Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland VC97 Westerness Newsletter - Spring 2018

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Loch Caorach near Grigadale – a site for Baldellia ranunculoides (Lesser Waterplantain) and Eriocaulon aquaticum (Pipewort).

Introduction

About 12,000 records for vascular plants and stoneworts were made in Westerness in 2017, the highest annual total for VC97 this decade! Our thanks to everyone who has contributed. Nearly 7,000 of these records are in the BSBI Distribution Database (DDb) and come from 224 monads (134 tetrads) across the VC, 51 of which had at least 50 records made. In addition, c. 5,000 records, still to be received, have been collected on Locheil Estate (see below).

There were many notable finds, some of which are described below, but all records are useful in helping to achieve good coverage for the next Atlas in 2020. For coverage to date and priorities for future recording see the end of this newsletter. All photos by IS unless otherwise stated.

2017 highlights

EAST

(Great Glen, Ben Nevis, Mamores, Creag Meagaidh, Ben Alder and Glen Spean)

A visit to Beinn Teallach in June produced new hectad records for two notable clubmosses: *Lycopodium annotinum* (Interrupted Clubmoss) on a stream bank at 700 m altitude and *Lycopodium lagopus* (Hare's-foot Clubmoss) not far from the summit at 740 m. The first of these is Nationally Scarce, but Hare's-foot Clubmoss is much rarer and more strictly montane. Ian Strachan (IS) first found it on Stob Coire Sgriodain, 11 km to the south, in 2007. It is also known from the central Cairngorms, and two years ago Andy Amphlett discovered another location in the western Cairngorms; no doubt more sites remain to be found. The most obvious difference from *L. clavatum* is that the cones are mostly single. Other finds of note included *Athyrium distentifolium* (Alpine Lady-fern) and a new hectad record for *Subularia aquatica* in Loch Sguadaig (NN3687). Across Glen Spean on Beinn Chlianaig an extensive colony of *Arctostaphylos alpinus* (Mountain Bearberry) was found, where Lousley had recorded it in 1953.

In 2016 Joh Mercer of Glen Loy reported an exciting find in a stream at Gairlochy - a water crowfoot. IS collected some flowering material last summer and keyed it out as **Ranunculus peltatus (Pond Water-crowfoot)**. Despite its name it was growing in a fairly rapidly flowing stream, below the canal, which runs into the River Lochy. This is the first record for the VC of this species and possibly the only record for a fine-leaved water crowfoot (a difficult group to identify). Another VC rarity **Nasturtium officinale agg (Watercress)** grows with it, could they have been introduced?

Exploration of the adjacent shingle banks and islands of the River Lochy turned up a rich flora, with species such as *Silene uniflora* (Sea Campion) and an abundance of *Salix phyllicifolia* (Tea-leaved Willow) and *S. purpurea* (Purple Willow), both very localised species in Westerness. Notable finds upstream on the River Spean included *Vicia sylvatica* (Wood Vetch) and *Elymus caninus* (Bearded Couch).



Shingle bank in River Lochy with much Salix phyllicifolia (Tea-leaved Willow) and Lupinus polyphyllus (Garden Lupin).

Less welcome on both rivers were large stands of the invasives *Persicaria wallichii* (Himalayan Knotweed) and *Fallopia japonica* (Japanese Knotweed), and a patch of *Lysichiton americanus* (Skunk Cabbage), new to the hectad. The last of these appears to be spreading in Westerness, presumably from garden ponds. Over the last few years it has been recorded from Lochaline, Salen and Fort William, and it was spotted last year at Sallachan (Ardgour) by Sandy Edwards. Last year IS also recorded several sites for two other 'large' garden escapes which seem to be spreading: *Cortaderia richardii* (Early Pampas-grass) is now flourishing prominently along the A82 beside Loch Lochy, and *Carex pendula* (Pendulous Sedge) has colonised ditches and waste ground near Spean Bridge and Inverroy, as well as sites at Nevis Range. Before 2010 this attractive sedge was only known in VC97 from the Loch Aline ashwood, where its status is uncertain.

