

Newsletter for vc97 Westernness - January 2011

Welcome to the first vc97 newsletter – a New Year's resolution! Please pass on to anyone else who might be interested.

NB The 3rd Edition of the **Stace Flora** appeared during 2010. A list of the main changes which are relevant to vc97 is given at the end of this newsletter. Note that some old friends are back e.g. *Carex demissa*, *Stellaria alsine*. We haven't used the new names in this report, but intend to use them in future.

Plant recording in 2010

2010 was a good year for records, with an increasing number of contributors – thanks to you all, and please send us your records if you have not yet done so. I have listed some highlights below but not mentioned everything – apologies for omissions.

I have been trying to visit some far-flung squares with the 2020 Atlas in mind. I also started early, to test the theory that botanising is not just a summer activity - some species are easier to find in winter! In February a walk up Glen Roy into NN39 yielded new hectad records for various species including **juniper** (ssp *communis*) and Scots pine ***Pinus sylvestris***, apparently native, in the gorge near the 'Natural Bridge'. There is plenty more exploring to do up here, especially in the hills to the north. I also visited the birchwoods at **Mandally** (Invergarry) which is the best place I know in vc97 for 'upright' juniper, with many large specimens up to 5m tall. Other interesting 'winter' records included new sites for serrated wintergreen ***Orthilia secunda*** and mossy saxifrage ***Saxifraga hypnoides*** on Meall Cumhainn above the Steall path in Glen Nevis, and bearded couch ***Elymus caninus*** on Allt Coire Chraoibhe above Moy Farm (dead stems still quite recognisable!). Most recently, at the beginning of 2011, I was rewarded on a wet birthday walk with a new site for intermediate wintergreen ***Pyrola media*** beside the Pattack Falls.

In May I explored around **Garrygullach** in Glen Garry, and in August canoed across Loch Arkaig to visit **Gulvain**, where a new site for alpine bearberry ***Arctostaphylos alpinus*** and abundant dwarf cudweed ***Gnaphalium supinum*** were highlights. One of the richest squares I visited in 2010 was at **Laggan Locks** (NN2896) where I recorded 249 taxa in a wide variety of habitats, helped by much calcareous flushing. A surprising find in woodland near the carpark was an abundance of betony ***Stachys betonica*** – presumably planted.

In **Laggan Reservoir** (Glen Spean) slender rush ***Juncus filiformis***, which I first discovered there in 2007, has now spread over a wide area of the extensive draw-down zone. This is an interesting site with extensive beds of bladder sedge ***Carex vesicaria*** and unbranched bur-reed ***Sparganium emersum***, also sea campion ***Silene uniflora*** and, curiously, corn spurrey ***Spergula arvensis***, both abundant on banks of shingle.

During 2010 Gary Servant and I undertook a biodiversity survey of the native woodland remnants and forestry plantations on **Corrour Estate**. This supplemented the 2009 BSBI survey with plant records added for many new areas. Notable finds included several new sites for both cranberry species, ***Vaccinium oxycoccos*** and ***V. microcarpum***, and bog sedge ***Carex limosa***, all associated with blanket bog remnants in the forest. Lesser twayblade ***Listera cordata*** was remarkably abundant throughout the pine plantations (Scots and Lodgepole). Gary found coralroot orchid ***Corallorhiza trifida*** beside Loch Ossian, only the second record for Westernness (he also found the first site near Torlundy in 2009!). We also found ***Pyrola media*** in the middle of the nearby colony of small cow-wheat ***Melampyrum sylvaticum***, and in the forest at Inverlair.

Ian Bonner spent a rather wet week based in Acharacle, with help from Richard Marriott and myself. Notable finds included wood small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos* near Loch Moidart and yellow loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris* (native?) in the River Shiel (not *L. thyrsofolia* as previously thought). A tiny spike of bog orchid *Hammarbya paludosa* was a surprise find on the edge of a stream above Dalilea.

At the end of August I was joined by members of Inverness Botany Group and Lochaber Natural History Society to monitor the recently found colony of Irish ladies'-tresses orchid *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* near Corpach. We only found nine flowering spikes, well down on the previous count, but this species is notoriously variable in appearance. The nearby quarry gave us common centaury *Centaureum erythraea* and hart's-tongue fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium*. We also did a circuit up the hill, where the highlight for me was chaffweed *Anagallis minima*, spotted on a track by Ro Scott – certainly under-recorded, the tiny plants are easily missed.

