



Hello Irish VCRs,

Finally it's here! Quite a bit later than planned - sorry about that - but here's the third Irish VCR newsletter. As you might expect, there is quite a focus on Atlas 2020 and related matters. Hope you enjoy – some light reading for over the Christmas time!

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## ATLAS NEWS

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### Atlas 2020: Latest news – hot off the press!

BSBI now has a dedicated Atlas 2020 webpage: [http://www.bsbi.org.uk/atlas\\_2020.html](http://www.bsbi.org.uk/atlas_2020.html) It holds a lot of resources that might be helpful to VCRs (vice-county recorders).

A working group has been set up for the Atlas project and an internal staff member will lead on this, Pete Stroh (previously worked on the [England Red List](#)). Robert Northridge is Ireland's representative on this working group.

If you would like recording cards printed out on card get in touch (maria.long@bsbi.org). BRC in the UK are happy to print out some on request for recorders. These can be all-Ireland, or specific for your VC (download VC-specific cards from the BSBI webpage: <http://www.bsbi.org.uk/resources.html>). Some recorders have even tailored their cards further – e.g. remove rarer species to 'force' recorders to write a note with details if they find a rare species. If you want to do this or make other modifications we may be able to help you with it.

### *Use of tetrads, coverage to aim for*

Just to re-iterate, as it has come up a few times with recorders...

BSBI has given guidance that it would like, as minimum coverage to aim for for the Atlas, three or five (depends on which version of the guidance you are reading!) tetrads covered/recorded in each hectad. We are aiming for three here in Ireland, but if you can do more, please do! This does *not* mean, however, that BSBI wants you to work or record on a tetrad basis! It simply means that tetrad (rather than hectad) is the *minimum* resolution that BSBI wishes to receive your data at.

In case this helps, see below from BSBI News No. 123 (April 2013):

- record in 3 random tetrads and you get about 50% of possible species in the hectad;
- record in 3 best tetrads and you get about 70% of possible species;
- record in 9 random monads and you get about 50% of possible species;
- record in 9 best monads and you get about 70% of possible species.

### *Recording weeks*

Recording weeks can fulfil a number of functions, particularly in relation to Atlas 2020 – e.g. tackle remote or upland areas which are hard to access without concerted effort, help a

recorder who would benefit from a 'glut' of records, help train new enthusiasts through learning in the field with established recorders. Get in touch if you think that your county, or part of it, would benefit from a targeted recording week/weekend. This would hopefully not only draw a crowd from within Ireland and Northern Ireland, but perhaps from the other countries too.

This coming year we have our first planned recording week in Mayo, and a long weekend in Inishowen in Donegal (as well as a number of other days and weekends too of course). We would really value the support of as many VCRs as possible at these concerted and targeted recording events in particular – they are a great chance to help recorders, to fill gaps, to have some fun and to learn as well. And they just won't work without your expertise!

### *Taking stock in lead-up to Atlas 2020*

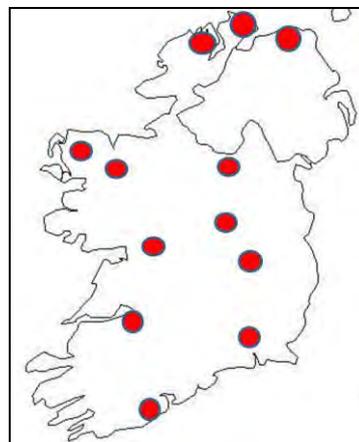
At present it is quite difficult to gauge how we are doing in terms of progress towards coverage for the Atlas because there are quite a lot of records that are not yet in the [BSBI DDb](#) (the 'big database' or the 'distribution database'). This is where all BSBI records go, whether submitted via MapMate, Excel, paper, etc. There are lots of records still sitting with recorders, for a variety of reasons. **We are encouraging all recorders to send in their post-2000 records as a matter of urgency this winter season so that we can take stock of where we are at.** There are gaps currently showing that we know are not 'real' gaps, but there are plenty of other areas where the gaps are all too real! In order that we make the best possible effort in Ireland, to get the best possible coverage, we really do need to be in a better position to see all of our records together. So the plea is this – please either:

