes in the UK. These 12 case studies include embedding EDI in policies and practices, gathering baseline data on participant demographics and successful, albeit small-scale, engagement with underrepresented groups via collaborations with community-centred organisations, such as Butterfly Conservation's partnership with Sustainably Muslim.



*People taking part in a butterfly-inspired creative workshop, designed and run by Sustainably Muslim as part of Butterfly Conservation's Big City Butterflies project. Image by Chris O'Donovan*

The workshop discussions also considered knowledge gaps and future challenges. These included the need for more detailed characterisation of participant demographics as some dimensions of diversity remain underexplored, and greater understanding and the motivations for and barriers to participation by underrepresented communities. Rethinking engagement and fresh approaches to biological recording will likely flow from this improved understanding, but may also encounter institutional, resourcing and cultural resistance to change. Input from underrepresented groups at each of these stages will be vital to achieve more inclusive biological recording.

## Reference

Pateman *et al.* (2026) Increasing inclusivity in biological recording in the UK: progress to date and future priorities. *Citizen Science: Theory and Practice* 11, 1. <https://doi.org/10.5334/cstp.894>



# A Competitive Edge

## *by Armchair Recorder*

Last Spring I spent a short time each day engaged in the most futile of activities. I have two Box bushes in the front garden, and of course each year, the number of Box Moth caterpillars has increased it seems exponentially. The moths are, I have to confess, utterly beautiful, and the caterpillars are a very pretty green, yellow and black – excellent camouflage amongst the foliage. I started by picking the more mature caterpillars off, and putting them on the wall so the Blue-tits and House Sparrows could help themselves, but I couldn't help noticing that their homing abilities directly back to the Box was remarkable and unerring. So, I tried putting them further and further away, using one wall brick as a measurement. Yet still they turned almost as one and headed straight back. I ended up putting them in a pot on top of the bins, and the Blue-tits obliged. My biggest haul in one day was 37, and I realised each day I was counting... but that's what naturalists do, isn't it?

We observe, identify, and record. And we count. I suspect as a mere botanist I was immune to 'how many species have you seen', until I joined the Ornithology unit at University of Birmingham (I am not an ornithologist – just in case you had any doubts...) – and I was introduced to the 'office list', 'life list UK', 'year list garden', 'life list garden', 'life list Europe', 'life list world', and I realised that this was rather good fun. Especially when I could beat them hands down on the annual office list. Fair enough, my office overlooked the River Severn, theirs overlooked 'The Quad' in Biosciences on main campus. But of course, I had no idea that these academics, these 'proper' ornithologists, were in fact rank amateurs at the 'gamification' of listing. I joined the hard core when I visited Shetland for the first time and stayed with Roger Riddington, and later Paul Harvey. Being introduced to the concept of the 'Bird Emergency' was interesting – half way through a meal, a phone call from Roger meant dropping of cutlery and dragging on of boots, leaping in the car (one memorable occasion I had still had one foot on the ground when Paul set off) and we would head towards – not an injured Puffin, as I first naively thought might be the case, but a sighting of a Marsh Harrier at Sumburgh Head. A Marsh Harrier? Fair enough – a lovely bird to see, but surely they had seen a Marsh Harrier before? Yes, but not on Shetland, and not this year...

But birders are renowned for their lists, and while us mere mortals on the other side of the fence regard it as mostly harmless fun, there are plenty of biological recorders (yes, including botanists) who have looked at this somewhat competitive side to recording and thought 'I'll have some of that, please'. What prompted me to write about the competitive side of recording was a mention by Paul Waring



in his bimonthly report on moths in British Wildlife. I have plenty of social media acquaintances who post with delight when they get a 'lifer' in their moth trap, but also FTY (first this year), first for monad, first for garden, and so on. Paul relates a mothing adventure a few years ago where keen moth-ers competed to see who could get the very first moth record of the year – the first records were within minutes of the stroke of midnight. And that reminded me of a certain botanist of my acquaintance, and possibly the only person I've met who is more competitive than I am. Tim Rich recounts several New Year's Eves waiting for the chimes so he could make the first botanical record of the year.

I guess that this 'turning recording into a game' is what drove us on New Year's Day 2012 to see how many flowering plants we could record in Cardiff, before lunch. I seem to recall it was 68, and we were staggered by how many there were. With hindsight, perhaps issuing a press release wasn't the wisest action, as we were both roped in for many, many interviews over the next two weeks. The following New Year's Day saw me in Shrewsbury and Tim in Midhurst – so of course we repeated the exercise – three hours of recording anything in flower. Tim won, the ratbag. And, in terms of the BSBI's New Year Plant Hunt, the rest is history.

So, I was quite surprised (and saddened) last year to see several rather negative comments on social media about the 'competitiveness' of the recording for the NYPH. Surely it is only competitive if you want it to be? And of course, your biggest competitor will always be yourself. A plant you've never seen before? More species on this NYPH than on last year's? How much better a botanist have I become this year? What level might I get if I take a FISC?

So, do we put off more people than we encourage, with our passion for numbers? For me, the numbers are just an adjunct – seeing a new species, learning why it is that species and not something else – that is where the true magic of biological recording lies. And so it is for those in the true halls of biological recording Valhalla – the pan-species listers. Their ranks of who has seen most species can be intimidating, but only if you let it. Instead, try being inspired, and think 'hey, could I see a new species today? Could I learn something new?'. Don't be put off by us old gits who need to get our kicks in increasingly weird ways – join in, learn something, and remember – that's exactly how we started all of those decades ago...



# New Year Plant Hunt 2026: a Record Number of Participants, Many Taking Their First Steps in Botanical Recording

*Louise Marsh, BSBI Communications Officer*

The BSBI's fifteenth New Year Plant Hunt (NYPH) took place between Thursday 1 and Sunday 4 January 2026. This annual citizen science event encourages participants to record any wild and naturalised plants (whether native or alien) managing to bloom in midwinter across Britain and Ireland. All previous records were broken this year for both the number of participants and the number of plant records: 3,652 people took part and used the BSBI Recording App to submit more than 25,000 plant records. Many of the first-time participants attended one of the 88 organised group hunts held across Britain and Ireland, by far the highest number so far. These group hunts are a great way for plant-hunters at all skill levels, from beginner to expert, to come together, share ID tips and take their first steps in recording. Most of the longest species lists (80+ taxa) were recorded during group hunts in Norfolk, Jersey, Cornwall, Gloucestershire and Glamorgan.