Faith Anstey has been compiling some impressive lists at Onich. Notable find in 2017 included the second VC record for *Geranium lucidum* (Shining Crane's-bill), previously recorded from Ardtornish in 1977, and *Bromopsis ramosa* (Hairy Brome). In Fort William, Andy Amphlett recorded *Erophila glabrescens* (Glabrous Whitlow-grass), only the second VC record for this segregate, which needs some careful measurements to determine. Just into 2018, as part of the BSBI New Year Plant Hunt, Jim McIntosh found *Barbarea verna* (American Winter-cress) flowering on the shingle beach beside the old fort at Fort William. This is the second record for this edible species in Westerness.

IS has been continuing to search for *Melampyrum sylvaticum* (Small Cow-wheat) which was recorded in 1896 on the 'wooded bank of Glen Roy' (no GR in those days of course), but without success – there is a lot of habitat which is difficult to reach though, and hopefully it will turn up eventually. Sandy Payne has also been hunting for this species in Glen Buck, east of Loch Oich, where there are several records from 1971 and 1985. He had no success in 2017, but we hope to look again this summer. Loch Ossian is the only site in Westerness with recent records. However, IS was pleased when searching along the Roy to find *Festuca altissima* (Wood Fescue) on the west bank near Cranachan. This is the first record of this species in Westerness for over 30 years, and a first for Glen Roy. Incidentally, spurred on by a note from Andy Amphlett, he has also been looking more closely at *Festuca ovina agg.* (Sheep's Fescue) and finding that *F. filiformis* (Fine-leaved Sheep's Fescue) is quite widespread and under-recorded in Westerness.

A surprise find on the verge of the A86 near the Laggan Dam was a 100m-long flowering colony of *Anthyllis vulneraria* (Kidney Vetch). This is a rare species in VC97 away from the Ardnamurchan coast, though it is present on sand/shingle along the Spey further east in VC96. The A82 verge just west of Spean Bridge has a good colony of orchids, which fluctuate from year to year according to the mowing regime. This year there were 49 spikes of *Platanthera chlorantha* (Greater Butterfly-orchid), 20 spikes of *Dactylorhiza purpurella* (Northern Marsh-orchid) and, for the first time 2 spikes of *Dactylorhiza x formosa*, the hybrid between *D. purpurella* and *D. maculata*, including one impressive specimen 60cm tall. Previously this hybrid had only been recorded in VC97 at three sites, all in west Ardnamurchan; coincidentally, Ian Bonner and co-recorders added another site there in 2017, near Kilchoan.



Anthyllis vulneraria (Kidney Vetch) growing on the verge of the A86.

SOUTH-WEST (Morvern, Ardnamurchan, Sunart, Ardgour and Moidart)

In May, Lorraine Servant recorded two of our rarer orchids, *Cephalanthera longifolia* (Long-leaved Helleborine) and *Neottia nidus-avis* (Bird's-nest Orchid), in the ashwoods at Inninmore Bay. In August Luke Gaskell made some useful lists at Druimbuidhe in the north-west of Morvern, including a new hectad record for *Asplenium viride* (Green Spleenwort). Meanwhile Jim McIntosh found a new site for *Catapodium marinum* (Sea Fern-grass) up the coast near Smirisary (NM6476), a species previously only known from the west end of Ardnamurchan. He also visited Beinn Resipol and found *Cryptogramma crispa* (Parsley Fern), a new hectad record, as well as *Hammarbya paludosa* (Bog Orchid) and *Subularia aquatica*(Awlwort).