- (a) send in all your post-2000 records to BSBI before end of March 2015 (or as many as you reasonably can, with a note on what's to follow);
- (b) assess what you have, and let the Irish Officer know the scale of the records you have for your area – e.g. is it 10s, 100s or 1000s of records; or
- (c) make contact with the Irish Officer if you have any issues with sending in records – this might be anything from lack of time, confusion over how to do it best, difficulty working with the suggested software, or concerns over where the data goes or the resolution of the data.

All of these issues can be discussed and solutions sought, but even if solutions are not immediate, having an accurate idea of the numbers of records out there is still necessary at this point in time. We don't want to waste valuable resources trying to fill a gap which isn't really a gap!

### **Field meetings 2015**

Planning for the field meetings schedule for 2015 was thrown into chaos this year following the death of Caoimhe Muldoon, who had just taken on the role of Field Meetings Secretary in the CFI (Committee for Ireland). We are all very grateful to John Conaghan who stepped in to take on the role. We now have a fantastic line-up of meetings, the details of which will be available shortly. To the right is a map showing the locations you can look forward to. One of our outings in August will be dedicated to Caoimhe's memory.



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## RECORDER NEWS

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We have two vice-counties which are effectively vacant currently, Longford and Cavan. In both cases there is a currently-listed VCR. In the case of Longford, Sean Howard is unable to record for health reasons and in Cavan, Jonathan Shackleton has many other commitments and is stepping down. East Donegal is listed as vacant (last year Pauline Hodson retired from here to become joint recorder in Wicklow with Catriona Brady), however we have in place two dedicated and dynamic young people who are learning the trade. Oisín Duffy and Mairéad Crawford have been out recording and learning from all of their neighbouring recorders, and particularly Ralph Sheppard. This is a fantastic development, and a great boost for the area, and we are really thankful for all their work so far.

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## OTHER NEWS

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- If you haven't already seen the [Rare Plant Register for Fermanagh](#), you should have a look. Well done to Robert, Ralph and Hannah, another fantastic achievement!
- BSBI VCR for Mayo, Gerry Sharkey, has been heavily involved in the set-up of a brand new [Mayo Naturatists' Field Club](#). Visit [this page](#) for more information.
- We recently submitted a proposal, with CEDaR, to the [Northern Ireland Challenge Fund](#) (otherwise known as the 'plastic bag tax' fund). Among other things, we proposed to run training courses, support the existing recorders, and cover an extra day of Irish Officer time. The scheme got seven times more applicants than it was able to fund, and sadly we were not successful in our bid.
- [Irish Botanical News](#) will, as always, be put together this year by Paul Green. The deadline for submissions is Jan 31<sup>st</sup> ([paulnewross@eircom.net](mailto:paulnewross@eircom.net)). Remember that you can see all of the previous 24 issues of IBN on the [Irish webpage](#). If you lead a field meeting in 2014, you will, I'm sure, be busy at the moment putting the final touches to your [field meeting report](#) and have it ready for Paul early in 2015!!!
- Peter Wyse Jackson published the excellent book "[Ireland's Generous Nature](#) – the past and present uses of wild plants in Ireland" during the year, a really great reference work.
- Another lovely book published recently is "A Year on Our Farm" by Ann & Robin Talbot, whose farm in Laois we visited on a field meeting this year. The book is available at [www.talbotsofcoolefarm.com](http://www.talbotsofcoolefarm.com).
- Do you want even more news?? Then have a look at some of the BSBI blogs I've listed below. (If you are new to 'blogs', maybe they could be described as being half-way between a newsletter and a diary?)
  - Louise Marsh: <http://bsbipublicity.blogspot.co.uk/> This is excellent and very regularly updated. It's a fantastic way to hear about all sorts of activities that are going on in and around BSBI. I can't recommend it highly enough.
  - Paul Green, Wexford: <http://wildflowersofwexford.blogspot.ie/>
  - Oisín Duffy, east Donegal: <http://oisinduffy.wordpress.com/>
  - Paul Green and Polly Spencer-Vallacott, Wales: <http://bsbicymru.blogspot.co.uk/>