In 2026, as in previous years, around half the species recorded were flowering late (53%) rather than early, or expected to flower at New Year or typical 'all-year-rounders'. These proportions of species flowering early, late or as expected were broadly similar to previous years, suggesting that the majority of plant species flowering out of season are 'autumn stragglers' which were not zapped by frosts and so were able to continue flowering so late.

More than half (58%) of the species in bloom were native to Britain and Ireland, including the three most frequently recorded species, which were also the same as in previous years: Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Dandelion *Taraxacum* spp. and Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*. There were 1,242 observations of Daisy in flower at locations ranging from Jersey up to Westray in the Orkney Islands, and from Norfolk to the Dingle peninsula in the west of Ireland.

663 species were recorded, the third highest



*Max Connolly and Primrose. Image by James Harding-Morris.*



total in the event's history. Herb-robert *Geranium robertianum* and Winter Heliotrope *Petasites pyrenaicus* were new entries in this year's list of most frequently-recorded species, displacing Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* and Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*.

Surprising finds this year included several familiar garden plants which had not only 'jumped the garden fence' and become naturalised, but were also managing to bloom at New Year. These included Spanish-dagger *Yucca gloriosa*, Algerian Iris *Iris unguicularis*, Osteospermum *Osteospermum jucundum* and Rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis*, all in Cornwall; Rue *Ruta graveolens* in Devon; Japanese Quince *Chaenomeles japonica* at Llandybie in South Wales; Rosy Cress *Arabis collina* in Stirlingshire and Broom *Cytisus scoparius* near Kirkwall on Orkney.

Native plants recorded in flower included Common Reed *Phragmites australis* in Norfolk – its usual peak flowering period is July and August - and the flowers of Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, a familiar tree of parks and woodlands which usually blossoms in April and May, were seen at Dolwyddelan in North Wales.

Perhaps the most surprising find of all was Mediterranean Nettle *Urtica membranacea*; an alien plant, as the common name suggests. The first official record of this species anywhere in Britain was from Warwick in 2006, but just two decades later, during the 2026 New Year Plant Hunt, it was spotted for the first time not only growing but also flowering in Jesmond, a suburb of Newcastle. You can explore the results in more detail on the BSBI NYPH website: <https://nyph.bsbi.org/results.php>

So, how do we encourage New Year Plant Hunt participants, who enjoyed their first taste of botanical recording, to take the next steps? The BSBI launched a new recording activity in February: the 100 Plants in 2026 Challenge. Beginner recorders are being supported and encouraged, via weekly webinars, online identification resources and regular email updates, to continue to log their plant finds throughout the season. We hope that the first steps they took at New Year will be the start of a botanical recording journey that lasts all year, and hopefully beyond. More here about the 100 Plants in 2026 Challenge: <https://bsbi.org/take-part/activities/100-plants-challenge>



Sarah, Walter and Gareth use the BSBI Recording App to upload their plant finds. Image by Louise Marsh.



# NBN Trust Update for NFBR – March 2026

*Mandy Henshall, Communications and Engagement Manager, NBN Trust: National Biodiversity Network Trust*

## NBN Awards for Wildlife Recording 2026

Help us celebrate those individuals and groups who are making significant contributions to wildlife recording and data sharing and helping improve our understanding of the UK's biodiversity.

Is someone you know worthy of a nomination? If so, you've got until 18 May.

There are seven categories of awards:

- NBN Group Award
- NBN Lifetime Achievement Award
- NBN Award for Marine Wildlife Recording
- NBN Newcomer Award
- NBN Award for Terrestrial Wildlife Recording
- NBN Verifier's Award
- NBN Young Person's Award (open to individuals aged 11-20)

Nominating someone is quick and easy – just answer three or four simple questions online or on our downloadable nomination forms.

All the information can be found on the [NBN Trust website](#). Make someone's day and nominate them for the recognition they deserve!

And, if you haven't already seen it, information on the 2025 NBN Award recipients can also be found on the [website](#).

## NBN Atlas Strategy 2025-2030

The NBN Atlas Strategy was launched in October 2025. In it we outline our ambitions to ensure that the NBN Atlas is the cornerstone of the UK's biodiversity data infrastructure, informing how we understand, protect, and enhance the natural world through data innovation and cutting-edge technology.

The NBN Atlas strategy can be viewed in StoryMap format [online](#) and is also available as a [PDF to view or download](#)



## Biodiversity Data Updates

Each month our NBN Atlas Data Team processes new and updated datasets from some of our 200 data partners, across the UK. These contributions are what make the NBN Atlas such a powerful resource for conservation, research and decision making.

To showcase the importance of these collaborations, we now highlight the new and updated datasets every month.

During the last data processing update in March, we reached a significant milestone of **335 million** species records on the NBN Atlas, which included almost 23 million records from the BTO!

Read more about the [March update](#).

## NBN Trust Data Team update

Will Millard and Rhiann Stock are the two main contacts for anything related to sharing or using data on the NBN Atlas. Will is Data and Analytics Manager and Rhiann is Data Officer.

For general support and queries about the NBN Atlas, please contact [support@nbnatlas.org](mailto:support@nbnatlas.org). To share new or updated data resources on the NBN Atlas, please contact [data@nbnatlas.org](mailto:data@nbnatlas.org).

## iNaturalistUK User Survey Reports

During 2024 / 2025 two reports were carried out to help understand iNaturalistUK users and their observation records.

