



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

KAREN FISHER



Welcome to the 2024 NPMS Winter newsletter!

Is it safe to say the winter's frosts and snow have gone yet? Perhaps not, but they do provide ideal conditions for a brisk walk. During the winter months, I still like to spend as much time outdoors as possible. Not only is it exciting to tread through a hushed landscape bathed in white, but it's also the perfect excuse to retreat to the warmth of the house for a mug of hot chocolate. There comes a point in the early part of the year where I feel a shift, and it isn't a particular date or point in time – it's a moment where I feel that despite the cold and wet, things are stirring and new growth emerging. A new and special 10th anniversary survey season is tapping faintly at the door.

Look out for upcoming training events (p.3). We're getting boots on and out into the field for some in-person events in Northern Ireland. We also have in-field winter tree ID and Summer Fern ID sessions coming up, with more events being added all the time. Last year over 500 of you came along to various on and offline training events, and we're excited to welcome as many of you as possible to our events series in the season ahead.

Within our scheme news section, you can read about the recent update to our Trends page (p.5), which wouldn't have been possible without the data you have gathered from your surveys. Last year, over 1500 squares were allocated to volunteers and thank you for all the important data that you've gathered as a result.

Following on from Valentine's, why not take a look at our new 'Preloved' feature (p.10) where we highlight some of our squares in need of adoption, either to ensure continuation of long-term monitoring, or to simply get them off the starting blocks!

We love catching a glimpse of your in-field forays and have again shared a selection of these within this edition. We hope you enjoy them as much as we have. Please do continue to share with us how you are getting on with your plots and indeed your preparations for the coming season.

Enjoy the newsletter and do keep in touch:

support@npms.org.uk



Tips for identifying trees in winter and early spring: p.4

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Dave Lamacraft, Plantlife

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)
Rachel Murphy (NPMS Volunteer manager)



Indicator species in:



Arable field margins

NPMS fine scale habitat type

Identification:

Small white flowers are arranged in loose clusters at the top of the stems, which rise from a rosette of usually pinnately lobed leaves, at the base of the plant. Though the leaves themselves can vary quite a bit, with arrow-shaped with wavy edges along the stem.

The flowers are very small and scentless, each with four petals and these measuring just 3mm. The flowers are followed by the characteristic green, heart-shaped seed pods, held out on thin stalks.



Sarah Shuttleworth



Sue McBean



Sarah Shuttleworth

The seedpods are arranged alternately up the stem, below the head of flowers. Indeed, the plant becomes more distinctive and easier to ID once the heart-shaped seed pods form.

Where and when?

Shepherd's purse can be at any stage of growth all year-round, so can be found in flower at any time.

This member of the cabbage family is known for producing many seeds. A single plant can produce hundreds to thousands of seeds, which are long-lived in the soil, germinating when the ground is disturbed. As such, it is often considered a weed and is a common plant of waste ground, arable fields, tracks, verges and gardens. This species is very common throughout most of Britain, though less so in north-west Scotland.



It gets its common name from its heart shaped seed pods, which are similar in shape to the little drawstring pouches worn by medieval peasants and shepherds. When broken apart, they spill out small copper-coloured seeds resembling tiny coins.

Fact file:

- Also known as 'Mother's Heart', referring to an ancient game in which a child asks another to pick a seedpod. Upon breaking it, the child is told they have broken their mother's heart.
- Small birds, particularly Chaffinches eat the seeds.
- The leaves have a mild peppery flavour and are used by some in salads and herbal tea.
- It is known for its anti-bleeding properties. During the 1st World War in Germany, extracts were used on wounds, when other products were not available

'And why? this shepherd's purse that grows
In this strange spot, in days gone by
Grew in the little garden rows
Of my old home now left; and I
Feel what I never felt before,
This weed an ancient neighbour here,
And though I own the spot no more
Its every trifle makes it dear.'

