

JANUARY 2026 BULLETIN

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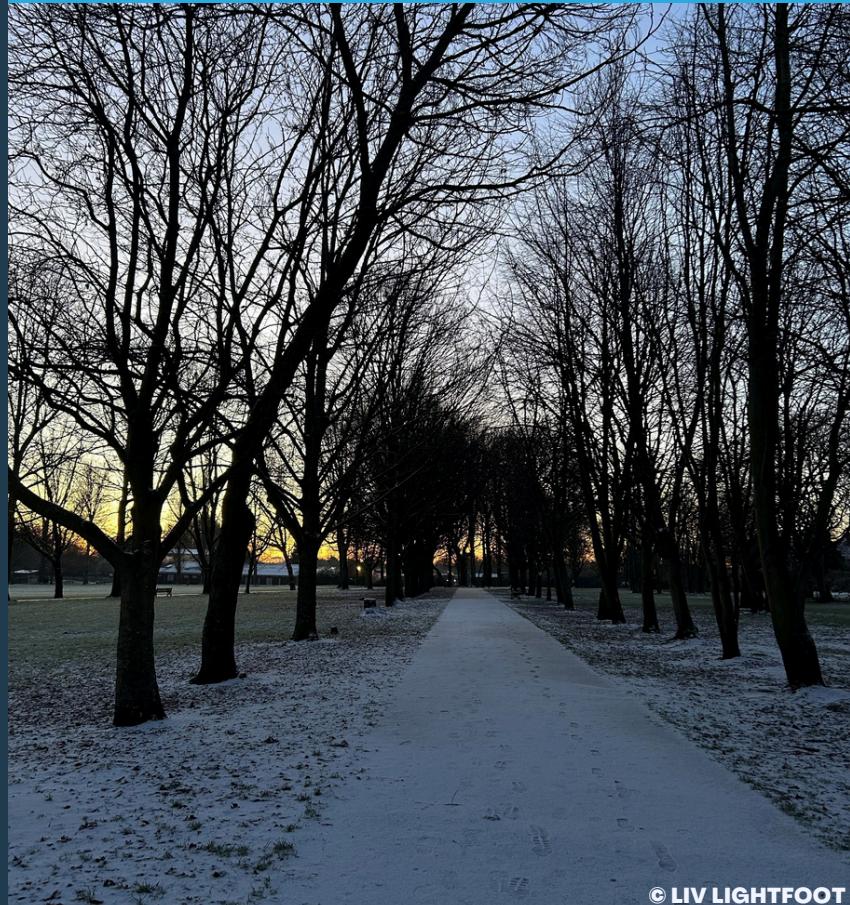
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WELCOME TO OUR JANUARY BULLETIN!

As we've all been sheltering from the rain or dodging icy puddles, the BioBank team have been hard at work getting ready for the season ahead. With lots of new volunteers and interns joining, major city-wide projects starting and a full timetable of events being booked in, 2026 is going to be an exciting year.

Nature itself seems to be raring to go this spring, with our early-flowering plants already budding and the days warming up fast for the invertebrates to start getting active. It will soon be time to dust off our handlenses, field guide and muddy boots and get recording!

1.1 City Nature Challenge

01

Article by Elina-Marielle Doss

Merseyside BioBank has proudly been leading the Liverpool City Region's involvement (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Halton and Wirral) in the City Nature Challenge since 2019, helping to mobilise communities, make thousands of wildlife observations, and raise awareness of our region's rich biodiversity during this 4-day BioBlitz. Whether you're a seasoned recorder, a community organiser, or simply curious about urban nature, we'd love for you to join us and help shape our local response to this global challenge.

LCR CNC Preparation Event 2026

Last year in November, we ran an online tutorial about the City Nature Challenge and iNaturalist. For those who have missed the event, we have now uploaded the recording.

[Recording](#)

iNaturalist LCR CNC Project

As mentioned during the session, we have set up a project on iNaturalist for the Liverpool City Region, which you might like to join to keep up with what's been recorded.

[Project](#)

LCR CNC Preparation Event 2026

If you have any events planned that you would like us to share or if you want to attend any events in the LCR, please check in to our Project Journal on a regular basis.

[Project Journal](#)

LCR CNC Preparation Event 2026

If you have any question regarding the CNC, we have created a page for FAQs. If your question isn't provided in the FAQs, feel free to add your question/s to the page.