[iNaturalistUK User Survey 2024](#) – This study represents one of the first comprehensive efforts to explore the users of the iNaturalistUK platform, aiming to understand who the users are, how they engage with the platform, and what motivates their participation. It details the results of the analysis based on data collected through the iNaturalistUK user survey 2024.

[iNaturalistUK Observation Records](#) – This report presents the results of the data analysis of the iNaturalistUK observation records from 2008 to 2023.

An executive summary of both reports can be found on the [NBN Trust website](#)

The findings and final reports come from a study conducted as part of the [RENEW project](#), funded by the Natural Environment Research Council.



## NBN Trust membership scheme update

Following a period of research and review, we are making changes to the NBN Trust membership scheme.

The first phase is being implemented from 1 April 2026 and will be applicable to individual members for the 2026/27 financial year. All individual members with April renewals have been contacted about the changes and other individual members will be contacted in advance of their monthly renewals.

We are expecting to roll out the updated scheme for organisations in summer 2026 and will share the information with current members ahead of then, in advance of their renewals for 2026/27.

We'd like to assure all members that access to the NBN Atlas and any other services is unchanged and there will be no interruption to membership during the renewal and transition process.

Thank you for your support as we implement the new scheme over the next few months.



# How Natural History Collections in Museums Help Conservation

## *Laura McCoy, Curator of Natural History, Manx National Heritage*

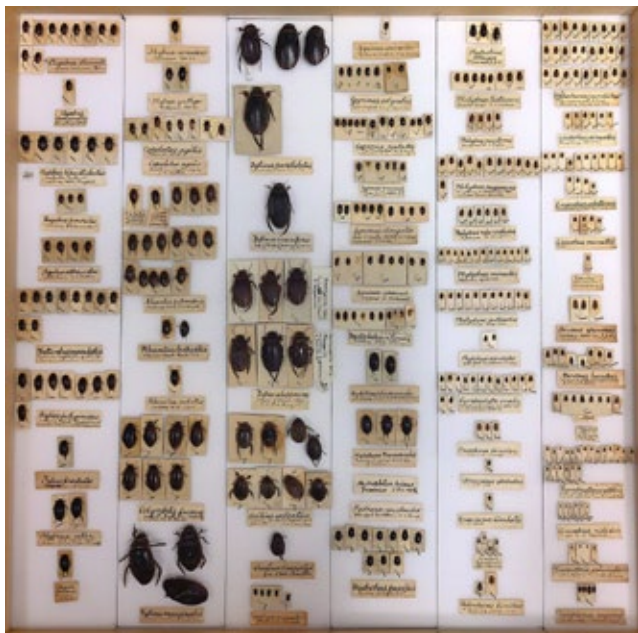
My job at the Manx Museum as a curator of natural history is to look after collections related to the natural world. The scope of the collections starts from the beginning of the solar system (e.g. meteorites older than the Earth) through to microscopic organisms, plants, fungi, molluscs, eggs, nests, insects, fossils, skeletons, animal skins, and taxidermy, although the list doesn't end there. 'Look after' is a vague term. I safeguard, prepare, repair and keep track of everything so that if someone wants to look at a specimen I can find it for them. That means identifying, preserving, labelling, adding all the information and also using the appropriate storage. Should something be kept dry, like bones, or should it be stored in alcohol so that it retains its shape, like small spiders? Our stores are divided up into sections: geology, botany and zoology, then these are further subdivided. Each group has a taxonomic order, so things that are closely related are kept together. Think of it like a library or supermarket, I even have a freezer section, but you don't want to eat any of it...

Each species is specialised to live in a particular habitat and a specimen is a biogeographical snapshot in time - take the Bilberry Bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*) for instance. This species is found almost exclusively on moorland in association with stands of Bilberry and is very specialised, so if a place has altered for some reason and this little bee becomes locally extinct due to development, drainage, farming, etc. we will still know that at one point in time they were there. Just one specimen can help you reconstruct a landscape and we can even use that knowledge for restoration in the future. We live in a time of unprecedented environmental alteration, with climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, invasive species and over-exploitation all contributing to species declines (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005, IPBES 2019). Natural history collections help us keep a track of all of that and more.

Sometimes we have more than one of something; we have several Hedgehogs, Burnet Roses and a whole drawer of Peacock Butterflies. Most of these, and certainly the newer ones, all have their own little label of when and where they were collected, and by whom; the earliest specimens date back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. People ask, 'Why do you have so many of the same thing, don't you just need one; isn't the data enough, or just take a picture out in the field?' Some may think they look the same but each specimen is unique. What if



by taking a DNA sample you discovered something that looked similar, but on close examination was actually new to science! Some mycologists at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew tested a jar of dried porcini mushrooms from Waitrose. Far from what you might expect, they found that there were actually 17 different species in there, three of which had never been found before. What if you wanted to study the variations within a species, or how it's adapted over time? There is still so much we don't know.



*Pinned beetle specimens at the Manx Museum. Image by Laura McCoy MNH.*

When I took this role and moved to the Island in 2017 I knew very little about the Isle of Man; I had never been here and aside from knowing that it didn't have certain things like moles, badgers and snakes, I had a lot to learn. What I found was that, although it has similarities to its neighbours, it is a unique combination of all of them and has its own individual character; but being a small island means that character is very fragile and much more sensitive to change than its larger neighbours. We need to be on our guard to monitor and protect our countryside more closely than ever, through surveys, biological recording, habitat restoration and investigation. Some think of museums as only focusing on the past but collections, particularly natural history, curate for tomorrow and we address real world challenges by supporting positive change using research, ideas, partnerships, exhibitions, events, consultations, policy and strategy to address key topics and enhance social and environmental impact (McGhie, H.A., 2019).

## References

McGhie, H.A. (2019). *Museum collections and biodiversity conservation*. Curating Tomorrow, UK.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005). *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: synthesis*. Island Press, Washington DC.



