

Compiled by George Hounsome

The section has had an interesting and varied year, with the general flavour reflecting the recent recasting of the committee. Everyone has pulled their weight in running the group and we are very grateful. The focus over the year has been on Mark Spencer's work on Axiophyte and Red Lists and Jon Agar's programme of field meetings.

Mark Spencer, Paul Losse (Salix Ecology) and Julija Fediajevaite have been working with Andy Foy, GiGL's Systems Manager, to develop Axiophyte and Red Lists for Greater London and a Rare Plant Register for Middlesex. These projects are also aimed at providing framework for the publication of the London Flora Project. Mapping work on Flora Project has been delayed due to significant issues relating to data-sharing with partner organisations; progress is now being made in these areas but full data-sharing that will enable mapping to take place is still unresolved. Axiophytes, Greek for "worthy plant", are plant species which are indicators of habitats of interest for nature conservation. They are not necessarily rare species which are encountered only occasionally, nor are they very common species which occur in a wide range of habitats. They may, however, be common in habitats of high value. Rare Plant Registers are a record of the rare plants found in an area, they usually follow the BSBI vice-county boundary system. The Axiophyte list and Red List will soon go out for consultation within the LNHS Botany Committee and with key stakeholders such as London Borough Ecologists and the Greater London Authority. The final lists will then be published on the LNHS and GiGL websites. In the year up to the AGM we have had a large, varied and successful programme of LNHS botany field meetings. There were 31 meetings in total.

Mark Spencer led four meetings, joint with the BSBI (Victoria Park/Hackney Wick, Rammey Marsh, Monken Hadley Common, and Syon Park). Mario Maculan led eight meetings (Putney Vale Cemetery, Harefield, City of London Cemetery, Morden Cemetery, Kensal Green Cemetery, Horsenden Hill, Mitcham Common, Croxley Common Moor). Bettina Metcalfe continued to lead a series of tree walks, coincidentally also focusing on cemeteries (Hanwell, Mortlake, Brockley and Ladywell, City of London, St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard, East Finchley)

Annie Chipchase and Sarah Lo organized a series of fauna and flora recording events at Hackney Tree Nursery. This site was also the occasion in April 2023 of a special Dandelion *Taraxacum spp.* identification workshop, led by the expert Tim Rich and organized by Jon Agar. It was a valuable hands-on introduction to this difficult but fascinating plant, of which there are c.250 species in the UK. Five species have been confirmed by the leading UK *Taraxacum* expert (Professor John Richards), one of which (*T. atonolobum*) is considered very rare. Twenty attended.

Thanks go to all leaders of the meetings, without which the society would be much impoverished.

Indoor meetings reflected the legacy of covid – they were all on Zoom. The 2022 AGM was followed by an excellent presentation by Tim Rich on "The Difficult Plant Problem", discussing the problems associated with groups of microspecies such as *Taraxacum spp.* and hawkweeds *Hieracium spp.* Over the year Mark Spencer presented a series of talks on the range of habitats in the London area, such as the Thames, Wetlands and Aquatic Habitats, and Streets, Railways and Brownfields. We would like to thank Mark for all the time and effort he puts in to the society's activities.

The quiz took place in February but there was no photo show. Both are programmed for 2024.