Cephalanthera longifolia (Long-leaved Helleborine) and Neottia nidus-avis (Bird'snest Orchid), in the ashwoods at Inninmore Bay (L Servant)

In July IS spent several days based at Strontian, with the principal aim of gathering records in the Ardgour hills. A long day was spent on the Druim Glas-Druim Garbh ridge, which runs north-eastwards from the Polloch road to Sgurr Dhomhnuill. Notable finds included *Dryopteris expansa* (Northern Buckler-fern) and *D. oreades* (Mountain Male-fern) amongst boulders, with a range of aquatics such as *Chara virgata* (Delicate Stonewort) and *Subularia aquatica* in the many small lochans. Rich crags near Bealach Clachaig had *Saxifraga oppositifolia* (Purple Saxifrage) and *Trollius europaeus* (Globeflower). On Glas Bhealach below Sgurr Dhomhnuill it was pleasing to refind several montane species recorded nearly 30 years ago by Rod Corner, including *Juncus triglumis* (Three-flowered Rush).



Herb-rich ledge near Bealach Clachaig with abundant Rubus saxatilis (Stone Bramble), Trollius europaeus (Globeflower) and ferns.

A long drive up Glen Hurich shortened the walk to Lochan Dubh, which yielded a new hectad record for *Isoetes lacustris* (Quillwort) as well as *Subularia aquatica*. IS then climbed onto the ridge on the south side of Cona Glen where, despite foul weather, he found a good range of upland species with new hectad records on Stob a' Chuir (NM9071) for *Juncus trifidus* (Three-leaved Rush), the very hairy hawkweed *Hieracium holosericium*, and *Saussurea alpina* (Alpine Saw-wort).

Ian Bonner (IRB) spent the same week at Kilmory, with Richard Marriott, helped by Liz MacDonald, and had some notable finds. In NM46, botanising around Mingary Pier and Pier Road, Kilchoan produced a single plant of *Lamium confertum* (Northern Dead-nettle) on a recently laid stone track between the road and a new jetty for a fish farm – presumably just a casual? On the limestone by the Pier were young plants of *Gentianella campestris* (Field Gentian), not seen here since 1996 and, nearby, *Dryopteris oreades* (Mountain Male-fern), the second near sea level record from W. Ardnamurchan. *Carlina vulgaris* (Carline Thistle) was on a rocky outcrop, only the ninth monad record and *Torilis japonica* (Upright Hedge-parsley) amongst boulders just above high water mark, a new hectad record.

Revisiting some of the forest roads W of Loch Mudle, IRB was interested to refind *Teesdalia nudicaulis* (Shepherd's Cress) along a short length of more open, stony road, not seen since 1984 when, in the early days of these plantations, it was more frequent. *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird's-foot) was also present. A first visit to Clach an Lochain in the forest revealed several tussocks of *Carex paniculata* (Greater Tussock-sedge), at only the third locality in Ardnamurchan.

A loss from the local flora is **Galium album (Hedge Bedstraw)**, first discovered by Ruth Dobson under the cattle grid near Branault, Kilmory, its only Arnamurchan locality and seen regularly over 20-30 years until its demise following recent replacement of the grid. This is balanced by the addition of *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine), with four flower spikes and several non-flowering shoots in the grounds of a property near Kilmory. This was first noticed by Maureen Minchin in 2014 and possibly originally introduced with planted shrubs. A visit to Ardtoe Island, just north of Kilmory, added a new hectad record for *Juncus ranarius* (Frog Rush) and refound an extensive stand of *Carex acutiformis* (Lesser Pond-sedge), just above the high water mark, where it was first discovered in 1993. It also grows in a similar situation near Sanna in NM4470, where it was first noticed in 1982 and was still present in 2014.

IS joined Richard to help survey **Baldellia ranunculoides (Lesser Water-plantain)** in Loch Caorach, south of Grigadale, where it was discovered new to Westerness in 1982. We found a healthy population, and Richard confirmed that it was subspecies *ranunculoides,* but he also found a second population 1km to the south in one of the Lochain Dubha. We also updated records for the Nationally Rare **Eriocaulon aquaticum (Pipewort)** at both these sites and at Loch Druim na Claish, perched dramatically above the western seacliffs of Garbhlach Mor. These cliffs are the only site in VC97 for **Crithmum maritimum (Rock Samphire)** which Liz managed to confirm by boat from the Minch!