- John Clare, "The Flitting"



Support and guidance

2024 offered a variety of training and development opportunities for our volunteers. Including our more recent winter mini-series, more than 500 participants joined 22 events over the year. Planning mode is now in full swing for 2025, with a number of events already available to book on to via our [Training and events webpage](#). There'll be many more going live in the coming weeks. Below shows just a flavour of what is to come. Keep an eye out for more events coming soon near you!



Upcoming training and events...

8 th March 11am-3pm	Identifying trees in winter and spring In-field, North Somerset – With Neill Talbot
Feb- March	Northern Ireland Habitat training (See below) Various dates and locations – With Jen Farrar
24 th April 12:30	Intro to NPMS and survey methods Online webinar – With Rachel Murphy
4 th July 10am-1pm	Fern Foray in the Forest In-field, Wiltshire – Rachel Jones



In-field meets & habitat training in Northern Ireland – With Jen Farrar, BSBI:


- 1. Bog Meadows NNR, Co. Antrim**
01/03/25
 10:30 – 16:00
Habitats: Damp meadows, ponds, wet woodland and base rich grassland

- 2. An Creagán, Omagh, Co. Tyrone**
02/03/25
 10:30 – 16:00
Habitats: Peat bog, plantation forestry and acid grassland


- 3. Belfast Castle, Co. Antrim**
08/03/25
 10:30 – 16:00
Habitats: Woodland, base rich grasslands and limestone quarry

- 4. Binevenagh Nature Reserve, Co. Derry**
09/03/25
 10:30 – 16:00
Habitats: Upland base rich grasslands and basalt outcrops


Frequently asked questions:

 **I didn't manage to survey my allocated square last season. Am I still allocated, and can I still survey it this year?**

That's absolutely fine, we know that plans change, and that life can get busy. There is no problem picking back up on your square this season, if you missed last year's surveys. We'd love to see you back and raring to go! We will be contacting allocated volunteers soon if they have not submitted data for the last two years. This is just to check in and ask if you still plan to survey your square. But we will never release your allocated square without first getting in touch and then informing you by email.

 **I am part of a local community group. Is there a way we can survey together?**

Certainly, a number of our volunteers choose to take on a square as a pair or a group. This can be a great way of learning from others, sharing the task or simply having company out in the field. We also have some local groups that take on a handful of squares to survey each year as a team. In these instances, we advise there is one central leader/coordinator that manages the NPMS account allocated to the square(s), and attends each survey for consistency.



Image credits:
 1 – Paul McIlroy, [The Bog Meadows](#) – [geograph.org.uk - 444399](#), [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)
 2 – *The Creggan Center* by Kenneth Allen, [The Creggan Center](#) – [geograph.org.uk - 3431436](#), [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)
 3 – Z thomas, [Northern Ireland – Belfast Castle, Antrim Road Belfast](#) – [20230525085932](#), [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)
 4 – Simon Huguet, [Binevenagh Nature Reserve](#) – [geograph.org.uk - 1553517](#), [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)



Support and guidance

It can be a bit trickier to head out and get to know the flora within our plots during the winter months. Given the popularity of our webinar: **How to identify native broadleaves in winter** – provided by experienced botanist Neill Talbot from Avellana Ecology, it is a good time to share some of the key features you can look for to help you identify trees in winter and spring.



Twigs: A twig is the current year's growth on a tree. Note the colour and hairiness. Check for leaf and bud scale scars, as well as breathing pores – lenticels. Are there thorns or spines?

Buds: They can be blunt, pointy, shiny, dull, hairy or smooth, as well as different colours.

The tiny leaves, shoots and flowers within buds open in spring, making buds trickier to use for ID as it gets later, and they start to lose their distinctive shape. Their position is also an important clue. Which form are they arranged in? Opposite, Alternate or Spiralled? Are the terminal buds (at the end of the twig) – single, have two buds or clusters of many buds?

Bark: Take note of the colour and texture of the bark. Does it have bumps, scales or ridges? Is it peeling or smooth?