[FAQs](#)

We're currently in the process of organising events so there aren't any events published yet. But once we have organised events and receive information about events organised by our partners, we will share them in the Project Journal for each Local Authority Area (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Halton and Wirral).

We look forward to working together to celebrate and document the wildlife in the Liverpool City Region.



Our internship and placement season has officially started. This year, we are excited to host two interns from the University of Chester from their 'Inspiring Future's' programme supporting students identified through the University's Access and Participation plan providing targeted support, resources, and opportunities to help them develop their skills and progress confidently in their career journey.

Georgia Philips



I am currently in my second year of an undergraduate BSc Zoology degree at the University of Chester, and I am excited to begin working on the various projects undertaken by Merseyside BioBank. In particular, I am looking forward to contributing to the brown hare project, which surveys brown hare presence and abundance at several sites in the Merseyside area, and will provide me with valuable skills and experience for my future studies and career path, such as conducting field-based studies, collecting transect data and identifying and monitoring species. Comparing the results with those found in previous years will be interesting to see how the work carried out as part of the Farmland Project, which was completed in March 2025, has impacted hare populations, and to note any outstanding patterns which may occur in the data. The skills which I hope to gain and develop from my internship include data collection and harvesting, GIS mapping, writing reports of findings, and project planning – which will all be

useful as I begin to think about my dissertation for next year. The work that the team does is invaluable both to the local environment and community, and the larger network of British ecosystems as a whole, and I am eager to take part in it and provide a meaningful contribution to British wildlife.

Emily Luby



Hello, I'm Emily! I am a first year Zoology student at the University of Chester and one of the new interns here at Merseyside Biobank. I am currently a scout leader, at my local group, and have gone through all the sections as a child, which has inspired my passion and interest for the outdoors and wildlife. My main species of interest would be anything UK wildlife, however bats and red squirrels would have to be my chosen favourite! Through this internship as an Ecological data and Fieldwork intern, I am looking forward to applying skills I have learned at university into real life practices that can help make a positive change to the local wildlife, as well as developing further knowledge and skill in data handling and using new systems such as GIS.

1.3 BIOBANK BOUNTY

EVEN WHILE DODGING BETWEEN THE RAINDROPS AND ICY PUDDLES, THE BIOBANK TEAM HAS SPOTTED A RANGE LIFE HERE AT COUT HEY PARK. THIS MONTHS HIHGLIGHT INCLUDE:



GREATER PERIWINKLE
VINCA MAJOR



SNOW DROP
GALANTHUS NIVALIS



WINTER ACONITE
ERANTHIS HYEMALIS



GOLD FINCH
CARDUELIS CARDUELIS



TURKEY TAIL
TRAMETES VERSICOLOR



GOLD CREST
REGULUS REGULUS

AS ALWAYS, IF YOU DO SPOT ANY OF THESE SPECIES PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU SUBMIT YOUR RECORDS TO US HERE AT MERSEYSIDE BIOBANK, SO WE CAN INCLUDE THEM IN OUR DATABASE!

Article by David Hopkins

Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*)

A classic early sign of spring, snowdrops are gaining attention for their first sightings, which serve as vital indicators of climate change-related seasonal shifts.

Identification Tips: Look for single, nodding white flowers with green markings on the inner petals. Leaves are narrow, grey-green, and grass-like.

Habitat: Often found in churchyards, woodlands, gardens, and roadside banks.



© RUEBEZAHL, INAT

Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*)

Though less celebrated, lesser celandine offers an equally cheerful start to the year, sometimes blooming as early as January.

Identification Tips: Glossy, bright yellow star-like flowers. Shiny petals and fleshy, dark green, heart-shaped leaves.

Habitat: Prefers damp, shady areas such as woodlands, hedgerows, stream banks, and ditches.



© STEVE MCWILLIAM, INAT

Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)

One of the first shrubs to bloom, blackthorn's white flowers are a striking early countryside feature. Flowers appear before the leaves, helping to distinguish it from similar species such as hawthorn (which flowers much later). Its long, sharp thorns are notorious for the painful wound they cause.

Identification Tips: Dense, dark twigs with spines. Small white flowers with five petals.

Habitat: Commonly found in hedgerows and scrub.