# Freshwater Jellyfish

*John Terenzini, PhD candidate, University of Plymouth*

One of the most widespread freshwater jellyfish, *Craspedacusta sowerbii*, is native to the Yangtze River area in China, but was first described in 1880 at the Royal Botanic Garden, Regent's Park, London by British zoologist Ray Lankester. Although *C. sowerbii* was first described in the United Kingdom, there have been few reports of this species in the UK over the last one-and-a-half centuries since their description. Despite infrequent sightings, *C. sowerbii* is likely more widely distributed in the UK than is currently known with unknown implications. An exciting new citizen science project has been launched examining the presence and distribution of *C. sowerbii* across the United Kingdom. This project is exploring the scientific literature, naturalists' journals, museum collections, and collecting citizen science reports of *C. sowerbii* within the UK to enhance understanding of this elusive species.

These freshwater jellyfish can be difficult to spot because their medusa form is small (<2.5 cm) and clear-bodied, and they occur unpredictably in mostly still water bodies like lakes, reservoirs, canals, and ponds. These jellyfish typically appear between June and October, when the water temperature exceeds 21 Celsius. Blooms may not occur every year, even in the same water body, as their life cycle allows *C. sowerbii* to exist in water bodies for years before blooming and becoming visible to the casual viewer. Much like some of their marine relatives, the freshwater jellyfish *C. sowerbii* has a multi-stage life cycle that can produce sexually as a medusae or asexually as a small polyp. Medusae will reproduce sexually, creating small polyps (only a few millimetres long) that can attach to aquatic plants or hard surfaces under the water. These polyps can wait, even for years, for ideal warm environmental conditions and then bud off small medusae, producing a bloom of freshwater jellyfish.



*Figure 1: Craspedacusta sowerbii.*  
*Image by Håkan Söderholm.*



Although they do not cause severe stings to people,

*C. sowerbii* blooms impact freshwater zooplankton communities and potentially fish recruitment, so understanding their abundance and distribution is valuable. As climate change affects the distribution of global biodiversity, the range of *C. sowerbii* will continue to increase and their impacts will be felt in new areas.

Since its first description, global research has determined that there are at least three distinct genetic lineages of *C. sowerbii* spreading throughout the world. Currently, all specimens are identified as *C. sowerbii*, though genetic distances between members of various clades are as big as between species. However, the original type specimen from London may be missing, and the exact lineage matching the *Craspedacusta sowerbii* designation is unclear, requiring further investigation to stabilise the nomenclature. By collecting specimens, this research is critically important as it has the potential to clarify the genetic lineage of *C. sowerbii*, providing a basis for further research to be conducted globally into the rapidly expanding distribution of this cryptic species.

If you see any freshwater jellyfish in UK reservoirs, canals, ponds or lakes, please take photos or videos, record the date and location, and contact John Terenzini at [john.terenzini@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:john.terenzini@plymouth.ac.uk). If you are able to collect any specimens, please contact John for how to share them with the research team. Collected specimens could be an important contribution to understanding more about the genetic lineage of *C. sowerbii* currently present in the UK. Even if you have spotted freshwater jellyfish in previous years or know of an occurrence anywhere in the UK, please share the date (month/year), location, how many you saw, and any information you can about the water body you found them in. Every observation is important and your contribution is much appreciated!



*Figure 2: Bob Vroom surveying for Craspedacusta sowerbii in British Colombia, Canada, June 2025. Image by Dr. Florian Lüsrow.*



# Poll-A-Gen Project Update

*Inez Januszcak, Poll-a-Gen Project Coordinator, Natural History Museum*

The importance of pollinating species, in particular insects, is well documented. In the UK, there are over 1,500 species that rely on plants for nectar and pollen, including bumblebees, honeybees, solitary bees and hoverflies. However, despite their high economical and biological value, it is no secret that UK pollinator numbers are declining. A study by the Natural History Museum in 2022 revealed that 60% of the UK's flying insect population has declined, with invertebrates affected by rising temperatures, fragmented habitats and excessive pesticide use in agriculture.

In response, in the summer of 2025 an exciting new project launched at the Natural History Museum in London. Utilising museum specimens collected at three different time periods (30s, 50s, 70s), and modern specimens collected across the UK, Poll-A-Gen is aiming to examine changes in diversity across species which are in decline or expanding. Funded by NERC (Natural Environment Research Council), the Poll-A-Gen project is aiming to delve into the reasons behind this decline, but from a genetic standpoint.

Since May 2025, the project has:

- Secured a species list that fits the criteria outlined in the grant.
- Connected with over 59 submitters spread across the country.



*Looking at museum specimens. Image from NHM website.*



- Received 97 specimens from unique locations, covering 11/16 species, from 47 sites.
- Processed the specimens for genomic sequencing (starting with DNA extraction).
- Databased all the *Vespula vulgaris* (1445) and *Dolichovespula sylvestris* (1035) specimens in the museum, now starting on the *Bombus* species available in the museum collection.
- Created the Poll-A-Gen webpage: <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/research/projects/poll-a-gen.html>

| Poll-A-Gen species list |                          |                                  |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                         | Common name              | Scientific name                  |
| <b>Bees</b>             |                          |                                  |
|                         | Buff-tailed bumblebee    | <i>Bombus terrestris</i>         |
|                         | Garden bumblebee         | <i>Bombus hortorum</i>           |
|                         | Brown-banded carder bee  | <i>Bombus humilis</i>            |
|                         | Health humble-bee        | <i>Bombus jonellus</i>           |
|                         | Red-tailed bumblebee     | <i>Bombus lapidarius</i>         |
|                         | Common carder bee        | <i>Bombus pascuorum</i>          |
|                         | Ruderal bumblebee        | <i>Bombus ruderatus</i>          |
|                         | Yellow legged mining bee | <i>Andrena flavipes</i>          |
|                         | Red mason bee            | <i>Osmia bicornis</i>            |
| <b>Wasps</b>            |                          |                                  |
|                         | Tree wasp                | <i>Dolichovespula sylvestris</i> |
|                         | Common wasp              | <i>Vespula vulgaris</i>          |
| <b>Hoverflies</b>       |                          |                                  |
|                         | Marmalade hoverfly       | <i>Episyrphus balteatus</i>      |
|                         | Gossamer hoverfly        | <i>Baccha elongata</i>           |
|                         | Dark-saddled Leucozona   | <i>Leucozona laternaria</i>      |
|                         | Batman hoverfly          | <i>Myathropa florea</i>          |
|                         | Thick-legged hoverfly    | <i>Syritta pipiens</i>           |
|                         |                          |                                  |





*Common wasp Vespula vulgaris pollinating a white primula flower. Image by Maria Wan, Shutterstock from NHM website.*

In November 2025, *Bombus jonellus* was added to the species list, to contribute to other existing work taking place regarding investigating *Bombus jonellus* between British and Nordic populations.

