Atriplex on the Firth of Forth

During searches for the Scottish HectAd Rare Plant Project (SHARPP), the most northerly British *Atriplex longipes* (Long-stalked Orache) population was refound after 40 years at Haughs of Airth (VC86), along with first records for the hybrids A. *x gustafssoniana* (Kattegat Orache) and *A. glabriuscula x prostrata* on the Firth of Forth (both found in VC84 & VC86). Huge thanks to John Akeroyd, BSBI *Atriplex* referee, for his determinations and feedback! His identification tips are shared here to encourage other *Atriplex*-hunters around the Forth.

Atriplex longipes, growing at the exact spot C.A. Stace recorded it in 1984! It has a lax, weakly erect habit, spreading but sparse branching, cuneate leaves and mix of stalkless and stalked foliose bracts. Some of the bracts have spiny tubercles, but Akeroyd notes in *Flora Europaea* that the bracts are 'smooth or muricate dorsally'. The margins can be entire or toothed. No doubt some backcrossing does occur in mixed populations. If you have any tall, upper saltmarsh vegetation in the area, it's worth looking out for *A. longipes* – like an erect, less leafy variant of *A. prostrata* with somewhat cuneate, little-toothed leaves and a mixture of stalked and sessile bracteoles.

Examples of *Atriplex* x *gustafssoniana* Tascher. (*A. prostrata* Boucher ex DC x *A. longipes* Drejer), with some mealiness and the triangular, truncate leaves of *A. prostrata* combined with foliaceous bracteoles of *A. longipes*; some bracteoles shortly but distinctly stalked. Short-stalked bracteoles is said to be a character of var. *kattegatensis*— this is apparently restricted to N. Scotland in Britain, but may have been overlooked and have a wider distribution – scope for more research.

Three examples of *Atriplex glabriuscula* Edmonston x *A. prostrata* Boucher ex DC, which has distinctive small, spinose-tuberculate, often densely clustered 'round fruits'. The right-hand specimen is a rather green (non-mealy) variant but with thick, tuberculate bracts that appear to be variably fused; more mature material would probably look more like the others. Typical *A. glabriuscula* prefers more exposed strands rather than saltmarsh assemblages.