Flowers: We can consider what time of year the tree is flowering. E.g. Blackthorn flowers bloom in late winter, before the leaves come out. Whereas hawthorn blooms appear later on, after the leaves are already out.

Fruit: Varying in shape, appearance and size, these include keys e.g. Ash keys; catkins; nuts e.g. chestnut, drupe e.g. cherry; and pome e.g. rowan and apple. Note the colour and texture of the outer surface. You may open fruit, to inspect the seeds inside for further clues. Do the fruit or seeds appear singly, or in groups or clusters? Is there old fruit around base of the tree? But don't forget – these may have come from a different nearby tree.

General structure/shape: Different species vary in general structures and shapes. E.g. Oak have a rounded, almost domed crown, whereas Alder have a more triangular or conical appearance. Note how the branches are growing. E.g. Birch branches appear to be dropping, whereas Ash branches point upwards.

Habitat: Certain species prefer, or are restricted to particular habitats and soil types. E.g. willow and alder are found in wetter areas; and birch usually in more acidic areas.

Leaves: Even though winter, there may be leaves to observe still on the tree or on the ground below. But be sure these aren't from another tree!



Useful further references:

- ❖ **Winter trees: a photographic guide to common trees and shrubs** – Price & Bersweden 2013 (AIDGAP)
- ❖ **A guide to the identification of deciduous broad-leaved trees and shrubs in winter** – May & Panter 2000 (AIDGAP)
- ❖ **The Field Key to Winter Twigs A Guide to Native and Planted Deciduous Trees, Shrubs and Woody Climbers (Xylophytes) found in the British Isles** – John Poland 2018
- ❖ **Identification of Trees and Shrubs in Winter Using Buds and Twigs** – Bernd Schulz, Monika Shaffer-Fehre, Tony Kirkham 2018 (Kew Publishing)
- ❖ **Woodland Trust Nature Detectives, Winter twigs spotter sheet: [HERE](#)**

Take this fun Woodland Trust winter tree quiz to test your knowledge, from bark and leaf buds to seeds and silhouettes. **QUIZ**



Don't forget... Recordings of all our training webinars and other helpful guidance videos can be found on the [NPMS YouTube channel](#)

Subscribe to our NPMS Support YouTube channel to be alerted to the latest video resources!





SCHEME NEWS

NPMS Website updates

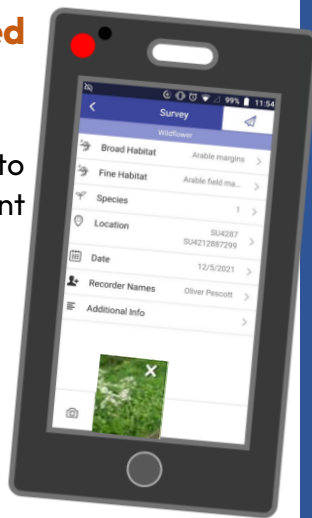
There has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes to improve and maintain the functionality of the NPMS website in the last 6 months. We continually work to provide a smoother user experience and we are also excited to soon launch additional map features and square accessibility detail, such as elevation data, road and rights of way networks, as well as public transport access points. This work is being done in line with efforts to improve survey accessibility and provide volunteers with more information in preparation for their surveys.



What this space for news of these features coming soon!

New NPMS/PP App launched

Thanks to funding from the Defra Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment program, we pleased to announce the launch of the new joint NPMS and Plant Portal App for in-field data entry. This comes in plenty of time ahead of the new survey season. The same app can be used to submit data by both NPMS volunteers and also others submitting to the Plant portal.



If you haven't downloaded it yet, but think you'd like to use it this season, why not install it in advance of the season and familiarise yourself. Available for both Apple and Android devices

We would like to thank colleagues and volunteers involved in field testing the App, before it went live. This "Road test proved to be extremely useful and their great feedback has helped us to update the app for the optimum user experience.



NPMS/PP

UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology

500+ Downloads

PEGI 3

NPMS Indicator species trends updated!

