

NBN Special Award

In determining the winners of the awards, one other nominee stood out and the awards committee decided to create a Special Award, to honour this person, which is being given posthumously.

Nigel Jee can best be described as Guernsey's own gentleman naturalist, a Gilbert White personified.

Following his retirement in 1985, Nigel started gathering data from the large garden and fields that he owned on the west coast of Guernsey. Over the next 27 years he methodically collected data on the plants and animals that lived there. Most noteworthy was his weekly written records of the flowering dates of all the plants in his garden and in the fields surrounding, where many different Narcissi had become naturalised.

Nigel recorded the date when flowers first appeared, the days when the plants were in flower and when flowers were no longer seen. As a consequence his recording is almost without precedent as he recorded not just the first date of flowering but the duration of flowering of each plant species. In all, between 1985 and 2011 he recorded several hundred species of plants and made 163,433 written observations. This dataset has arguably become one of the most important long-term datasets in the British Isles.

Dr Tim Sparks of the Centre for Ecology at Monks Wood was involved in 2006 and analysed a small part of the dataset. Tim Sparks was searching for long-term datasets in an attempt to show how wildlife was affected by climate change. Nigel wrote out in long hand the data that he had collected on a selection of spring flowering plants and these were sent to Tim Sparks for analysis.

It was Nigel Jee's meticulous recordings that proved that climate change was affecting plants and animals in the Channel Islands.

Gilbert White (1720 – 1793) is remembered in these awards because his name is synonymous with biological recording. He was one of the first English naturalists to make careful observations of his surroundings and record these observations in a systematic way. He transformed the way we look at the natural world and is recognised as one of the fathers of ecology.