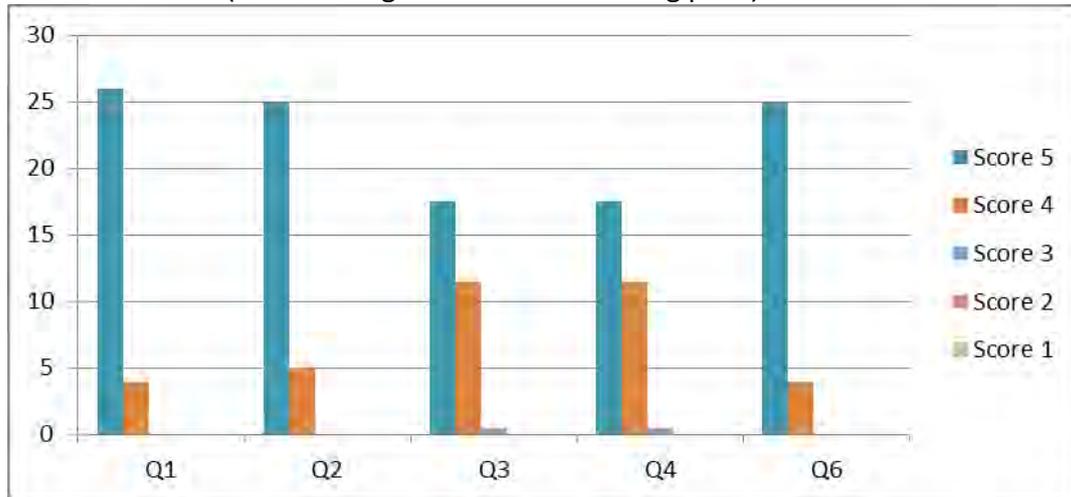
### Irish Species Project (ISP)

The records from the ISP in 2014 are still rolling in. If you haven't sent yours in yet, please do so (by post or email to the Irish Officer). It seems that many VCRs have been busy, and we've also had a good response from the public, without a large advertising campaign, which is a great sign. Next year we hope to advertise the project much more widely and get lots more data in.

## Irish BSBI Members Conference 2014 (and 2015!)

It seems a long time ago now, but I haven't reported back properly to VCRs on the Irish BSBI Members' Conference 2014. What a great time we had at the conference! It really was a special occasion, and surpassed all our expectations in terms of turnout, atmosphere, learning and fun! I've attached some photos at the end of this document (digital version only), in case some of you haven't seen them. Remember, many of the [talks from the conference](#) are up on the Irish webpage. A total of 27 out of our current total of 37 VCRs were in attendance (73%), which was really great – thank you all so much for coming.

I received almost 40 feedback forms which allows a great measure of confidence in the feedback. These have been collated and the general gist was overwhelmingly positive! The basic message is that we have to do it again! We got lots of useful constructive comments too – like more talks/workshops for beginners, species names should always be put on slides, etc. Below is a graph, some metrics and a couple of quotes from the feedback to show just how well people rated the event (with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor).



**Q1** How enjoyable was the conference? **Mean score: 4.86**

**Q2** How were the facilities? **4.83**

**Q3** How was the programme rated (talks/workshops/posters/exhibits/fieldtrips)? **4.5**

**Q4** How well organised was the day's event? **4.5**

**Q5** Was the event value for money? **4.7**

*"New faces wonderfully encouraging; advertising must have been good; knowledgeable speakers a real pleasure; PhD student presentations impressive. Banquet was fantastic"*

*"So beautifully organised, so well supported. Such a marvellous day for Irish botany"*

## Irish BSBI Members' Conference 2015

Following the runaway success of last year's event, we will definitely be holding another [Irish BSBI Members' Conference](#) in 2015, probably late March or late April. It will be a one-day event held in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, with talks and workshops, and an evening meal nearby. Perhaps we will also have an associated field excursion. Keep an eye on the [Irish webpage](#) (<http://bsbi.org.uk/ireland.html>) for updates coming very soon.