We are pleased to announce that we have just updated the species-by-habitat trends presented on our [Indicator species trends](#) page. Each trend now includes data collected by NPMS volunteers in 2023 (the analysis of 2024 data is just beginning now).

Heathland

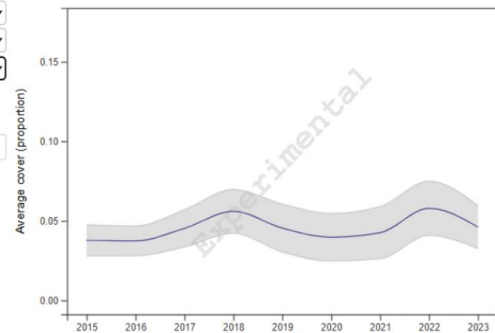
Positive indicators

Cuscuta epithymum

Zoom in Zoom out

Scientific Common Both

Download PNG SVG



Pictured: Cuscuta epithymum (L.) L. (credit: Rob Still / Chris Gibson)

The NPMS team is also working towards the publication of the modelled numbers underlying the species-by-habitat trends this year, and these will be published on the Environmental Information Data Centre alongside [NPMS field data](#).

Nature for all

The NPMS and organising partners are active members of the UK Terrestrial Evidence Partnership of Partnerships (UKTEPoP). This is a collaborative initiative, set up to strengthen and unify the efforts of organisations dedicated to collecting evidence on terrestrial biodiversity with the help of volunteer citizen scientists, across the UK.

This winter UKTEPoP partners published a joint statement – *Nature for all: diversity makes us stronger* – that pledges their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in species monitoring schemes in the UK.

You can find out how together we're building inclusive #biodiversity monitoring schemes that reflect our society and strengthen our conservation efforts: [HERE](#)

Plot Portrait



My NPMS Volunteer journey: Cordelia Newsome

I first read about the National Plant Monitoring Scheme back in 2020 and immediately wanted to get involved but it wasn't until 2023, after taking early retirement, that I felt able to choose a square and get started. I opted for a hill I had seen between Ingleton and Kirkby Lonsdale, while on one of my regular visits to a dear friend who lives in Kirkby. I guessed that the hill might be a limestone escarpment full of lime-loving flora; I guessed wrongly! The grey rocks I had seen in the distance turned out to be gritstone and the habitat a rather species poor blanket bog.



Images: Cordelia Newsome

At first, I felt a bit disappointed but once I got started on my plots, I began to really enjoy the task and appreciate the habitat. It was fun noticing the subtle differences between each plot and finding such variety of moss species tucked away beneath the grasses. I also love Cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*), and it was great to find this in several of my plots, although never in flower when I was surveying.



It is also interesting to see the difference the weather can make to the site. In June 2023 we had had a heatwave and my two linear plots (that are flush lines) were totally dried up and the vegetation looked parch and pale. However, in June this year water was flowing through them, and everything looked lush and bright green.



Plot 5, Dry – June 2023



Plot 5, Wet – June 2024



Plot Portrait

Volunteer Cordelia Newsome Cont.

The site was at its most lovely then with the beautiful heads of Hare's Tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) fluttering in the breeze. I had gone up the hill early while the day was still cool; it was totally peaceful, and I was able to savour the sounds of the larks singing overhead and the distant bubbling call of the curlew.



Hare's Tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*): C Newsome

I have felt hugely supported in getting started with NPMS. Rachel was very patient with me bombarding her with questions in my first year, and I found the on-line training sessions I attended really useful, especially one on fern identification. I found the on-line resources about identifying habitats particularly fascinating as for many years I have been very interested in the British National Vegetation Classification system .



Plot image: C Newsome



Luzula multiflora: C Newsome

I have only done two seasons with NPMS so far, but I imagine that the longer I monitor my square, the more differences in vegetation will become apparent. This is where the true value of the project will kick-in in revealing what effects land management and climate change are having on plant communities and species.