© SUSAN MARLEY, INAT

Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*)

A large and familiar bumblebee, the buff-tailed bumblebee queens are often the first conspicuous insects seen in early spring. Like snowdrops, they have been emerging earlier in recent years, making records at this time of year particularly valuable for understanding spring temperatures and climate trends.

Identification Tips: Broad black body with a pale yellow band near the head and another on the abdomen. Buff-coloured tail. Note**: Queens are much larger than workers.



© STEVE MCWILLIAM, INAT

Article by Paul Round



Observations: 1,336

Species: 427

This month's records from iNaturalist across North Merseyside have seen a slight increase on December's stats which had a total of 1,181 observations of 413 species.

This month's observations saw plants leading the way, closely followed by birds and then fungi.

Thanks again for all that have helped to record wildlife in North Merseyside and uploaded your records to iNaturalist. Take a look below at the most recorded species of each taxa.

Plants were our most recorded taxa in the area this month as more species are gradually starting to come through. Common Ivy lead the way with 24 observations.

The usual suspects in the avian world came out on top again and Tufted Duck made it into the top five this month.



1

PLANTS

Common Ivy
Hedera helix

24
Records

2 **Smooth Sow-Thistle**
Sonchus oleraceus

18

3 **Cleavers**
Galium aparine

17

4 **Wood Avens**
Geum urbanum

15

5 **Common Nettle**
Urtica dioica

14



1

BIRDS

Carrion Crow
Corvus corone

27
Records

2 **Great Cormorant**
Phalacrocorax carbo

17

3 **Common Wood Pigeon**
Columba palumbus

15

4 **European Robin**
Erithacus rubecula

13

5 **Tufted Duck**
Aythya fuligula

13

Article by Paul Round

This time of year is far from optimal for insects but species have still been recorded. With signs of Gall Wasps leading the way.

Red Fox was our most recorded mammal, with a notable mention of two of our cetaceans, i.e. Common Porpoise and Common Dolphin. We had no records of either amphibians, reptiles or fish, but are hopeful too see some sightings of Common Frog as they can start to lay eggs as early as February



This month saw another strong number of records for fungi with the lichens leading the way.

It was a mixed bag of records for arachnids this month, ranging from mites to harvestmen. There were limited molluscs and protozoans recorded this month.



Article by Dr. Phil Smith

December was relatively mild with very few frosty mornings in Formby. Rachael Parks measured 110 mm of rainfall in her garden, close to average for the month. The Met Office monthly summary agrees with these findings, our region having about average rainfall and being warmer and sunnier than normal. Overall, 2025 was a year of weather extremes for Britain, with the sunniest spring and warmest summer on record, beating even 1976.

One of December's highlights, an immature male Smew, spent most of the month on Southport Marine Lake. This duck breeds in the vast boreal conifer forests, from Scandinavia to Siberia. I caught up with it on two occasions, the second when it was unnecessarily disturbed by a photographer. When I was a student in London in the early 1960s, I used to travel to the Welsh Harp to see impressive flocks of wintering Smew. This reservoir boasted a record count of 144 in 1956. However, due to milder winters in Europe, in recent years the duck has become increasingly scarce and is now Red-listed in Britain. Southport Marine Lake also had a female Goosander, two Red-breasted Mergansers, up to four Great Crested Grebes, six Little Grebes and several Goldeneye; quite a duck/grebe-fest!

Insects are hard to find in mid-winter but a short trip to Wicks Lake at Formby Point on 10th was rewarded with a colourful Orange Ladybird and a hulking Giant Willow Aphid, visually competing with a backdrop of freshly fallen, bright-yellow Aspen leaves. As usual, Pete Kinsella did rather better, photographing several species of hoverflies and Green Shieldbugs on flowering Ivy at Crosby Coastal Park, a reflection of the mild weather...



© PHIL SMITH
Great Crested Grebe Southport
Marine Lake 8/12/25



© PHIL SMITH
Halyzia sedecimguttata Orange
Ladybird Wicks Lake 10/12/25



© PHIL SMITH
English Longhorn Birkdale LNR
24/12/25

To continue reading, please follow this [link](#)

2.1 Local Finds & Regional Finds

08

Article by Paul Round

Local Finds

1



© RAOUL GEREND

2



© PAUL SEAMAN

3



© GLACIER WALKER

4



© PIERRE GALVEZ

5



© D

6



© STEPHEN HARRIS

Local finds in the region this month have been avian-heavy with Smew *Mergus albellus* (1), Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* (2) and Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* (3) being particularly good records. A White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (4) has also been observed but later was confirmed as an escapee from South Lakes Safari Zoo. Twite *Linaria flavirostris* (5) and Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* (6) although not particularly rare were nice sightings locally. Local botany expert Steve Cross also recorded Annual Mercury *Mercurialis annua*, see separate article below.

