

Gilbert White adult award

Richard Comont is a dedicated biological recorder with almost 50,000 records on iRecord (online biological recording software) and more than 5,000 species recorded across 75 groups. He records more than two thousand species every year, with up to 13,000 records, mostly in his own time.

He co-leads the national Garden Bioblitz project with four friends, an annual event to introduce the general public to wildlife recording. He is also part of the UK Ladybird Survey national recording team, verifying ladybird records on iRecord and he has written the identification sections of ladybird books and charts.

His job with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust is to run two bumblebee recording schemes, BeeWalk and BeeWatch, which between them have generated over 60,000 records of some of our most charismatic but least-known species.

BeeWalk in particular is a standardised transect-walking recording scheme which has helped inspire equivalent schemes across Europe. He has been the only person running the scheme since 2013 and has been vital to its acceptance in the scientific community, supporting over 200 volunteers every year, identifying over 4,000 bee photos and working hard to test the validity of the scheme's assumptions.

He trains 400-500 people every year to identify and monitor bumblebees and ladybirds and also gives inspirational talks on the value of recording ladybirds and bumblebees to local wildlife groups country-wide, reaching another 400-500 people annually.

We are told that he spends too much time on Twitter and Facebook identifying the insects (or anything else) that people post photos of, some of which turn up at his house in padded envelopes a couple of days later!

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.