Carex nigra: C Newsome



Empetrum nigrum: C Newsome

One of the reasons I retired early was so I could get involved in campaigning around the two appalling crises that are facing us – climate change and biodiversity loss. This summer I attended the Restore Nature Now march called by Chris Packham. It was heart-warming to see so many people there and from such a huge variety of organisations; members of the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts next to Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion activists. When I saw a giant Fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*), Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) and Rock Rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*) marching towards Westminster, I knew it must be members of Plantlife! Suddenly the Drooping Saxifrage (*Saxifraga cernua*) that I had tried to make looked a bit inadequate, but I was proud to march with them for part of the route and to stand with that wonderful charity in this, the great battle of our time.





Botany through art

This winter, we held an enjoyable evening learning about nature journaling from artist Alex Boon. Not only a useful practice to get know our NPMS squares, participants were inspired and encouraged to step out and creatively record their experience with nature. Feeling enthused myself (and a perhaps a touch overconfident), I set myself a challenge this year to maintain a perpetual nature journal. I am thus far enjoying setting regular time aside to slow down and immerse myself in the details of my surrounds.

Though I am well aware that I am no artist, I feel content to enjoy the process and hopefully with time and practice, I will improve.

It has become increasingly evident through these creative sessions that many of our volunteers explore and express their relationship with nature through art. Below are some examples of what a truly talented and creative bunch our NPMS volunteers and supporters are.

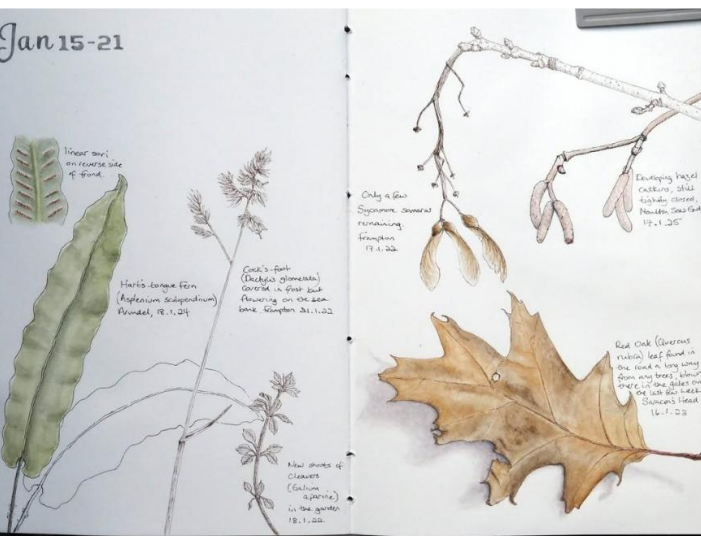


▼ Lisa Mason

Inspired by the natural world, Lisa describes herself as an enthusiastic amateur botanist, lover of wildlife and wild places. She is learning to draw and paint, mainly plants and occasionally birds, and thoroughly enjoying keeping a perpetual nature journal.

Lisa shares this journey and her beautiful artwork on her social media and also through her blog:

[Glimpses of Nature](#)



▼ Julie May Wheeler

Julie is an artist working largely in water-based media. She is currently building up a series of examples of local street pavement plants, with a view to create a poster with their names and accompanying information.

"What I would like is for folk to become more observant/ appreciative, and less likely to get annoyed by seeing them and wanting to have them just removed as weeds!"



You can view more of Julie's beautiful and varied work on her blog here:

[Julie May Art.](#)

◀ Zoë Pearl

An embroidery artist and illustrator based in rural Southwest Scotland, Zoë mainly works with a combination watercolours and hand embroidery to share her love for her local flora and fauna. This dreamy meadow piece drew us in from the first glance. You can get lost in Zoë's stunning and tactile work here: [Zoe Pearl Art](#) or by following @zoepearlart





Botany through art

Continued...