The project is always looking to expand its reach to capture as wide a UK specimen distribution as possible. The Poll-A-Gen project **is subsequently looking for entomologists, recorders or hobbyists from across the UK who would like to be involved in this exciting research and able to collect specimens**. There are 16 pollinator species on the list; nine bees, two wasps and five hoverflies, all with a relatively good UK distribution and mostly easy to identify in the field. The project will provide all equipment as well guidance around sample preservation for genetic research – the only requirement is each species cannot be collected more than twice at each site, so there is a high enough geographical distribution of specimens, and that there is prior permission for collection.

If you would like to get involved, or have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to contact Poll-A-Gen Project Coordinator Inez Januszczak at [pollagen@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:pollagen@nhm.ac.uk).



# Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs); Why Recorders Matter

*Catherine Wensink, Executive Director, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum and PhD Candidate, University of Exeter*

Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) are an emerging area-based conservation mechanism which aims to achieve long-term, effective in-situ biodiversity conservation outside of traditional protected areas. The term ‘30 by 30’ is now used widely to reflect the vision to protect 30% of the planet by 2030 and it comes from the UN Convention on Biological Diversity’s Global Biodiversity Framework [Target 3](#). While international target enthusiasts will note that OECMs were first included in the 2010 Aichi Targets, there is some history about how they have entered the world stage. Here I will explain a bit of this and how biological recorders make local level recording important at a global scale.

IUCN took the lead in developing both a taskforce and guidelines for OECMs in 2015. In 2018, the UN provided the following definition:

*“A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services, and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values.”*

— CBD Decision 14/8, 2018

Unlike protected areas, where conservation is a primary objective, OECM sites may have primary conservation aims, conservation may be a secondary benefit, or there may even be unintended conservation outcomes. Examples include: alpine refuges, airspace corridors, subterranean habitats, sacred sites, marine parks, surf-breaks and deep-sea thermal vents.

Protected areas alone are considered insufficient to reverse or halt the accelerating loss of global biodiversity. While ‘paper-park’ designations (protected areas that exist legally but not effectively in practice) are often located in areas where little or no management occurs, it has been demonstrated that many important ecosystems and species of conservation concern are found outside formally designated protected areas. While this is not innovative itself - as various forms of governance have shown - communities and biodiversity can co-exist. The difference is that the potential for OECMs to recognise this co-existence, in international targets, has the potential for shifting power-imbalances and historic



colonial approaches; if used correctly.

Two of the challenges that the criteria set for OECMs has to overcome are; how to demonstrate an area is of conservation importance, and that long-term positive conservation outcomes can be achieved. This is where biological recorders are critical for identification, establishment and verification of OECMs as effective mechanisms for achieving positive outcomes for biodiversity. Maxwell *et al.* (2020) discuss the need for conservation agencies to better fund long-term and well-designed biodiversity monitoring programs which recognise OECMs. They encouraged governments and communities to engage more with biological recorders and citizen science and use techniques like camera traps, drones and acoustic monitors to increase the coverage and frequency of biodiversity data collected.

The increasing recognition of OECM sites internationally has been rapid and is now documented by the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) through the Protected Planet platform (<https://www.protectedplanet.net/en>). In 2026, in recognition of the importance of OECMs, the platform was renamed as the World Database on Protected and Conservation Areas (WDPCA). As of March 2026, the total number of OECMs recorded around the world is 7,485, covering 17 countries and territories. It remains to be seen how the United Kingdom as a whole (including the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, will approach the use of OECMs in area-based conservation. Robinson *et al* (2024) conducted a review of protected areas and potential OECMs, providing guidance on which types of sites should be incorporated within Target 3 (of the Global Biodiversity Framework).



*St. Andrew's Cotton Stainer*  
*Dysdercus andreae*, *Montserrat*.  
Image by Jodey Peyton.



*Common Sieve Tortoise Beetle*  
*Chelymorpha cribraria*, *Montserrat*.  
Image by Chris Malumphy.



Scotland, through NatureScot and the Scottish Government, created an OECM Working Group in 2024 to develop the criteria for OECMs in Scotland. An important lesson learned during the pilot phase (involving 11 potential OECM sites) was the difficulty in using ‘biodiversity values’ criteria for site selection, which are not focussed on easily recorded measures such as species count data or, area, covered by specific habitats. This demonstrates that more learning from practical, real-world examples, is on-going and that there is not a one-size-fits all approach. In the guidance developed through the working group, monitoring of OECM sites is expected to be “robust and reliable, informing management and appropriately aligned to the biodiversity values of the site”. To address this NatureScot are developing a new approach to monitoring, called *Delivering Healthy Ecosystems* (DHE). Further information is available via the NatureScot website (<https://www.nature.scot/>).

Biological recorders all over the world are fundamental pieces in the puzzle to protect globally important biodiversity. From OECM creation built on evidence of the presence of important species, to the evidence required to justify their effectiveness, all records can count, whether through iRecord, iNaturalist or other platforms. Their role cannot be overstated for recognising current sites, to finding more. For example, recording under-surveyed areas could lead to candidate OECMs being identified and recognised. This in turn could contribute towards global targets for reducing biodiversity loss.