Regional Finds

1



© GRAEME BAXTER

2



© CW&CC

3



© EGIDIO

4



© PSWACINA

5



© PRZEMEK CHMIELEWSKI

6



© TEASLET

This month saw some superb close-up sightings from the visitor centre at RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands of a Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra* (1), who has become a regular throughout the month. Another brilliant find was a species of fungi Wrinkled Peach *Rhodotus palmatus* (2) which was found in Cheshire by the Friends of Lees Lane Ponds which is a rare and endangered fungus. Other finds in the region included Ringed-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (3), Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* (4), Caspian Gull (1st and 3rd winter) *Larus cachinnans* (5), and Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* (6).

Article by Steven Cross

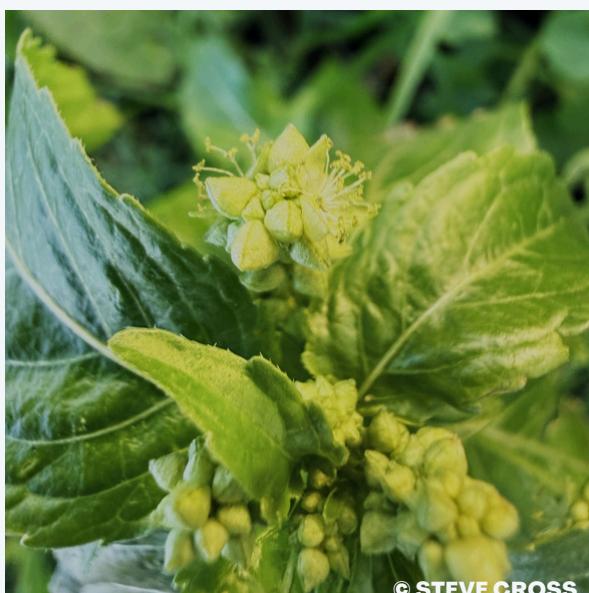
The start of the new year brought an unexpected botanical highlight: a fresh record of Annual Mercury *Mercurialis annua*, discovered on a roadside verge in Sefton. A single male plant was found in early January, growing at the base of a wall beside a recently disturbed section of pavement. This species had not been recorded locally for more than two decades, making its reappearance particularly intriguing. Its sudden return appears to be linked to recent utility works, where soil disturbance has provided just the right conditions for germination. Given that similar works preceded both recent finds, it seems likely the seed arrived on machinery rather than emerging from long-buried local seedbanks.

The story began in late November with a remarkable find at Ainsdale, where seven plants, including three males in flower, were recorded on grassland verges. This represented the first vice-county record since 2004, by the Liverpool Botanical Society, with only fourteen records in total between 1902 and 2004. The Ainsdale plants emerged on ground freshly disturbed by services work, and the site had not produced the species since the 1940s. The find generated lively discussion on local botany forums, highlighting the rarity of *M. annua* in our area and the role of urban disturbance in enabling uncommon annuals to appear. Further information on this species in Lancashire is in the Flora of South Lancashire Vascular Plants at <https://northwesternnaturalistsunion.org.uk/.../VC59-069...>

Native to the Middle East and Mediterranean, Annual Mercury typically favours bare, sandy or nutrient-rich disturbed soils. In Britain it is best known as a weed of allotments, gardens, rubbish tips, roadsides, and cultivated land, with its main stronghold in the south-east of England. Records elsewhere are sparse, and it remains only an occasional visitor in northern regions.

