

Gilbert White Highly Commended winner

Mark Pritchard only started work in a wildlife related area 18 months ago, when he wanted to volunteer on a new project encouraging other volunteers to submit records for Local Wildlife Sites. He had little experience of wildlife identification and no experience of biological recording. He was disillusioned with his current job and wanted to really change his career options.

From day one he threw himself into every training opportunity given to him through the project & immediately started going out to explore his local spaces in Liverpool to record wildlife.

He hasn't focussed on just one group, but is keen on everything from dragonflies to beetles, birds & plants. In the year up to March 2016, he had generated a massive 730 records for the Merseyside BioBank, which is a huge achievement for a new recorder with little experience.

Realising volunteering wouldn't be enough to shape his future he also re-entered into education in September 2015 undertaking a Foundation degree in Countryside, Conservation & Recreational Management in which he is now due to gain a distinction.

He has also been volunteering with Cheshire Wildlife Trust on their White Faced Darter Project and at the Merseyside BioBank as a volunteer data officer, thus fully rounding his experience of biological data collection, processing & implementation.

In under a year he has gone from having critically low confidence to a point where he actively leads as a volunteer at regional events and inspires other people to get involved in their local environment and in local conservation.

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.