Jim McIntosh (JM) found a new site for bog orchid on the Ardnish peninsula. He also reported wood speedwell *Veronica montana* and heath dog-violet *Viola canina* beside the River Lochy – two other species I seem to miss. Sallie Jack reported a new site for *S. romanzoffiana* at Lochaline. Faith Anstey continued her good work recording squares in Ardgour, and Chris Irvine sent useful records from around Kinlochleven, including frequent lesser butterfly-orchid *Platanthera bifolia* on the slopes north of the River Leven. A most intriguing report from Jon Mercer was goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* from the River Loy.

Barbara Sumner recorded plant lists for the two community woodlands at Corpach as part of the BSE project. Martin Robinson added the dandelion *Taraxacum stictophyllum* to the list for vc97 from a location on Ardverikie Estate. The *Diapensia lapponica* colony near Glenfinnan was visited by various people, including Heather McHaffie from RBGE who collected cuttings (under licence) to add to their collection of rare native species in cultivation. Still no sign of the Sithean Mor plants!

Threatened Plants Project

The TPP target species for 2010 in vc97 were (number of sample sites in brackets): corn marigold *Chrysanthemum segetum* (2), holly fern *Polystichum lonchitis* (2) and sibbaldia *Sibbaldia procumbens* (8). Records for the first of these date back to the 1980s from north Ardnamurchan, but with no sign recently. JM refound holly fern on Am Bodach (along with much *Arabis petraea*) and I relocated the sibbaldia population on Beinn a' Chaorainn – both thriving and more widespread than the previous records. The other sites for these montane species didn't get visited – opportunity and good weather did not coincide. However records were made for several other TPP species from previous years including *Gnaphalium sylvaticum* and *Pyrola media* as mentioned above, also field gentian *Gentianella campestris* – 180 plants on the verge of the A86!

The TPP list for 2011 includes one species which is widespread but scarce in Westernness, small white-orchid *Pseudorchis albida*, and two rarities, hairy stonecrop *Sedum villosum* (Beinn Iadain) and least water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides* (Loch Caorach, Ardnamurchan). The sample sites have not been selected yet, but help would be very welcome, also to mop up sites for previous years' species, especially sibbaldia.

Site Condition Monitoring (SCM)

In 2010 Richard Pankhurst did the SCM for Kentra Bay and Moss SSSI, whilst I continued with Sunart SSSI. Species monitored included northern rock-cress *Arabis petraea* and rock

whitebeam *Sorbus rupicola* on Ben Hiant, eelgrass *Zostera marina* near Glenmore, and *Hammarbya paludosa* at Resipole and Laudale. I failed once again to find long-leaved helleborine *Cephalanthera longifolia* at Woodend – it hasn't been seen there for some years but I haven't given up yet! Marion Moir had the same problem with *S. romanzoffiana* at Auliston Point. Both would benefit from a group effort in 2011 if anyone is able to help. Near Glenborrodale, Lapland marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza lapponica* (now merged with *D. traunsteineri* as *D. traunsteinerioides* – I prefer *lapponica*!) also needs a proper count when in flower.

Aliens

The Westernness flora has relatively few non-native plants, at least compared to many parts of the country, but they are also rather under-recorded I suspect. A bright yellow patch of the wintergreen *Barbarea intermedia* turned up in a layby beside Loch Lochy – first VC record for over 30 years. Nearby I spotted several plants of early pampas-grass *Cortaderia richardii* from the car, whilst Faith Anstey also recorded the pampas-grass *Cortaderia selloana* on the shore at Blaich – both are new VC records though I have a feeling both may grow elsewhere.

JM found an interesting selection of species on a building site in Fort William, including the third VC record for scentless chamomile *Matricaria recutita*. Also new to Westernness was a huge patch of Chinese bramble *Rubus tricolor* in the middle of Killiechonate Forest, with rock crane's-bill *Geranium macrorrhizum* and Cornish heath *Erica vagans* – presumably all from someone's garden. I also found mossy stonecrop *Crassula tillaea* on my drive – I can't believe that's the only site in Westernness?