## References:

- [Cook, C.N. \(2024\)](#) ‘Progress developing the concept of other effective area-based conservation measures’, *Conservation Biology*, 38(1), e14106.
- [Jonas, H.D. et al. \(2024\)](#) ‘Global status and emerging contribution of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) towards the “30x30” biodiversity Target 3’, *Frontiers in Conservation Science*, 5, p.1447434.
- [Alves-Pinto, et al. \(2021\)](#) ‘Opportunities and challenges of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) for biodiversity conservation’, *Perspectives in Ecology and Conservation*, 19(2), pp.115–120.
- [Maxwell, S. et al. \(2020\)](#) ‘Area-based conservation in the twenty-first century’, *Nature*, 586(7828), pp.217–227.
- [Robinson, J.A., et al. \(2024\)](#) ‘Developing statements of compliance for UK protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures’, *PARKS*, 30(1), pp.37–45.
- [Watson, J.E.M. et al. \(2023\)](#) ‘Priorities for protected area expansion so nations can meet their Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework commitments’, *Integrative Conservation*, 2(4), pp.140–151.



# Rare Camel Spider (Solifugid) Discovered on Anguilla Island

*Dr Danni Sherwood, Senior Conservation Officer, Buglife*

Scientists have discovered a rare camel spider on the main island of Anguilla, more than 20 years after its initial discovery on Sombrero Island, where it was originally thought to be restricted to. This work, funded by the UK Government through Darwin Plus grant DPLUS216 ‘Supporting Atlantic Territories Invertebrate Conservation’ was published by Sherwood, Armas, Mukhida & Connor in the December edition of the arachnology



*Figure 1: Endemic Antillotrecha iviei solifuge at Long Pond, Anguilla. Image by Danni Sherwood*

journal *Revista Ibérica de Aracnología* (Sherwood *et al.*, 2025), where the original description of the species also appeared two decades earlier.

Danniella Sherwood, Senior Conservation Officer at Buglife, said “When I discovered these solifugid specimens during nighttime fieldwork, I was floored. Camel spiders are amongst the rarest arachnids in the world, and I’ve only observed them in the wild four times previously. We knew whatever species they were, that they were new for the main island of Anguilla. To find out they were a rare species described from Sombrero was the icing on the cake, as this indicates the species is much less restricted than previously thought and a positive development for its conservation.”

Farah Mukhida, Executive Director at the Anguilla National Trust said “We’re thrilled to be collaborating on DPLUS216 with various partners, including Buglife, and the discovery of this remarkable camel spider on a new island is a key win for its conservation outlook.”

Rhon Connor, Director of the Environment Unit at the Anguilla Government Department of Natural Resources added: “We are extremely happy to find out that this rare camel spider species also exists in Anguilla.”



‘Supporting Atlantic Territories Invertebrate Conservation’ (DPLUS216) is a Darwin-funded project and a collaboration between: Anguilla National Trust, Government of Anguilla, Ascension Island Government Conservation & Fisheries Directorate, The Bermuda National Trust, The Government of Bermuda, Falklands Conservation, Falkland Islands Government, The Species Recovery Trust, and Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust.

## Reference

[Sherwood, D., De Armas, L. F., Mukhida, F. & Connor, R.A., 2025](#). New records of the camel spider *Antillotrecha iviei* Armas, 2002 from Anguilla, Lesser Antilles (Solifugae: Ammotrechidae). *Revista Ibérica de Aracnología* 47: 139–142.



# Seven New Species of Spider Discovered in Anguilla, and 21 Other Caribbean Spiders Have Their Distribution Ranges Expanded

*Dr Danni Sherwood, Senior Conservation Officer, Buglife*

A multi-national collaboration of scientists and conservationists on Anguilla and the United Kingdom has published a landmark new paper on the spiders of Anguilla (Sherwood *et al.*, 2026). More than 20 species are recorded from the island for the first time, many being regional endemics previously thought only to occur on other nearby Caribbean islands. Seven species were also new to science, representing key new endemic species thought to be restricted to the island. The team, whose work was funded by the UK Government DPLUS216 ‘Supporting Atlantic Territories Invertebrate Conservation’ project, comprised of the entire Anguilla National Trust team, most of the environmental staff of Anguilla’s Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and a British arachnologist.

The seven new spiders are from a variety of families, and are all named after places in Anguilla or the Lesser Antilles in general: two new money spiders (*Agyneta anguilla* and *Sphecozone sandyground*), one new pirate spider (*Mimetus antillensis*), a daddy-longlegs spider (*Modisimus anguillensis*), and three cobweb spiders (*Anelosimus blackgardens*, *Anelosimus covepond*, and *Coleosoma roadsalt*) were described. Other key discoveries were the documentation of three wolf spiders, when only one species was previously known.

Danniella Sherwood, Senior Conservation Officer at Buglife and a world-renowned arachnologist said “It was a great pleasure to be able to conduct fieldwork on Anguilla to study its spider fauna, made possible through the dedication and kindness of colleagues at the Anguilla National Trust and Anguilla Government. We surveyed the vast majority of the island, made many discoveries, and were able to describe seven new species, showing how crucial Anguilla is as a centre of island invertebrate endemism.”

Farah Mukhida, Executive Director at the Anguilla National Trust said “Even on a small island like Anguilla, there is a remarkable and largely hidden world of biodiversity. Spiders are an undeniably important part of that story. Research like this reveals just how much biodiversity remains undocumented and underscores the importance of continuing to study and build our understanding of Anguilla’s wildlife and wild spaces. No species is too small, each plays a vital role. We’re



thrilled to be collaborating with Buglife and other partners on this groundbreaking work, funded by Darwin Plus.”

Rhon Connor, Director of the Environment Unit at the Anguilla Government Department of Natural Resources said “We are delighted to be a part of this Darwin project as it has provided us with an opportunity to further investigate spiders’ diversity within our island. We are pleased to be collaborating with Buglife and other partners, and this paper has helped us to learn so much more about our island’s unique spiders.”