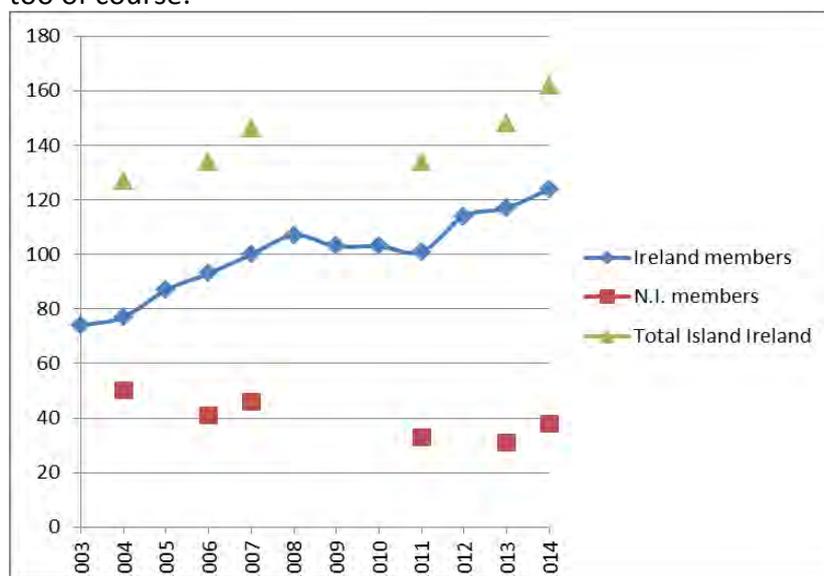
## Dataset for Ireland in DDb

David Holyoak, whom many of you will know from his work on Irish bryophytes over the last 15 years, culminating in the superb new book 'Rare and Threatened Bryophytes of Ireland' (co-authored with Neil Lockhart and Nick Hodgetts), has recently lodged a large dataset with 42,000 Irish vascular plant records with BSBI and it is up on [the DDb](#). They are full of good detail, with lots of interesting records. If you are interested in looking at them log onto the DDb and see for yourself, or contact the Irish Officer who can (a) help you access the DDb, or (b) send you the subset relating to your vice-county. Feedback from one recorder (Gerry Sharkey): "I got Holyoak Mayo data ... some time ago and it is of very high quality." Below is a list of Irish VCs and the number of records in the Holyoak dataset for each:

VC no.	No. records						
1	5947	11	517	21	6	31	0
2	7015	12	742	22	0	32	0
3	3022	13	445	23	108	33	525
4	74	14	1342	24	0	34	120
5	0	15	3021	25	960	35	70
6	0	16	6980	26	382	36	20
7	0	17	3715	27	41	37	3
8	219	18	2025	28	4	38	43
9	1467	19	1518	29	362	39	49
10	6	20	117	30	131	40	37

## Membership numbers 2014

There has been a slight increase in membership numbers this year, see below. Encouragingly, this includes a few in Northern Ireland, where there had been a downward trend in recent years. We hope to continue to reverse the trend in NI, and continue to grow across the board too of course.



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**TECHNOLOGY SECTION:**

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**Got a data query? - Who to contact...**

I thought it might help to let you know some of the key people in BSBI to contact if you have a data query. There have been some shifts in who's responsible for what over the years, understandably, so here's an update:

MapMate	Bob Ellis (bob.ellis@bsbi.org)	- if you want to talk to someone in BSBI 'central' about <u>MapMate</u> (e.g. a query to do with submitting your data via MapMate), then Bob Ellis is your man
DDb - submitting datasets	Quentin Groom (quentin.groom@bsbi.org)	- if you want to ask about <u>formatting data</u> using other programmes (e.g. <u>Excel</u> ), or <u>submitting datasets to the DDb</u> , then Quentin Groom is the best person to contact
DDb - detailed queries	Tom Humphrey (tom.humphrey@bsbi.org)	- if you have a detailed query about the DDb, how it works, etc., the best person to direct that to is Tom Humphrey
Website	Alex Lockton (alex.lockton@bsbi.org)	- queries relating to the website can go to Alex Lockton

Of course – you can direct any and all queries to the Irish Officer in the first instance if you like. If I can't deal with them I will forward them on.