Sarah Shuttleworth, Plantlife

► Julie May Wheeler

A piece in progress. An artist based in Scotland, Carol usually paints her subjects using watercolours. We also enjoyed hearing about Carol's attempts and testing out lino cutting for the first time. ▼

A lovely reminder to try new things and methods. And how well they came out for a try!



Botany book club

Recommendations

During our nature journaling workshop with artist Alex Boon, discussion turned to books on this subject. Both Alex and participants have suggested a number of fascinating and inspiring books worth sharing.

The Peverel Papers - Flora Thompson

A collection of nature notes written in the 1920s while Thompson lived in Hampshire. The 2008 edition includes an excerpt from Thompson's own nature journal.

The Nature Diary of an Artist - Jennie Hale

Exploring the English countryside throughout the year through the sketchbooks of artist Jennie Hale. A diary of watercolours and handwritten notes on the seasons and landscapes around her.

The Military Orchid - Jocelyn Brooke

A blend of memoir, botany, artwork and satire, as Brooke recounts his lifelong quest for the elusive *Orchis militaris*.

Island: A Year On Easedale - Garthe and Vicky Waite

Combining their knowledge of the natural world and creative talents, this book offers an illustrated account of this newly married couple's first year on this tiny Scottish island.

The Shepherds Calendar and The Wood is Sweet: Two books of John Clare's poetry describing early 19th century rural life and the natural world, illustrated by the evocative linocuts of painter and printmaker Carry Akroyd.



Check it out!

Further nature journaling artists recommended by journaling trainer and artist Alex Boon, to follow and explore their work:

Angela Hennessy:

A nature journaling artist based in Yorkshire. Angela specialises in watercolour, though has a varied portfolio work, often with an educational/conservation message and focus on connecting with nature. www.angelahennessy.co.uk [@raspberryytheif](https://www.instagram.com/raspberryytheif)

Lara Call Gastinger:

Botanical artist and illustrator in Central Virginia. Lara focuses on the small details in nature and is well renowned for teaching how to create and maintain a perpetual nature journal.

www.laracallgastinger.com [@laragastinger](https://www.instagram.com/@laragastinger)

Watercolour artist and former Plantlife artist in residence **Iris Hill**, has generously offered NPMS volunteers a £5 discount for her upcoming online [Spring Equinox Watercolour Wellbeing workshop](#) - Wednesday 19th March.

Contact support@npms.org.uk for more info.



Have you read a natural history or botanical book, that you think fellow NPMS volunteers maybe be interested to hear about?

Consider contributing a book review for our next issue! Contact support@npms.org.uk



GET INVOLVED

Submit your data:

If you have not done so already, please submit your 2024 season data as soon as possible, to be included in the over winter analyses taking place now.

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

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



Volunteer stories

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



Additional volunteering opportunities

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

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

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

Contact support@npms.org.uk for further details

NPMS Local support

- **Are you a member of a local recording or interest group?**
- **Or would you like to support more local meets in your area?**



Please get in touch if your local group are interested in getting involved with the scheme, or if you would like to support a meet near you. This could include a local walk, square visit or shadowing.

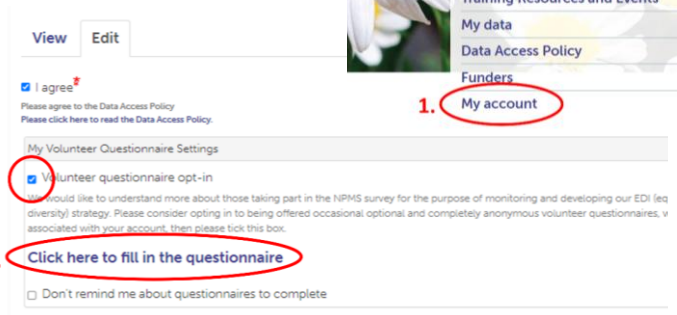
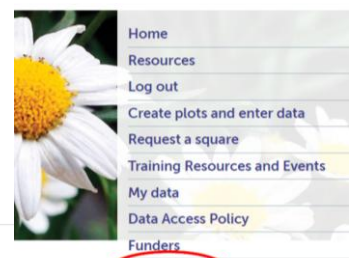
Equality, Inclusivity and Diversity matters

We would like to encourage as many people as possible to get involved with monitoring plants and habitats with the NPMS. If you are happy to but have not already done so, we would be very grateful if existing volunteers could please 'opt-in' to and complete our brief EDI questionnaire.