Shallon *Gaultheria shallon* is an invasive shrub which is widespread in Argyll though rare in Lochaber. It is known from Mandally, where it seems to be spreading, but I also found it in Coille Dubh near Garryguallach – one to look out for. Another one to watch is Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* which seems to be colonising various sites. A more familiar invasive is Sitka spruce *Picea sitchensis*, which JM found at 960m on Stob Ban very recently – a new altitudinal record for Britain (by 100m) and despite deer browsing, 40cm tall, even at that altitude!

Data storage and analysis

With SNH support, over 17 000 records (mostly for 2000+ date class) have been entered into MapMate and will soon go onto the NBN Gateway. About 7000 more will be digitised in early 2011. These records are nearly all at 1 km resolution or less, with many 8 figure 'GPS' grid refs. This follows the earlier digitising of >30 000 records from Ardnamurchan by Ian Bonner (available on NBN Gateway). Having all these data in MapMate makes a huge difference e.g. it is possible to produce lists of species, dot maps and records for particular areas at the touch of a button – just ask! Some sample maps are given below – note that most pre-2000 records, except for Ardnamurchan and Local Change squares, are not included at present. If you have MapMate yourself then the data are easily shared and records exchanged. We have various plans for checklists, a Rare Plant Register and so on, in line with the BSBI Recording Strategy, also a webpage via the BSBI site soon I hope.

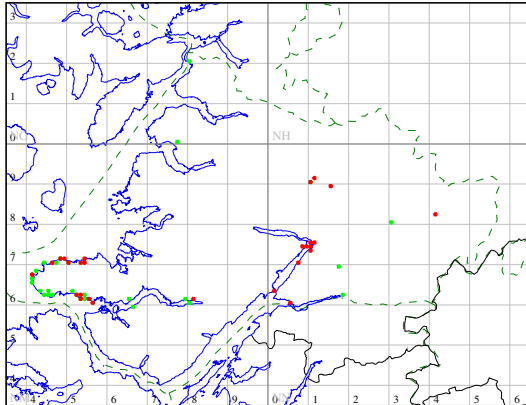
Sample maps from MapMate as at 22/1/11 (most 2010 data not yet entered)

Upper – 1km square records (red 2000+, green pre-2000)

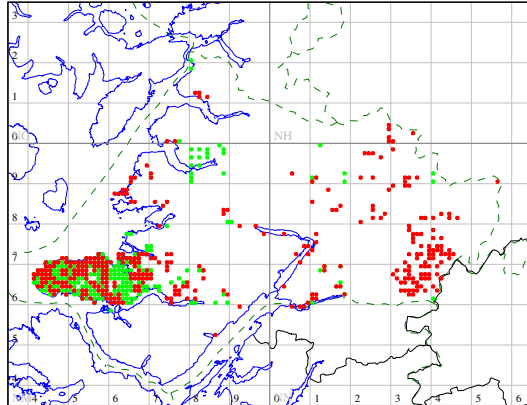
Lower – tetrad distribution (all dates)

The *Calluna* map gives an approximate indication of recorded squares in the database

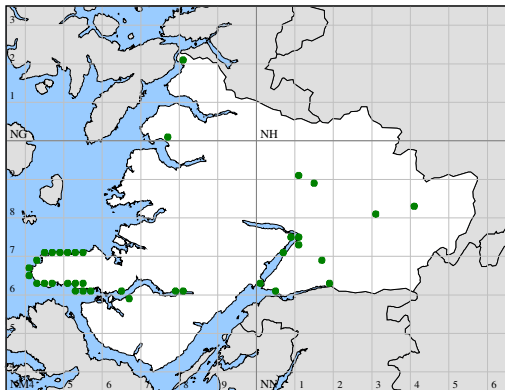
Silene uniflora (Sea Campion)



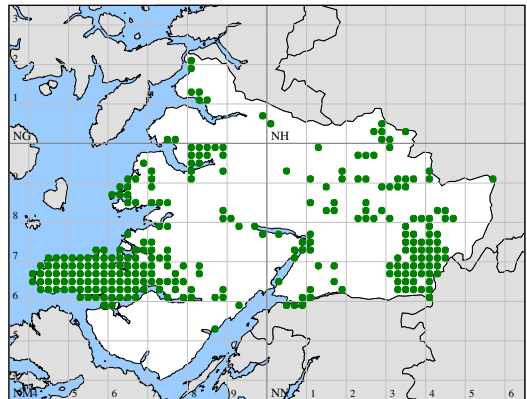
Calluna vulgaris (Heather)



