

# Summary of Cumbria Recorders' Conference 2025

A more detailed exploration of the conference is available in a separate document. The general theme for this conference was new opportunities for recorders.

A welcome from the conference chair, **Tracey Griffiths**, who is independent chair of the CBDC Advisory Group, started the day. The first talk was from **Martin Harris**, CBDC Recording Officer, who outlined the focus for CBDC recording in 2025 – from putting in place new processes to make recording more robust and resilient to development of training resources and app training sessions as well as recording days. The first keynote was from **Pete Jones**, the Cumbria Wildlife Trust's (CWT) Skiddaw Forest Project Manager, who provided an overview of the site, the highest nature reserve in England, and outlined plans to plant 270 ha with trees after a detailed baseline survey to indicate other restoration opportunities. There will be lots of recording opportunities at the site! **Rhian Ebrey**, Access to Eden Project Manager at Eden Rivers Trust, introduced this new project which includes the River Eden corridor from Carlisle to Kirkby Stephen and across to the River Irthing, with eight sites and seven programmes for restoration, training and engagement. Recording and volunteering opportunities abound, from surveying the eight sites to taking part in tree growing of wider surveying across the river corridors.



(L-R): Martin Harris, Pete Jones, Rhian Ebrey

The second session of the conference started with three recording 'highlights' talks. **Chris Hind**, County Recorder for birds, described the Cumbria Bird Club's 2024 Yellowhammer Survey which found an overall decline in the bird across the county but also reported that Hen Harriers had their most successful breeding year this century. Rarities for the year were showcased. **David Clarke**, British Dragonfly Society Recorder, provided an overview of Odonata seen in Cumbria in 2024, with 250 recorders providing 2,079 records. These included Downy Emerald records for the third year at Keswick and Brown Hawker breeding in the Lake District. Botanical highlights provided by Botanical Vice County Recorder, **Mike Porter**, included the New Year Plant Hunt 2025 which saw more people recording than in previous years and a total of 78 species recorded for the county. Among the 2024 species highlights for the county, the most notable was *Crepis*

*praemorsa* (Leafless Hawk's-beard), which was first recorded in Cumbria in 1988 and this was the only UK site for this species: however, in 2024, it was found at a second site.

The third keynote and final talk of the morning session was a look at Swifts in Cumbria by **Tanya Hoare**, founder of Sedbergh Community Swifts. Tanya's talk highlighted how unique this bird is but also how Swifts across the UK have declined by 60% in the last 25 years. Loss of nest sites is seen as an important factor in their decline and so it is crucial that nest sites are better recorded to feed back to planners and developers. All are encouraged to record nest sites this year!



*(Clockwise from top right): Carrie Hedges & Angus Walsh; Sylvia Woodhead; David Scott-Langley; Tanya Hoare; Mike Porter; David Clarke; Chris Hind.*

After a networking lunch which allowed time to explore the exhibition stands and book sales, Cumbria Woodlands and Plantlife introduced the Cumbria Rainforest Project. **Carrie Hedges** and **Angus Walsh**, from Cumbria Woodlands, introduced the project and their role in providing training and engagement with temperate rainforests in Cumbria. **Georgie Stephens**, Plantlife Rainforest Adviser, spoke about how the project has worked with existing lichen and bryophyte records to identify target sites and will provide more intensive surveys, woodland management interventions, lichen translocation and

training to identify and restore more temperate rainforest in Cumbria. Volunteers interested in engaging in surveys and training are encouraged to get in touch.

**Sylvia Woodhead** built on the information available from the Cumbria GeoConservation exhibition stand by providing an overview of the work undertaken by the group over the last year including the designation of two new Local Geological Sites as well as ongoing work to engage and educate about the importance of geology. Bothel Community Wildlife Group is a new wildlife group which launched last year. Founder, **Aimee Campbell**, provided a talk which outlined why the group started: born from frustration after the pandemic, Aimee was keen to engage more people in wildlife-friendly activities. Having arranged a programme of talks over winter, Aimee has spear-headed the Torpenhow Bioblitz which takes place 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> May 2025. Another new group celebrating its first anniversary is Cumbria Invertebrate Group (CIG). Founder member, **David Scott-Langley**, provided an overview of the first year, growing membership, developing a field visit programme and recording over 500 species, many under-recorded, in the first year.

The conference ended with an 'open mic' session. Peter Macqueen provided a short presentation on his mothing adventures in Cumbria and Carrie Hedges highlighted an upcoming NW Rainforest Alliance workshop.



*Conference delegates during the 'open mic' session: Peter Macqueen (inset)*

Thank you to the conference chair, Tracey Griffiths, speakers, exhibitors and delegates!

*Prepared by CBDC, February 2025*