– *Mercurialis annua* L. in BSBI Online Plant Atlas 2020 <https://plantatlas2020.org/atlas/2cd4p9h.vnd>

The species-rich grassland verges of Kenilworth Road are discussed in *Floral diversity of road verges at Ainsdale, Merseyside* by P.H. Smith & P.A. Lockwood in BSBI News 119, pages 34-36 <https://archive.bsbi.org/BSBINews119.pdf>



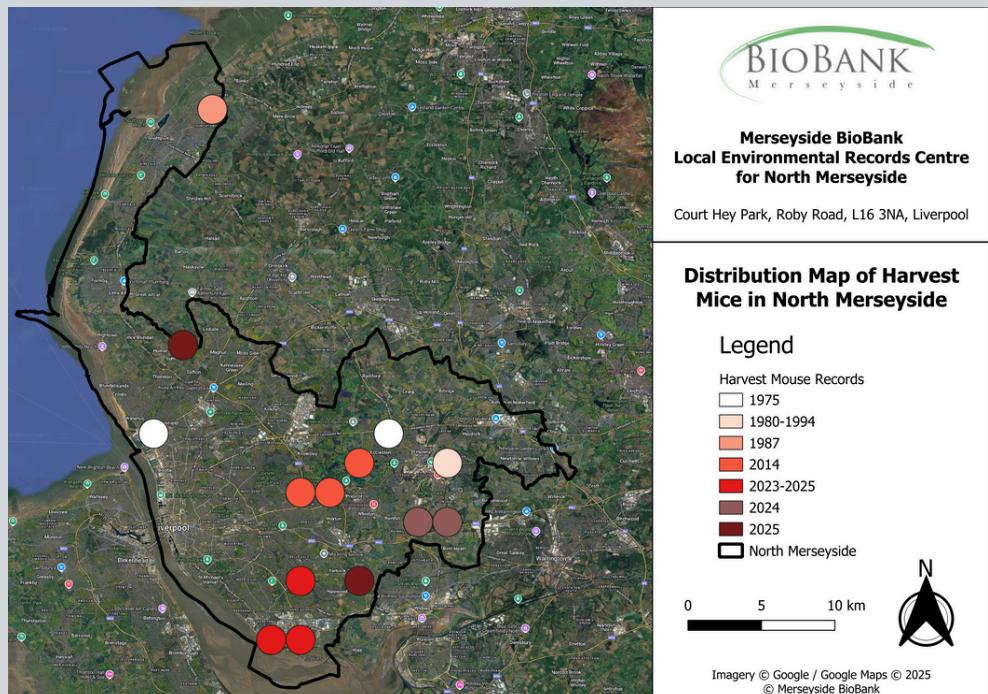
3.1 Harvest Mouse Surveys 2026

10

Article by Elina-Marielle Doss and David Hopkins

Since 2023, Merseyside BioBank has been helping out the Mammal Society with their [National Harvest Mouse Survey](#).

We noticed that there were very few records in North Merseyside, and the few we did hold were very old. Since then, through the survey events we held, we've successfully found evidence of harvest mice at nearly every site we've visited and have significantly increased the number of local records, suggesting a healthy population in the area.



Our Harvest Mouse Surveys are continuing this year. Survey season finishes in March, and we have two more surveys you can get involved with. See more information below and book your place if you are interested in joining us. During these events, in addition to mouse nests, we record many other signs of voles, foxes, deer, and moles so it's a great way to pick up additional experience.

Speke Coastal Reserve | 11th Feb | 10am - 3pm



© CATH LINDEN

In October 2023, we hosted our very first harvest mouse survey at the Speke Garston Coastal Reserve. We were joined by Vice Chair, Derek Crawley, who showed us the ropes and of course it was him who found the first nest. We are venturing out again this February as we were only able to survey a small section in 2023.

[Tickets](#)

Rimrose Valley Country Park | 20th Feb | 10am - 3pm

This is the first time we are visiting Rimrose Valley. Whilst there is never any guarantee whether we will be finding any signs of our teeny weeny mammal friends, the habitats present at Rimrose make us quite hopeful: Long, tussocky grass as well as red beds.

[Tickets](#)



© JO DOOLIN

3.2 Twilight Sessions

Article by Liv Lightfoot



11

Our Twilight Sessions are back for 2026!

We are again looking forward to providing new sessions in 2026, with more talks lead by our team and outside experts. We will continue to cater to nature enthusiasts, whether you are a beginner or seasoned recorder, please join us to learn something new.

Why attend?

- Connect with Nature
- Gain new skills and knowledge
- Contribute to conservation
- Join a community of like-minded people

How can you join?

