

Site Condition Monitoring

Vascular plant Site Condition Monitoring continues to be an important aspect of my work. It is particularly helpful in making a strong case for SNH funding for the Scottish Officer post. The fieldwork and reporting is largely done by BSBI volunteers with some help from me.

In the early part of the year, reports were completed, checked and forwarded to SNH for the six sites surveyed in 2014. These were Arthur's Seat Volcano, Craighall, Derskelpin Moss, Glen Strathfarrar, Milton Wood & Selkirk Racecourse Moss. Further attempts were made in spring 2015 to monitor previously unsatisfactorily surveyed species in three other SSSIs. Reports were updated and re-sent. Another full SCM program was agreed with SNH for 2015. Fieldwork was completed and reports drafted by volunteers for Eigg-Cleadale (by Stephen Bungard), Glas Tulaichean (Martin Robinson), Hill of Towanreef (David Welch), Kyle of Sutherland Marshes (Brian Ballinger), Loch Leven (Liz Lavery) and Morven & Mullachdubh (Eric Meek).

BSBI members Ian Strachan, Gordon Rothero, Dan Watson and I worked with climbing guides to find and monitor rare plant populations on Ben Nevis as part of the North-face project. Grateful thanks are again due to all the BSBI volunteers involved with monitoring work in 2015.

Atlas 2020 Recording

Achieving full Atlas 2020 coverage across Scotland is going to be a great challenge in Scotland - particularly as several vice-counties fell vacant during the year. A number of initiatives were arranged to help Recorders with Atlas 2020. For example, we held two residential recording weeks in 2015 - in Shetland and Ayrshire. The Shetland recording week, based on Unst, was organised by me with the help of Paul Harvey of the Local Recording Centre, Lynne Farrell and the local recorder, Walter Scott. In total 7,500 records were collected by 14 participants and digitised by Paul Harvey. Another equally successful recording week was organised by Angus Hannah and local recorders in the south of Ayrshire in early July. A dozen members participated and collected an equally impressive number of records.

Both Angus Hannah and I each spent a week on the Isle of Jura with the newly appointed Atlas 2020 Recorder, Simon Smart, to get him started with MapMate and Atlas Recording and up to speed with the local flora. Meantime visiting members provided significant help with Atlas recording on Islay and Colonsay.

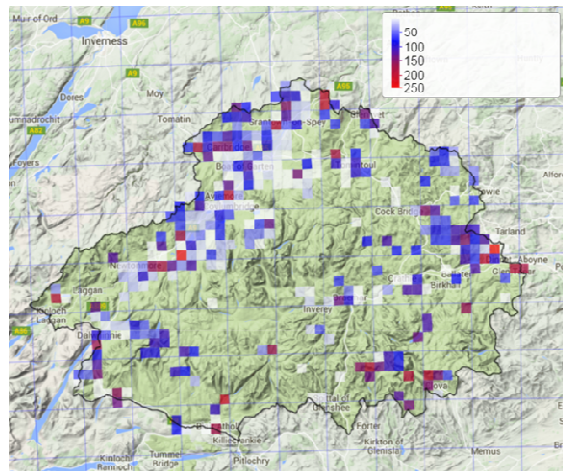
Andy Amphlett collected an amazing 11,500 records in his neighbouring Vice-County (VC) of Easternness and this was augmented by a further 3,500 records by local member Stewart Taylor. Together this is a great contribution to Atlas recording in *the* biggest VC in the British Isles. Both Stephen Bungard and Angus Hannah helped with Atlas coverage in VCs that neighbour their own (West Ross & Ayrshire respectively). If other recorders who are on top of Atlas coverage in their own VCs would like to help struggling neighbours please get in touch. Thanks are due to all those involved in these initiatives.

Cairngorm National Park (CNP) Recording Project

The BSBI collected over 20,000 records in the CNP area in 2014, with the help of CNP Authority funds to cover the cost of volunteers' travel and subsistence costs. A similar project bid was prepared by

Andy Amphlett on behalf of the BSBI in 2015. This was successful and resulted in another 30,000 records, being gathered, digitised, uploaded to the DDb and validated - a truly remarkable achievement. Field Meetings organised by Recorders in Angus & South Aberdeen made a significant contribution to the tally.

The distribution of records made in 2015 in the Cairngorm National Park is summarised in this map. Records were made within 53 hectads, 334 tetrads and 644 monads (1x1km grid squares), and were from 3572 unique grid references.