Baldellia ranunculoides (Lesser Water-plantain) in Loch Caorach

At Camas nan Geall, Liz found *Ranunculus sceleratus* (Celery-leaved Buttercup), a first for NM56 and the first record since 1998 for this species which is otherwise known only from Kilchoan in NM46. Other notable finds nearby included *Glechoma hederacea* (Ground Ivy) and *Anagallis tenella* (Bog Pimpernel) and, at Ardslignish, *Botrychium Iunaria* (Moonwort) and 21 flowering spikes of *Neottia ovata* (Common Twayblade), a scarce orchid in Westerness.

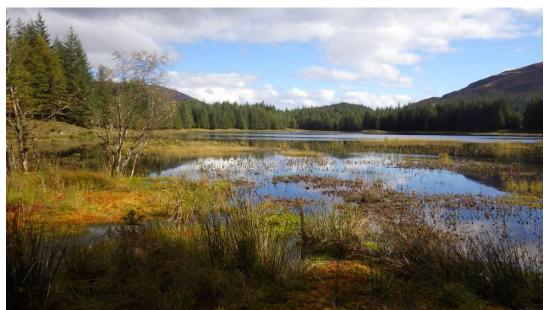
The Moidart hills have been poorly recorded in recent years. In May Tim Harrison found *Pseudorchis albida* (Small White-orchid) on the way up Rois-bheinn, only the second Moidart record this century. The same month Jim McIntosh and IS spent a productive day in NE Moidart, following the north shore of Loch Shiel from Glenfinnan pier to Coille Bhrodainn, and returning via Lochan nan Sleubhaich. We added 83 taxa to the post-1999 list for NM87, including 19 new species. The highlight was finding two new populations of the Nationally Scarce *Lycopodiella inundata* (Marsh Clubmoss), within 3km of the pier. This inconspicuous and somewhat 'erratic' species occurs elsewhere on Loch Shiel at Moss (near Acharacle), with an earlier record from Glen Aladale (1999) and a historic record for Ceanna Garbh near Polloch, with only a handful of records elsewhere in the VC (see below). At Loch Shiel it grows as small patches on bare, peaty substrate in the inundation zone, with

Drosera anglica (Great Sundew) as a common associate. Winter debris and/or wave action probably help to keep the habitat open. There are surely more sites to be found for Marsh Clubmoss on this enormous loch.



Lycopodiella inundata (Marsh Clubmoss) on the shore of Loch Shiel (centre of photo) with Drosera anglica (Great Sundew) and Pinguicula vulgaris (Butterwort)

Spurred on by these finds on Loch Shiel, in September IS visited Loch Dubh Torr an Tairbeit, which lies a few km to the east, between Glenfinnan and Kinlocheil (NM9378). *Lycopodiella inundata* had been recorded here in 1903 and 1936 but not found since. Getting there proved to be a trial, even in waders, but he was delighted to find a small patch of the clubmoss on the north shore. *Rhyncospora fusca* (Brown Beaked-sedge) was also recorded here in 1936, but nearly all the bog around the loch has since been afforested, and it could not be found. However, a large stand of *Carex lasiocarpa* (Slender Sedge) was found beside the loch, a new species for the hectad.



Loch Dubh Torr an Tairbeit, a hidden gem in Callop Forest

NORTH (Morar, Knoydart, Glengarry and Locheil)

Matt Harding obtained some useful early records around Glen Dessary when doing bird surveys, and Adam Fraser has some 5,000 records (!) from Locheil Estate collected during monitoring work last year. Philip Sansum submitted good monad lists from Sandaig, south of Glenelg, including *Veronica montana* (Wood Speedwell), also *Leymus arenarius* (Sea Lyme-grass) which is surprisingly rare in VC97, previously known only from Morar.