‘Supporting Atlantic Territories Invertebrate Conservation’ (DPLUS216) is a Darwin-funded project and a collaboration between: Anguilla National

Trust, Government of Anguilla, Ascension Island Government Conservation & Fisheries Directorate, The Bermuda National Trust, The Government of Bermuda, Falklands Conservation, Falkland Islands Government, The Species Recovery Trust, and Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust.

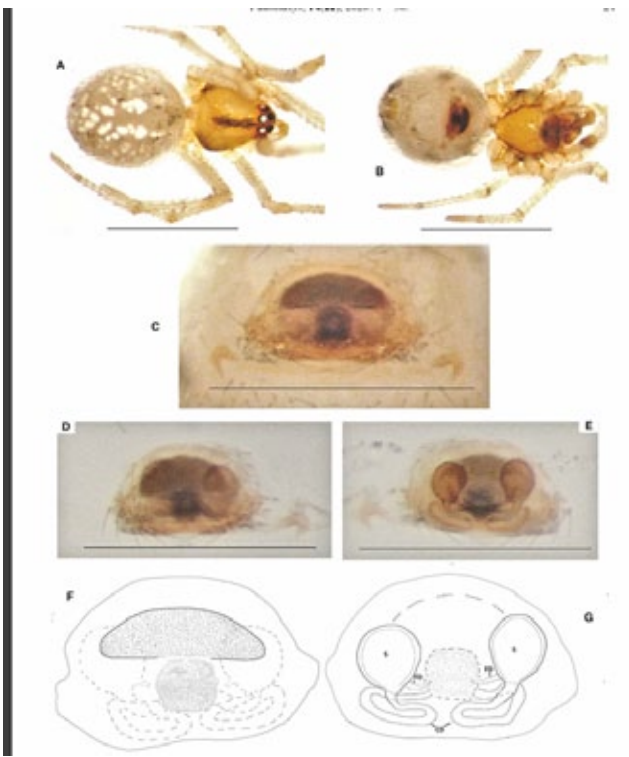


Figure 1: A new spider *Anelosimus blackgardens* paratype female. Image by Danni Sherwood.

## Reference

[Sherwood, D., Mukhida, F., Connor, R. A., Hughes, G., Carter, D., Curtis, I., Hochart, J., Gumbs, K., Gumbs, J. C., Buckmire, Z., Morrishaw, Z., Child, N., Visque Bosquet, I. 2026.](#) New data on the spiders (Arachnida: Araneae) of Anguilla, Lesser Antilles with description of seven new species. *Faunitaxys* 14(22): 1–30.



# Two excellent biological recording compendiums published

This year has seen the publication of two very different books that both give comprehensive and fascinating insight into the range of approaches to biological recording, that will be enjoyed by recorders of all levels. *The text below is taken from the publisher's website. If you would like to hear more from the authors about these books, come to the [NFBR conference 2026](#), because we are extremely lucky to have both authors speaking.*

## [The Biological Recording Handbook - Making Wildlife Count](#), by Sarah Whild

Biological recording is the discipline of writing down natural history observations of a correctly identified species, in a specific location, on a specific date, by a named individual. Simple enough, you may think. But these four pieces of data each have their own pitfalls for the unwary, whether making records or using them in analysis.

This is the first time that all principles and processes of biological recording have been brought together, with a detailed look at some fascinating historical examples. What is biological recording, why do we do it, how did it start, and why does it underpin just about every evidence-based decision that is made in conservation? The book covers:

- The art of recording – in-depth, practical information from site-specific work and different habitats to handling absence data, bias and error.
- Planning – including relevant legislation and monitoring.
- Context – databases, collections, rarities, refereeing/validation.
- Analysis – working with lists and indicator species.
- Reporting – how-to, the community, ownership and confidentiality.

Controversial topics such as species reintroductions are discussed, tips are offered



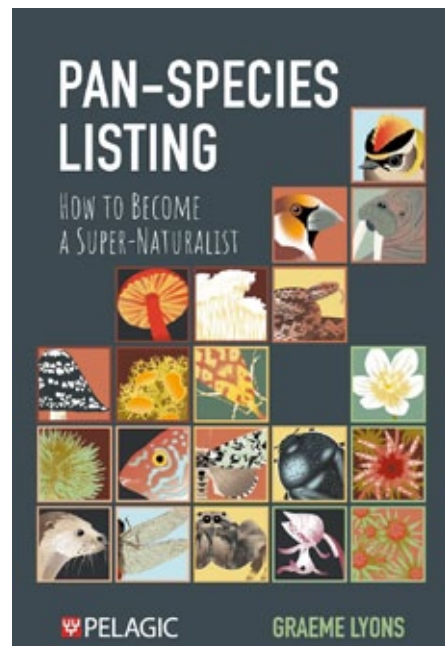
on how to make the most effective use of data, and readers are invited to carry out thought experiments on aspects of their own recording activities as well as considering the future of this all-important discipline.

*“An engagingly written coverage of all that is essential (and more) to undertake and understand Biological Recording.”* —Paul Ashton, Professor of Botany and President of the BSBI

### [Pan-Species Listing - How to Become a Super Naturalist](#), by Graeme Lyons

Pan-species listing is a brilliant method to keep track of a lifetime of natural history sightings. A personal list, not just of birds but including every moth, beetle, lichen, sea-spider, liverwort, fungus, slime mould, cetacean... anything and everything, all the species you've seen. The list is maintained as part of an online community, following your progress in a fun and gently competitive way.

But pan-species listing is not just a game; it generates huge amounts of good quality biological data, while providing a framework for the next generation of naturalists to become experts themselves. This book reveals why the approach was dreamt up, as well as how to do it, what the benefits are and how you too can realise them. The 37 taxonomic classes used on the *Pan-Species Listing* website each have a section showing which texts, websites, equipment, online groups and information are needed to get started. Along with a detailed section on biological recording and fieldcraft, they make this a very handy guide for those that don't necessarily just want to list.



Altogether this is a crucial text for navigating the world of natural history and biological recording in the twenty-first century. The book is suitable for anyone who wishes to take part in pan-species listing but also those with an interest in biological recording, natural history, fieldwork and fieldcraft, bioblitzes, survey and monitoring, conservation ecology, record handling and analysing large lists of species.