**How to use the DDb...**

Scottish recorder Andy Amphlett has written a guide to using the DDb. It is posted on the message board here: <http://bsbidb.org.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=4&t=120>. It's not intended to be fully comprehensive, but as a starting-point for people wanting to use the system his guide should be really useful. Any feedback on the document from VCRs would be welcome, (sent as follow-up posts on the message board or by email). You can also find it on the [resources page](#) of the BSBI web site. I highly recommend that you have a look if you are still not a DDb user – and in fact, even if you are!

**Do you put your detailed grid references in the comments field of Mapmate? – if so, stop!**

If you put grid references in the Comments field, they are largely hidden. Not completely, but they are not easy to retrieve. One way to deal with species which you want to have more detailed grid references for is to plough on ahead and enter a full site card at your chosen resolution (e.g. monad), and then to go back in to the records for the more interesting ones (usually just a handful) and edit the site field using the Site@GR approach (refer to MapMate manual, or email me, if you want further info on this). If you have more than one detailed grid ref for a species in the square, then Save as Common Settings, open a new Data Entry window, Get Common Settings, re-enter date and the additional grid reference by amending the existing into a new Site@GR.

**Data entry guidelines for .... your name!**

In the past, guidelines on recorder names suggested that the forenames of recorders should be abbreviated to initials. This creates ambiguity as there are many cases where different people share the same surname and initials. The primary reasons for these older guidelines related to database and search constraints, most of which are largely irrelevant to modern database systems.

So – the upshot is... please use your full first name. I wrote a note in the last newsletter relating to choosing how you enter your name and sticking to it. If I enter 'Long, Maria', 'Long,

Maria P', 'Maria P Long', a computer will think there are three of me, so bear that in mind! But do consider using your full first name, rather than initials only to avoid potential confusion.

### Generating 'Species per Tetrad' maps for your VC using the BSBI DDb

[I've taken this section from Jim McIntosh's Scottish Newsletter from last winter – thanks Jim!]

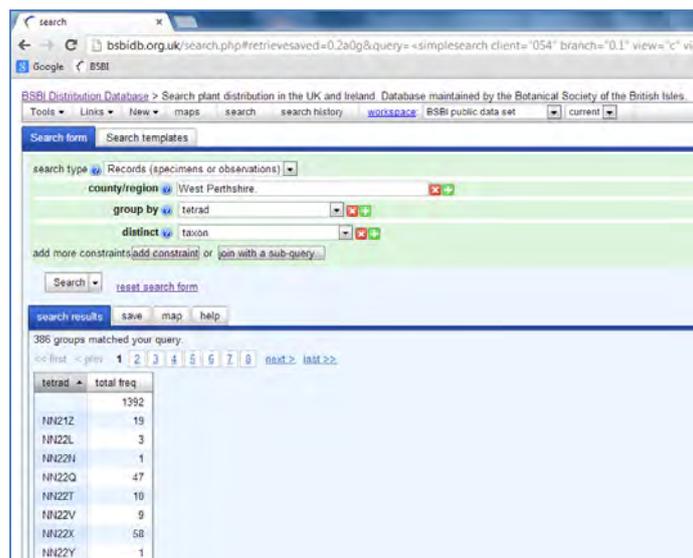
1. In County/region select your VC.
2. Then click on "More Options" below the search form and select Grouping > Group by > tetrad.
3. Then click on "More Options" again then select Grouping > Distinct > taxon

Clicking on "Show Results" will generate a list of Tetrads in your VC and the number of distinct taxa in each (all date classes).