This is of course entirely optional, but helps us to understand more about those taking part and work towards engaging more diverse audiences and improving scheme accessibility for all.

This takes just 2 minutes via your My Account/Edit page on the NPMS website, and you can complete the questionnaire straight away following the link.

Thank-you!



New season recording forms:

New recording forms for 2025 can be downloaded from the **resources page** of the NPMS website. If you are unable to print these, we will be sending them out to those who request them during the last week of March.

If you do need us to send new recording forms for the upcoming season, simply head to your account, select the edit tab and tick the box to Indicate you would like to Request survey forms, by 26th March.





Follow us



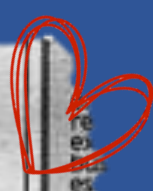
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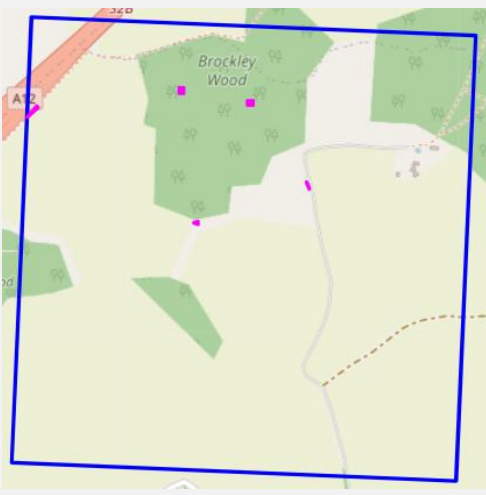


GET INVOLVED



TM1139

- Near Babergh, Suffolk
- Within East Suffolk Vice County area
- 5 Existing plots
- Previously surveyed from 2015 – 2021
- 60 surveys completed
- 111 taxa recorded in that time



Are you in Suffolk and able to adopt this ready made square? Landowner information is already available from the previous dedicated volunteer, along with additional useful advice. For summary square details and additional photos, visit [Here](#).

LONELY HEARTS AND PRELOVED SQUARES

Available: NPMS 1km squares seeking survey volunteers who are passionate about the environment and committed to monitoring our landscapes. Suitable for existing volunteers, newcomers to NPMS and local interest groups, looking to take on a shared challenge. Your perfect match awaits!

SO0121

- In the heart of the Brecon Beacons, South Wales
- Never-before surveyed NPMS square in the Welsh uplands
- Be the first to locate plots and conduct NPMS botanical surveys at this site.
- Within the beautiful Brecon Beacons AONB and SSSI
- This square is also 100% within the National Trust estate, with the benefit of having support from the Trust team in the area.



A remote site encompassing Pen-Y-Fan, the highest peak in South Wales, this square needs a volunteer that is confident in the hills.



TR2839

- Hougham, near Dover
- Within the Kent Downs AONB
- Neighbouring Folkestone Warren SSSI and not far from the famous white cliffs!
- 5 Existing plots
- Previously surveyed from 2015 – 2019
- 51 surveys completed
- 72 taxa recorded in that time





GET INVOLVED

Further opportunities cont...

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

Learn more about our wonderful wildflowers With the BSBI!



If you've enjoyed the amazing NPMS online [training resources](#) and [webinars](#) and you're hungry for more, check out these options from the BSBI:

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

[Bookings are now open](#) for the 2025 BSBI [Annual Summer Meeting](#), which is based in Scotland this year.