Jenny Ford contributed nearly 500 records from various parts of the VC, including the Borrodale-Beasdale area and Coire Shubh, south of Kinlochhourn, where she found *Pseudorchis albida* (2nd hectad record), *Juncus trifidus* and *Kalmia procumbens* (Mountain Azalea). The hills in this part of the VC have few recent records, which we hope to rectify in July during the field meeting at Kingie Lodge.

A visit to Glas Charn (north of Loch Eilt) in June proved to be worthwhile. In Lochan Stob a' Glas-chairn (NM8383) IS found a large stand of *Carex aquatilis* (Water **Sedge)**, a scarce species in the west of Scotland, which In VC97 was previously known only from Ardtornish and Loch Laggan. *Subularia aquatica* was also common here, and over 200 taxa were recorded for the tetrad as a whole. Further east, Oliver Moore found several spikes of *Hammarbya paludosa i*n Gleann Fionnlighe, the first record in NM98 since 1950.

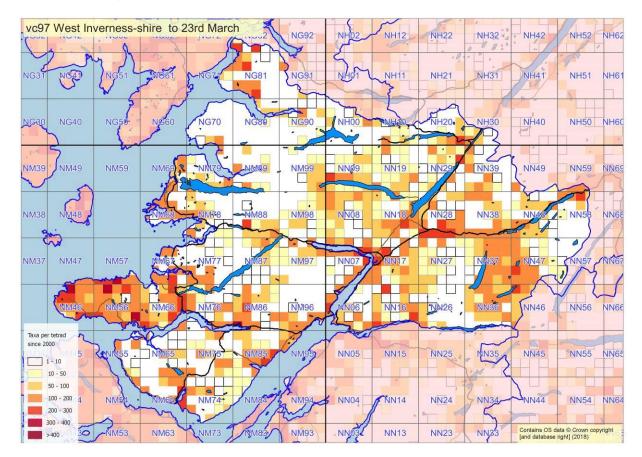


A spiky flowering rosette of Subularia aquatica (Awlwort), with tadpoles!

Survey coverage and priorities for 2018-19

All the 2017 records received have been digitised and submitted to the BSBI Distribution Database (DDb). IS has also digitised c. 7,000 records from previous years, including many important records for Ben Nevis SSSI, from Site Condition Monitoring (2012-13) and the **North Face survey (2014-16).** The final report for the latter survey was completed in 2017 and includes a remarkable 558 records for six Nationally Rare and ten Nationally Scarce species. The full project report (year 3) is available on the Nevis Landscape Partnership website <u>here</u> and the botanical report is also available on the VC97 webpage.

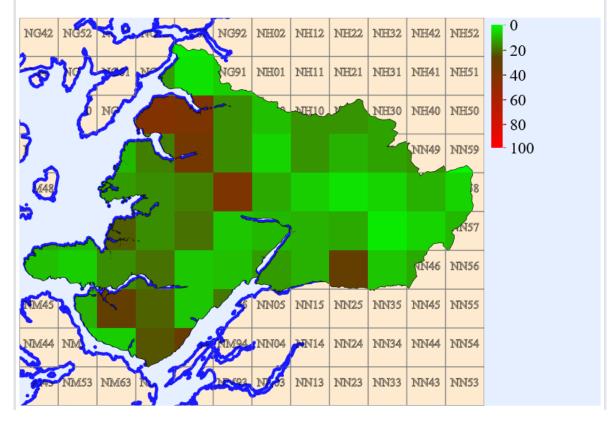
The map below summarises recording effort in Westerness since the last Atlas i.e. 2000+. The coloured squares give a broad indication of the number of taxa recorded in each tetrad (often from just a single monad list). Note that the number of species will depend partly on habitat diversity, so that for an upland square 50-100 species (dark yellow) may be a 'good' count and 100-200 (orange) very good! Records are currently being extracted from various survey reports for SSSIs/Nature Reserves by IS, which will improve the picture for NG70/80, NM65/75, NN17/27, NN47/57 and NN48, but some clear 'gaps' are apparent. With only two field seasons left before Atlas 2020 the pressure is on!