Spaces for these workshops are limited, so be sure to register early to secure your spot! All sessions are expected to run between 18:30-20:30 on the first Tuesday evening of the month. There is no twilight session in January.

2026 Programme*:

FEB
3

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Owl Pellets

**Book
your
tickets**

JUL
7

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Ferns

MAR
3

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Bees

AUG
4

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Hoverflies

APR
7

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Seabirds or Waders

SEP
1

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Spiders

MAY
5

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Common caterpillars and foodplants

OCT
6

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Fungi/Waxcap Grasslands Project

JUN
2

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Longhorn beetles

NOV
3

Tuesday, 18:30-20:30
Winter species

*times and dates subject to change. Keep an eye on our social media for up to date information.

Tickets are available on [Eventbrite](#), and will be advertised through our monthly bulletin and on social media.

Sign up to our monthly bulletin [here](#)

3.3 Upcoming Events

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Lancashire Wildlife Recorders' Conference

Lancashire Wildlife Recorders' Conference

£5

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday 7th March 2026 - 10am to 5pm - Blackburn College

Join us for a full day celebrating wildlife recording in Lancashire. Hear from local experts and recording groups, discover the latest conservation news, and enjoy a variety of talks, workshops, and displays covering birds, plants, mammals, insects, and more.

Full programme and booking details will follow soon.

If you'd like to offer a short talk relevant to wildlife recording in Lancashire, please get in touch.

Contact: Steve Garland – Lancashire Wildlife Recorders' Forum Chair
Email: steve@stevegarland.co.uk



Generously supported by Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society

[**Book your tickets here**](#)

Liverpool Biological Society

The Liverpool Botanical Society, our local BSBI group, have released their indoor meetings for 2026. To attend any indoor meetings or field visits, you need to be a member. Membership is **£5 per year**. These meetings are a great opportunity to improve your botanical skills, learn about new species and projects and to have a great time with like-minded people.

Upcoming Indoor Meetings

AGM

Saturday 14th February | 11am

Location: Liverpool World Museum, L3 8EN

Meet on the ground floor and you will be taken up at 10:55am.

[**More information here**](#)



3.3 Upcoming Events

13

Ento Live

In February and March, Ento Live have the below events available. All of them are free to attend online for people with a passion and interest for invertebrates. Well worth checking them out and tuning in for the ones that are of an interest to you. To book on to any sessions, please click on the links below.



Tuesday 17th February 2026 | 13:00 - 14:00
[Mapping the Beetle Tree of Life](#)



Thursday 26th February 2026 | 13:00 - 14:00
[Shades of Grey: Industrial Melanism in Spiders](#)



5th March 2026 | 13:00 - 14:00
[Antarctic Invertebrates: Diversity and Threats](#)

[More events here](#)



Tanyptera Trust

Lots of interesting events, workshops, webinars and recording days are coming up in February and March with the Tanyptera Trust. See the dates below and follow the links for more information and how to book:



Wednesday 18th February | 10:30 am - 4:00 pm
[Apoid Wasps \(with one sub-marginal cell\) Workshop](#)

Location: World Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EN

Cost: £10.00



Friday 27th March | 10:30 am - 4:00 pm
[Spider Identification Training: From Field to Microscope](#)

Location: World Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EN

Cost: £30.00*

*this session is part of a series, more information is available on the link above.



[More events here](#)

3.3 Upcoming Events

14

Kindling Farm

Kindling Farm have the following events available. Well worth getting involved. More information is available via the links below.

Saturday 28th February 2026 | 09:30-16:00

[Kindling Farm Volunteering Day](#)

Sunday 1st March 2026 | 09:30-16:00

[Kindling Farm Volunteering Day](#)

Monday 2nd March 2026 | 09:30-16:00

[Kindling Farm Volunteering Day](#)



Booking for all events is essential, please follow the link below to book.

[**More events here**](#)

British Botany

British Botany provide a series of online courses, which you might be interested in if you want to expand your knowledge on plants. We have highlighted a few below for you to have a browse:

[**Reading the Landscape: An Introduction to Wetland & Fen Identification**](#)

Cost: £9.99

[**An Introduction to Botanical Survey: NVC**](#)

Cost: £12.99

[**Plants in the Planning Process**](#)

Cost: £7.00

[**More courses here**](#)



Article by Liv Lightfoot

February

World Wetlands Day - 2nd February



WWT are the wetland charity. They celebrate wetlands 365 days a year, but on the 2nd February, the world comes together to raise awareness of these super-powered habitats.