*“This book, by a top naturalist, should kick-start a resurgence in biological recording. Authoritative and fascinating but also moving and funny.”* —Mark Avery, environmentalist and wildlife campaigner



# News Snippets

*Sam Amy, NFBR*

A short round up of some news from the UK biological recording community.

## Recording scheme news

The **National Plant Monitoring Scheme (NPMS)** celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2025! Celebrating the incredible achievements of the scheme and the amazing contribution of its fabulous volunteers, as the scheme moves into its second decade, they want to continue to shine a light on the dedication of our volunteers and maybe even recruit more to plant monitoring. You can watch recordings of many varied and fascinating [talks from their 10 year celebration](#) on the NPMS Support YouTube Channel. From insights gained from NPMS records, to how NPMS supports local nature monitoring and strategies, and a Question-and-Answer session with scheme organisers.

The **Hoverfly Recording Scheme (HRS)** is preparing a new **Atlas currently in draft**, about which you can read more in their [spring 2026 Hoverfly Recording Scheme newsletter](#).

The **BTO** published last year a report titled [Waterbirds in the UK 2023/24](#) which provides a single, comprehensive source of information on the **current status and distribution of waterbirds in the UK** for those interested in the conservation of the populations of these species and the wetland sites they use.

The **British Bryological Society (BBS)** has a [Phenology Recording project](#) running currently to document the timing of reproductive stages in bryophytes (mosses, liverworts, and hornworts) across the UK and Ireland. Volunteers record observable traits such as swelling, mature, or dehiscent capsules, as well as male organs, through both field observations and detailed monitoring. The project aims to fill gaps in knowledge about bryophyte life cycles, track variation across species and locations, and provide data useful for ecological research and understanding the impacts of climate change. Results are shared in *Field Bryology* and made available to the wider scientific community, with the project planned to run for at least two years.

The **Biological Records Centre (BRC)** hosted The BRC National Recording Schemes Meeting 2026 online on 17th and 19th March. Recordings of talks, which covered current developments in biological recording, including species Red Lists, data standards and platforms, recording schemes, technological innovations, and how biodiversity data is used to inform policy, conservation, and public engagement. will soon be made available online [here](#).



We have **just 20 years to stop the spiralling decline in British biodiversity** according to a study led by the **UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH)**, that used plant, bird and butterfly data and was recently published in Nature Communications ([Cooke et. al., 2026](#)). You can read more in the [UKCEH press release](#).

## Courses and training

The **Bat Conservation Trust (BTC)** have a huge repository of [events and training](#), much of which available online now, such as a [free Bat Record Keeping Webinar](#).

The **Biological Recording Company (BRC)** provides and facilitates biological recording guidance and training for naturalists and environmental professionals. For example the [entoLEARN webinar series](#) is a programme of online educational talks focusing on the biology, ecology and behaviour of insects and other invertebrates. They are also running a **series of [Field Recorder Days in the London area](#)** as a core part of their mission to **get more people submitting biological records**. Using [iRecord](#) to submit records to ensure they are available to recording schemes and LERCs, beginners through experts are welcome to these events, with specialists on hand to provide identification support and mentoring.

The **Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland** have published [2026 dates for Field Identification Skills Certificates \(FISC\)](#). This 1-day test that assesses your botanical proficiency on a scale from beginner to professional/ expert has become recognised as the industry standard for anyone wanting to carry out botanical surveys. See also their [events calendar](#) for other training opportunities and field meetings.

The **British Entomological and Natural History Society (BENHS)** have [events in 2026](#) including open days for members, and an Introduction to Leafhoppers and Allied groups at beginner (1st Aug) and intermediate (8th August) level.

The **British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)** offers a wide range of [courses and training](#), with some online courses coupled with half-day field sessions to put the theory into practice, enabling more people to participate in the many [BTO surveys](#), should they wish to.

The **Field Studies Council (FSC)** run regular [biological recording courses](#) throughout the year, currently focussed mainly at beginner level.

There is an [Identification workshop: Jumping plant lice \(Phyllids\)](#) on June 13-14th at the World Museum, Liverpool. Learn about their ecology and identification with Dr. Joe Botting, co-author of British Bugs and **Psyllid recording scheme** lead.

For those in South East Wales (and beyond), see many opportunities on **SEWBRECs**



**comprehensive list of events** organised by SEWBRc and other wildlife organisations, both in-person and online, [here](#).

## Upcoming diary dates

April 20-26 - [National Mammal Week](#) in celebration of Britain's wild mammals, and the people working to monitor, protect and restore populations of these vital species. Organised by The Mammal Society.

April 24-27 - The [City Nature Challenge 2026](#); an annually 4-day global bioblitz. See [here](#) for a list of participating cities.

April 24-30 - [The Big River Watch](#); accessible surveys submitted via a free app, that help to build an important picture of river health across the UK and Ireland.

May 7-8 (9) - [NFBF 40th Celebration Conference: Data for Nature](#)

June 22-28 - [Invasive Species Week](#); Tues 23rd focuses on volunteering and recording





# NATIONAL FORUM FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING

The National Forum for Biological Recording is the premier UK organisation for practitioners engaged with biological recording across the UK. Membership includes individual naturalists, national organisations and recording societies, local records centres and their staff. This gives it a unique perspective and an important role.

Whether you are an experienced naturalist or taking your first steps in biological recording, we want to hear from you.

To offer an article for a newsletter, please contact our Newsletter Editor:

Sam Amy on [editor@nfbr.org.uk](mailto:editor@nfbr.org.uk)

To join the NFBR, please contact our Membership Officer and Treasurer:

Clare Langrick on [membership@nfbr.org.uk](mailto:membership@nfbr.org.uk)

For all other enquiries about NFBR please contact our Chair:

on [chairman@nfbr.org.uk](mailto:chairman@nfbr.org.uk)

Join the discussion on [Facebook](#) and [Bluesky](#).