The next map, from the DDb, shows for each hectad the % of taxa recorded in the period 1987-99 that have not been refound. It is surprisingly difficult to get below 20%, and a 70% refind rate is pretty good. Some parts of the VC were better recorded than others in 1987-99 which obviously affects interpretation of this map. A table at the end of this newsletter summarises various recording statistics for each hectad.

Taxa not refound since 2000 (at hectad scale)

Comparing taxa found between 1987 and 2000, with the period since 2000. Map shows the % of taxa not refound in the recent period - which may indicate loss of diversity; recent surveying deficits or earlier misrecording.



Some key priorities for survey are listed below (with highest priorities asterisked), although there are plenty of unsurveyed squares in most hectads! Guidance on recording for Atlas 2020 is available on the BSBI website <u>here</u> and includes guidance on difficult taxa and where to record. NB There is a general need to record **aquatics** – such as **stoneworts** (*Chara* and *Nitella* species), **bladderworts** (*Utricularia* spp) as well as **pondweeds** (*Potamogeton* spp) even though our flora is quite limited. If you are not able to wade or do not have a grapnel, loch margins often have washed up fragments later in the year. IS would be happy to receive specimens for identification.

If you liaise with us about survey we can help with previous records for notable species and perhaps avoid duplication of effort. Work is progressing on a Rare Plant Register and checklist, which is highlighting many locations for notable species that need checking/updating, details from IS.

EAST

NN26* – eastern Mamores, lochs and peatlands NN47/NN48/NN57/NN58* - Ardverikie Estate, Creag Meagaidh – uplands, lochs NN06 (this was well recorded pre-2000) NN39 – Glen Buck

NORTH NG70*/NG80* - Knoydart-Barrisdale NM78/NM79 -Morar hills and lochans

NM88*/NM89*/NM98*/NM99* - Hills north of Glenfinnan (Adam/Matt?) NG90*/NG91*/NH00*/NH10*/NH20* - targets for **Kingie field meeting** July 2018

SOUTH-WEST

NM77*/NM87* - Moidart hills and lochans, Glen Aladale NM96*/NM97* – Ardgour glens (Gour, Scaddle, Cona), +corries, ridges, lochs NN07 – Gleann Sron a' Chreagain NM54 - Killundine (5749, 5849, 5949)

NM55 - Abhainn Mhungasdail, Lochan Chroise Bheinn (aquatics) (5854); Oronsay

NM65: Loch Arienas (and Doire nam Mart) - aquatics. Rahoy woods, Carna?

NM74* - Ardtornish hills, mires and lochans

NM84 – Inversanda

NM85 – Fuar Bheinn-Creach Bheinn

Appendix

Table of hectads in VC97 with extent (% land = sq km) and statistics about recorded species. The final column gives a rough indication of recording effort since 2000, based on the number of 'recording days', defined in the DDb as days when at least 40 spp were recorded. The five hectads in italics have negligible area in VC97.

hectad	hectad name	% land	Species recorded (all years)	% recorded since 2000	Species refound since 2000	Species not refound since 2000	Newly found species since 2000	Recor- ding days since 2000
NG60	Am Fhaochag	0.1	1	0	0	1	0	0
NG70	Beinn na Caillich	74	395	46	162	215	18	3
NG71	Sandaig(N)	13.9	248	91	37	22	189	3
NG72	Kyle Rhea	0.8	208	97	2	7	199	4
NG80	Barrisdale	86	325	40	120	196	9	4
NG81	Glenelg	92.8	555	86	333	78	144	9
NG82	Bernera	16.5	333	94	193	19	121	6
NG90	Kinloch Hourn	97.7	384	61	213	150	21	9
NG91	The Saddle	29	65	88	6	8	51	2
NG92	Ratagan N	0.1	1	0	0	1	0	0
NH00	Loch Quoich E	79.1	281	58	153	119	9	3
NH01	Sgurr an Lochain	0.4	0	0				0
NH10	Tomdoun	50	302	61	164	119	19	7
NH20	Loch Garry	69.1	420	62	215	160	45	10
NH30	Loch Oich N	27.1	294	82	77	53	164	11
NM46	Kilchoan	53.7	595	80	440	119	36	70
NM47	Glendrian	5.2	373	76	265	88	20	12
NM54	Killundine	4.1	299	67	134	99	66	3
NM55	Drimnin	38.7	472	64	283	170	19	7
NM56	Ben Hiant	81.8	574	87	450	73	51	103
NM57	Ockle	13.8	495	78	363	110	22	32
NM64	Fiunary	48.4	568	70	356	170	42	14
NM65	L Teacuis	91.7	519	55	275	232	12	9
NM66	Laga	88.7	609	72	400	173	36	54
NM67	L Moidart	50.9	572	63	339	214	19	25
NM68	Arisaig	46.3	573	61	297	226	50	20

