

Plantlife press release
For immediate release – 6 July 2023

Plant Watchers Wanted

Conservation charity Plantlife is calling for volunteers to join a citizen science project that monitors the effect of pressures facing the countryside on wild plants.

Wild plants are the foundation of our habitats and ecosystems and underpin all life on earth. The National Plant Monitoring Scheme (NPMS), launched in 2015, is unique and the biggest continuous plant monitoring scheme of its kind. In total, over 1000 volunteers have completed nearly 7000 plant surveys across different habitats in the UK, amassing over 200,000 individual records in that time. The data collected from the survey describes the abundance and diversity of plants and helps scientists to understand the health of different habitats.

The [latest NPMS Annual Report](#) cites 18,063 individual records in 2022, collected from 633 surveys representing 11 habitat types around the UK.

The survey was designed and developed by [Plantlife](#), the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland ([BSBI](#)), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee ([JNCC](#)) and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology ([UKCEH](#)).

Anyone interested in nature who can identify plants, or who is keen to learn, can take part. Last year, hundreds of people participated in the training, mentoring and other learning sessions available. Survey participants are invited to select a survey square of semi-natural habitat near them and record specially selected, distinctive species that allow researchers to monitor changes in habitat health. Within the scheme, there are now over 1,000 1 km squares that have been surveyed at least once.

Dr. Oliver Pescott, Data Analyst and Plant Ecologist, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology said:

“We know that wild plants are suffering from numerous threats posed by habitat loss, changes in land management and climate change. This unique, growing and impressive dataset is starting to allow us to investigate these impacts.”

“The NPMS is part of an important jigsaw of wildlife surveys. Together, a broad coalition of wildlife conservation organisations is improving its knowledge of the wildlife and habitats around us, the challenges that confront them and what we can do to safeguard and restore our vitally important wild plant heritage.”

Dr. Rachel Murphy, Volunteer Manager, NPMS, said:

“Long-term monitoring using a consistent methodology is incredibly important for enabling us to understand the health of our habitats and the drivers and processes impacting our landscapes. We are keen to encourage more volunteers to take part in the survey, especially in more remote regions including the Scottish Highlands and Islands, Northern Ireland and the east coast of England.”

Further information about the scheme can be found here: www.npms.org.uk

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Editor's notes:

- LINK to the report <https://www.npms.org.uk/article/npms-annual-report-2022-now-released>
- LINK to dropbox of free images to use with credit <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/tp71xs8l1fg2w6n/AADONw2ZL9u2lhKCUaR2bytVa?dl=0>
- For more information or to arrange interviews please contact Caitlin.Thomas@plantlife.org.uk