Silene uniflora (Sea Campion)



Calluna vulgaris (Heather)



Ian Strachan and Ian Bonner, Joint Recorders for vc97 Westernness
27th January 2011

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**Name changes in Stace 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition relevant to vc97 (may not be comprehensive)**

| Old name                             | New name                             |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Alopecurus borealis                  | Alopecurus magellanicus              |
| Anagallis minima                     | Centunculus minimus                  |
| Arabis petraea                       | Arabidopsis petraea                  |
| Athyrium flexile                     | Athyrium distentifolium var. flexile |
| Carex curta                          | Carex canescens                      |
| Carex ovalis                         | Carex leporina                       |
| Carex viridula                       | Carex viridula s.l.                  |
| Carex viridula subsp. brachyrrhyncha | Carex lepidocarpa                    |
| Carex viridula subsp. oedocarpa      | Carex demissa                        |
| Carex viridula subsp. viridula       | Carex oederi                         |
| Cerastium arcticum                   | Cerastium nigrescens                 |
| Ceterach officinarum                 | Asplenium ceterach                   |
| Chrysanthemum segetum                | Glebionis segetum                    |
| Dactylorhiza lapponica               | Dactylorhiza traunsteinerioides      |
| Dactylorhiza traunsteineri           | Dactylorhiza traunsteinerioides      |
| Dryopteris affinis                   | Dryopteris affinis agg.              |
| Dryopteris affinis subsp. affinis    | Dryopteris affinis                   |

| <b>Old name</b>                                 | <b>New name</b>                        |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Dryopteris affinis subsp. borreri               | Dryopteris borreri                     |
| Dryopteris affinis subsp. cambrensis            | Dryopteris cambrensis                  |
| Euphrasia rostkoviana subsp. rostkoviana        | Euphrasia officinalis subsp. pratensis |
| Festuca arundinacea                             | Schedonorus arundinaceus               |
| Festuca gigantea                                | Schedonorus giganteus                  |
| Festuca pratensis                               | Schedonorus pratensis                  |
| Galium mollugo                                  | Galium album                           |
| Gymnadenia conopsea                             | Gymnadenia conopsea s.l.               |
| Gymnadenia conopsea subsp. borealis             | Gymnadenia borealis                    |
| Gymnadenia conopsea subsp. conopsea             | Gymnadenia conopsea                    |
| Helictotrichon pratense                         | Avenula pratensis                      |
| Helictotrichon pubescens                        | Avenula pubescens                      |
| Juncus ambiguus                                 | Juncus ranarius                        |
| Leontodon autumnalis                            | Scorzoneroides autumnalis              |
| Listera cordata                                 | Neottia cordata                        |
| Listera ovata                                   | Neottia ovata                          |
| Loiseleuria procumbens                          | Kalmia procumbens                      |
| Lychnis flos-cuculi                             | Silene flos-cuculi                     |
| Lycopersicon esculentum                         | Solanum lycopersicum                   |
| Malus domestica                                 | Malus pumila                           |
| Monotropa hypopitys                             | Hypopitys monotropa                    |
| Photinia davidiana                              | Stranvaesia davidiana                  |
| Phyllitis scolopendrium                         | Asplenium scolopendrium                |
| Potentilla palustris                            | Comarum palustre                       |
| Ranunculus ficaria                              | Ficaria verna                          |
| Rheum x hybridum                                | Rheum x rhabarbarum                    |
| Rorippa microphylla                             | Nasturtium microphyllum                |
| Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum                    | Nasturtium officinale                  |
| Rosa caesia subsp. glauca                       | Rosa caesia subsp. vosagiaca           |
| Schoenoplectus lacustris subsp. lacustris       | Schoenoplectus lacustris               |
| Schoenoplectus lacustris subsp. tabernaemontani | Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani         |
| Stachys officinalis                             | Betonica officinalis                   |
| Stellaria uliginosa                             | Stellaria alsine                       |
| Triglochin maritimum                            | Triglochin maritima                    |
| Triglochin palustre                             | Triglochin palustris                   |