hectad	hectad name	% land	Species recorded (all years)	% recorded since 2000	Species refound since 2000	Species not refound since 2000	Newly found species since 2000	Recor- ding days since 2000
NM69	Mallaig	27.2	493	62	276	189	28	15
NM73	Rubha an Ridire	0.1	0	0				0
NM74	Loch Tearnait	81.6	517	61	296	201	20	12
NM75	Laudale	99.5	436	62	249	166	21	11
NM76	Resipole	89.2	511	67	317	168	26	28
NM77	Rois Bheinn	96.8	474	71	309	138	27	13
NM78	Lochailort	92.8	437	65	245	152	40	18
NM79	Loch Morar W	72.7	420	65	256	146	18	13
NM84	Glensanda	16.3	112	49	5	57	50	4
NM85	Kingairloch	83.6	483	73	318	128	37	17
NM86	Strontian	98.1	556	78	365	125	66	32
NM87	Loch Shiel N	100	296	69	181	92	23	23
NM88	Loch Beoraid	100	376	66	222	126	28	19
NM89	Camusrory	95.5	353	59	195	143	15	4
NM95	Inversanda	15.7	302	88	96	35	171	11
NM96	Glen Gour	92.8	491	69	305	154	32	11
NM97	Cona Glen	97.6	376	70	222	113	41	17
NM98	Streap	100	349	43	141	199	9	16
NM99	Glen Dessary	100	326	72	187	92	47	11
NN05	Carness	1	236	84	9	37	190	1
NN06	Onich	76.7	693	63	378	256	59	29
NN07	Achaphubuil	85	585	75	357	146	82	41
NN08	Druim Fada	100	341	73	190	91	60	33
NN09	Glen Kingie	100	317	81	204	59	54	17
NN16	Steall	84.7	509	79	342	106	61	49
NN17	Ben Nevis	99.5	704	72	424	199	81	115
NN18	Gairlochy	100	540	75	338	133	69	78
NN19	Geal Charn	100	365	78	236	79	50	20
NN26	Loch Eilde Mor	94.9	322	63	181	119	22	12
NN27	Grey Corries	100	440	60	234	178	28	32
NN28	Roy Bridge	100	576	77	321	132	123	88
NN29	Ben Tee	100	488	73	307	133	48	30
NN35	Black Water R'voir	0.2	3	0	0	3	0	0
NN36	Leum Uilleim	93.2	340	87	237	44	59	11
NN37	Loch Treig	100	421	82	272	75	74	41
NN38	Beinn Teallach	100	445	82	300	78	67	31
NN39	Glen Turret	89.5	376	76	236	92	48	16
NN46	Corrour Lodge	26.2	308	91	178	27	103	14
NN47	Ben Alder	93.1	360	86	227	50	83	37
NN48	Creag Meagaidh	99.2	464	73	294	125	45	44
NN49	Meall Ptarmigan	12.8	177	74	101	46	30	3
NN57	Loch Pattack	30.6	129	29	14	92	23	3
NN58	River Pattack	67	421	69	217	129	75	12
NN59	Strathmashie	6.6	265	95	5	12	248	5