[More info here](#)

World Whale Day - 16th February

Held in February, World Whale Day is a special day set aside to celebrate all whale species from oceans across the world. Keep reading to find out more about these awe-inspiring animals and how you can help protect them.

[More info here](#)



March

World Wildlife Day - 3rd March

On March 3rd, the world celebrates World Wildlife Day, a global event to raise awareness about wildlife conservation and the urgent need to protect endangered species. As human activities threaten biodiversity, this day is a powerful reminder of our responsibility to safeguard the planet's rich ecosystems.

**WILDLIFE
ALLIANCE**

[More info here](#)

Compost Week - 13th-19th March



Garden compost helps to improve soil structure, retain moisture, and provide essential nutrients for plants. There are many different types of compost available, each with its advantages and disadvantages.

[More info here](#)

Who we are

Merseyside BioBank is the Local Environmental Records Centre for North Merseyside. We collect, manage and share vital information about the wildlife and habitats in our area.

By bringing together records from volunteers, community groups, researchers and professionals, we provide a trusted evidence base that supports conservation, planning and environmental decision-making.

We also help strengthen local recording through training, volunteer opportunities and projects that encourage people to get involved in understanding and protecting North Merseyside's natural environment.

Interested in volunteering with us?

See the next page on our volunteering process & how you can get involved with us

Want to keep in touch?

Follow us on social media, and sign up to receive our monthly bulletin



[Merseyside BioBank](#)



[mbblerc](#)



[Merseyside BioBank](#)



[Merseyside BioBank LERC](#)



[mbblerc.bsky.social](#)

[Sign up to our monthly bulletin here](#)

Want us to advertise for you?

We would like to support any local wildlife, conservation, recording, species-specific groups or Friends of Groups.

We hope to continue to develop our local biodiversity network by:

- Advertising your up-coming events
- Help recruit new members and volunteers
- Provide support on wildlife ID and recording
- Opportunities to work together on projects, and
- Provide connections between local biodiversity groups

Please get in touch: info@merseysidebiobank.org.uk



Express interest

Get in touch by:

- Following links in our social media & monthly bulletin
 - Applying via our online platform
- Contacting us directly at info@merseysidebiobank.org.uk

Attend an induction session

Held monthly, allows you to:

- Meet MBB staff
- Learn about what we do and why it is important
- Discuss your opportunities

Sign up to our volunteer portal

The portal allows you to:

- Book volunteer shifts
- Log hours worked on projects

Start volunteering

Office

- Collate records
- Digitise maps
- Write articles

Field

- Outreach events
- Surveying
- Collect data

Personal Projects: Have your own personal interests supported

To see our volunteer opportunities, or to register for the volunteer platform, please scan the QR code or click [here](#)



Article by Elina Marielle-Doss

The North Merseyside Amphibian and Reptile Group (NMARG) is back with a new season of habitat management events, offering a fantastic opportunity to get hands-on with conservation work along the beautiful Sefton Coast.

NMARG is a small, passionate, volunteer-led network dedicated to monitoring, recording, and protecting some of the UK's rarest amphibians and reptiles across North Merseyside, particularly the Sefton Coast's rare sand lizard and natterjack toad. The group works year-round to restore and maintain vital dune habitats – clearing invasive plants in winter and creating sandy patches for breeding in spring and summer. NMARG also runs surveys, training sessions, and community events to help people discover and record local amphibians and reptiles.



17 When?

Events will run every other Tuesday and Sunday in January from Sunday 4th January and Tuesday 6th January 2026 until the end of February. Keep checking our social media channels and monthly bulletin too for more updates.

What to Expect

Volunteers will be helping with scrub and small tree removal, vital work to maintain and restore habitats for local wildlife. The Tuesday sessions are especially exciting, as they often involve collaboration with the Green Sefton Rangers, who bring along power tools and even a fire to help tackle denser vegetation and larger trees.

Where?

All events are expected to take place along the Sefton Coast, with specific locations to be confirmed closer to each date.

Please note that dates may be subject to change or cancellation, but this schedule should give a good indication of when events will take place. If you're interested in attending any of the habitat management sessions, please get in touch via info@merseysidebiobank so we can connect you to the NMARG leader.