If you wish to just see post-2000 records, enter 2000 in the Date Recorded box, and select "from" in the adjacent dropdown box.

To see these lists mapped, simply click on the "map" tab to the right of the "results table" tab.

Note that this method does not list tetrads with *no* records.



### Importing records into MapMate

[I've also taken this section from Jim's Newsletter – thanks again Jim!]

We hesitate to encourage people to enter records using Excel for importing into MapMate or other recording systems as it bypasses all the checks that are done during data entry. They then have to be done tediously while importing. However there is a place for it; for example when extracting records from reports or when receiving records from others.

But if you must use Excel, the spreadsheet created by Andy Amphlett, and included with the electronic version of this Newsletter, must surely be the one to use! It uses Excel 2007, but it also seems to work fine with the current version of LibreOffice (free software). Andy reports "one recorder provided me with 3000 records using the spreadsheet, and the records took very little work to tidy before importing into MapMate, so this can be a big time saver."

The file is in MapMate Import format, with a couple of additional columns. Drop down lists are used to select Taxon, Stage and Status. The Taxon list is taken from the latest version of the MapMate dictionary (basically Stage 3). Full instructions are included on a separate worksheet tab but it's very simple and straightforward to use.

### MapMate support page

Remember that there is a wealth of supports available to MapMate users. Visit <http://mapmate.bsbi.org.uk/> to see some of them.

### How do I know my 'sync' file arrived?

There shouldn't really be cause to worry when you've sent a sync file, as you should always receive a confirmation email which states "Sync Received OK" from the person/place you 'sync-ed' to. If you don't receive this email, check with whoever you were hoping to sync with, and perhaps you will have to sync again, check you followed all the steps, or re-set the sync (further details on this available in [MapMate handbook](#), or from the Irish Officer).

### Online mapping resources

All of these online mapping websites offer fantastic data. In most cases you are limited to viewing the data, but in some cases you can download (e.g. from NPWS, from NBDC). I'm sure there are more out there, but these are some I've used:

1. NPWS: <http://webgis.npws.ie/npwsviewer/> Digital conservation designation site boundaries available to download. You can search for places by townland, which is a very handy feature.
2. NBDC: <http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/#/Home> See species records for plants and animals. Can measure areas and distances.
3. Heritage Council: <http://heritagemaps.biodiversityireland.ie/#/Map> Heritage and archaeological data, also habitat maps from national surveys.
4. EPA: <http://gis.epa.ie/> Soils, landuse, water quality, etc.
5. GSI: <http://gsi.ie/mapping.htm> Bedrock, etc.

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## FINAL WORDS

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Please do get in touch if you want further information on anything in the newsletter. I will be sending a digital version out in the New Year by email. As usual, I hope you find the letter useful – I write it specifically for VCRs, so please let me know what you'd like to see more of and what you could do without! As usual, I will also put it up on the [Irish webpage](#).

Please feel free to call to the National Botanic Gardens any time – for a chat, for a coffee, for advice, to access the herbarium or the library, or just because you are passing.

**Maria Long, BSBI Irish Officer**

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**Remember:** If your contact details change, **please** let me know (postal address, email or phone number).

**Note on hyperlinks:** Anywhere you see a blue/pink underlined piece of text in this document means that it is a hyperlink – i.e. you can click on it (Control + Click) and it will bring you to that webpage or document. Contact me if you want more information, or if you would like certain documents sent to you directly by email or post.

### Donation

One of the wishes of Caoimhe Muldoon's family was that donations might be made to one of the causes that Caoimhe felt strongly about rather than give flowers at the funeral. They chose the work that Médecins Sans Frontières carries out fighting Ebola. If you would like to donate, you can follow this link: [http://www.msf.ie/donate?gclid=CJPR95\\_z0clCFYJe2wodShMAxQ](http://www.msf.ie/donate?gclid=CJPR95_z0clCFYJe2wodShMAxQ)