SPECIES on the EDGE

Species on the Edge is an ambitious partnership of eight nature conservation organisations in Scotland, with 18 project officers based across seven [project](#)

[areas](#). They are all working together to secure a future for Scotland's rare and vulnerable coastal wildlife. Whether you're in or visiting Scotland, there are many ways to get involved, including joining any of the varied [engagement and training events](#).



Plantlife

Plantlife Volunteer opportunity

Plantlife are working on developing a new AI tool that will be trained to identify plant species within a patch of lawn. This will contribute to an exciting new citizen science project that will enable people without botanical knowledge to get involved in nature research and conservation.

To help train this new system, we are looking for a team of home based volunteers, with good botanical knowledge and confidence using computers.

What is involved?

- Taking several photos of plant species in your lawn or similarly managed local green space.
- Using your botanical knowledge to identify the species in your photos.
- Labelling your plant photos using annotation software. Training provided.

See [Volunteer - Plantlife](#) Closing date - 9th March



Follow the Botanical University Challenge.

This fun and friendly annual contest of botanical knowledge between teams of UK and Irish university students has been growing in recent years and is currently underway!

BUC 2025 kicked off this month with the quarter finals now complete and the semi finalists lined up. The live semifinal and final will be at University of Cambridge on 20 August 2025. All the contests will be streamed live on the BUC [YouTube channel](#).

The finals will be followed by the *Third Student Botany Festival* will follow the final, open to all BUC2025 contestants.

It will be on 21 – 22 August 2025. It will involve 2 days of networking, talks, career sessions, workshops and visits.



Find out more about these events and their sponsors [HERE](#). Or follow [@botanicalunichallenge](#) on Instagram.



Field Diaries: Your pics

Some great images that have been shared with us through 2024. We love to receive your photos from out in the field, whether to help with a query, ID, or simply to share your plot set up, a fun find, or moment of reflection.

Andrew Upton, NPMS surveyor

We saw some lovely examples of species images to aid in identification through the 2024 field season. The below images of Sea couch grass *Elymus atherica*, were provided by Andrew from his grassland plot near Morecambe Bay. Tricky to confirm from the initial photograph to the far left, but complimented by the following images of the sharply pointed and inrolled leaves and flower spikes.



▼ Below, Andrew has also captured the characteristic leaf shape of the aptly named Spear-leaved orache *Atriplex prostrata*.



Alison Minns, NPMS surveyor

Below we see an example of using a plain background behind the subject to improve focus, allowing a clearer image of this Crested dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, that is passed its best. Alison also got low to the ground to capture this beautiful image of the tiny Common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, including the characteristic white hairs over the dark green leaves.



Ian Thompson, NPMS surveyor

Ian shares a glimpse of his coastal square in Hampshire, with this scenic plot shot. Annual plot images are a useful way to illustrate changes over time. Ian has also provided this great example of Greater sea-spurrey *Spergularia media*, including a ruler for scale. Here we can clearly view and count features, including the sepals, petals and stamen.





Field Diaries: Your pics

Continued...

Stephen Grimshaw, NPMS surveyor

Here Stephen has shared images of Hound's-tongue *Cynoglossum officinale*, first observed in flower on his woodland plot in late spring (below), with deep maroon flower clusters. Then captured again during his late summer survey (right), including its characteristic developing fruit (bottom right).



Ava Marley, NPMS surveyor and photography volunteer

Following our piece on winter tree ID features (p.4), we simply had to share Ava's stunning image of Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and the vibrant colours of the pink and orange fruit.



Nathalie Esselin, NPMS data entry and photography volunteer

We are familiar with the sight of the large, sunshine-yellow flowers of the Yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*, but it is just as fascinating to observe the large, three-sided and shiny seed pods. Nathalie has captured this beautiful image of a pod that has started to brown as it has matured and split open in autumn, revealing a glimpse of the glossy D-shaped seeds within.



THANK YOU!

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

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

Thank you to all the contributors to this newsletter.

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

07399 299770 or 07711 922098



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