VCR Network Support

A residential Recorders' Workshop with the theme *Atlas 2020 - the final five years* was held in March at Kindrogan FSC. In total, 27 recorders participated. Its aim was to provide *practical* help and advice on the tools that recorders need to use for the project, such as MapMate, Memory Map and the DDb. We invited recorders to bring their laptops or desktops and held sessions on tuning-up MapMate for Atlas 2020 and getting recorders started with the DDb and validating records in the DDb. There were also talks on RPRs & the CNP project. We offered one-to-one clinics with experts to address specific problems, not covered in the classroom sessions. The presentations and handouts are still on the [BSBI Scotland](#) page. It was agreed that similar events will be held two yearly, and in the intervening years lower-key one-day events would be held.

Early in the New Year we asked for Annual Reports for 2014 from VC Recorders. Each was replied to individually and the reports were collated and published in the Scottish Newsletter and on the BSBI [Scotland page](#). Take a look - it is great to read about the great diversity of botanical endeavour that is undertaken across Scotland by Vice county Recorders annually.

One-to-one support meetings were held with Recorders in West Ross, Westernness and West Sutherland and I met prospective recorders for Caithness and spent time in the field with them. Two support newsletters (one in [winter](#) and another in [summer](#)) were sent to Scottish Recorders. [Atlas 2020 guidance](#) specifically for BSBI Vice-County Recorders was also drafted and published.

VCR Network Support – Andy Amphlett

Andy Amphlett retired from the RSPB in March and undertook even more support work on behalf of the BSBI in 2015 than in 2014. Much of this work related to helping Recorders with data and its validation. In particular he developed or updated spreadsheets that variously analyse Atlas 2020 coverage for each VC by [Hectad](#) and [Tetrad](#) and assess the frequency of taxa in a vc. He provided support – particularly on validation - to recorders in the NE of Scotland, e.g. Easternness, East Perthshire, Moray and South Aberdeen and helped recorders in Dumfries and Kirkcudbright import records into MapMate. Andy revised DDb User Guidance and contributed regularly to the DDb message board.

Rare Plant Registers

It was great to see a further two RPRs being published in Scotland: [West Perth](#) by Liz Lavery & Jane Jones and [Orkney](#) by John Crossley & Eric Meek. That brings the total of Scottish RPRs up to fourteen (including one for the Cairngorm National Park). Chris Metherell and I continue to provide advice and support to Recorders preparing Rare Plant Registers. Local and visiting botanists are invited to use them to track down long lost populations and update old and vague records! There is a full list on the [BSBI website](#) – please send any updates to the relevant VC Recorders.

Data

One of the biggest outstanding datasets from the Scottish Computerisation project was finally synched to the hub and made it onto the DDb. This was a 150,000 record set by Bernard Thompson for Argyll for the period 1980-1999. The current recorder, Carl Farmer, has been diligently checking it since it had been digitised by contractors in 2010. A further 40,000 Argyll records for the period since then also came through in the same upload. Another outstanding dataset – that for 10,000 Dumfries records was also recently completed by the contractor and uploaded directly to the DDb by Tom Humphrey. In addition we continue to work on the 127,000 records from Keith Watson's BioBase database for Renfrewshire. BioBase is now defunct so we need to set Keith up with MapMate. And Katherine White was given MapMate training and digitised Jackie Muscott's West Lothian backlog. Katherine then went on to collect (and digitise) 2,300 records from East Lothian over the summer.

Training

The BSBI Outreach Group offered beginners training in Identifying Plant Families by organising workshops and follow-up field meetings in Inverness and St Andrews in May. A total of 41 beginners participated and particular thanks are due to Faith Anstey.

Fifteen members attended an *Introduction to Recording* day organised in May at RBGE – covering how to find, prepare and complete recording cards, use GPS, plan routes, etc. For the more advanced, Chris Metherell led two *Euphrasia* Study Group days at RBGE – each attended by about a dozen participants.

Two training days were organised on Shetland for 18 local beginner and intermediate botanists in August.

BSBI Meetings

The Scottish Committee organised another very successful BSBI/BSS Scottish Annual Meeting (SAM) at RBGE in November. The SAM organiser, Liz Lavery, was assisted by an automated booking and payment system. A great range of interesting exhibits were on display thanks to Recorders. But one of the most colourful was the BSBI Photographic Competition arranged by Natalie Harmsworth. The Scottish Officer gave an update on his work and on Atlas 2020. The highlight of the day, however, was Ken Thompson's thought-provoking, controversial and witty talk on Aliens in the British Flora.

Twenty BSBI members enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch and convivial company in the RBGE staff canteen, thanks to retiring RBGE Chef, Ted Gatier. I hope to repeat the initiative next Christmas.

Thanks

Thanks are due to all the BSBI Recorders, members and volunteers who contributed so magnificently in 2015! And I look forward to seeing you in the field in 2016!

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer, March 2016