BSBI Atlas 2020

Scottish Officer Report for 2016

Atlas 2020 Recording

With 30% of the land area but only 13% of the BSBI membership, achieving full Atlas coverage is going to be a great challenge for Scotland. A number of initiatives were arranged to help including two recording weeks: one in Lanarkshire organised by Angus Hannah and another in Shetland organised by Paul Harvey and me. Over 4,400 records were collected, with 274 new hectad records by ten members in Lanark and over 10,000 records in 110 monads were collected by 29 BSBI members across the Shetland Mainland and the eastern isles. We plan to continue with two Recording Weeks per year in the final three years of Atlas 2020 fieldwork.

Wild Flower Society funds supported Atlas recording in West Ross & Sutherland. The funds paid for two weeks' survey work in remote areas of West Ross, by contractor, Ian Green and self-catering accommodation so the West Sutherland Recorder, Ian Evans, could base himself and a small survey team in the north-east of his county for three weeks (avoiding a daily 4-hour return journey).

Andy Amphlett collected an amazing 11,000 records in his neighbouring Vice-County of Easterness and both Stephen Bungard and Angus Hannah also helped neighbours in West Ross and Ayrshire respectively. If other recorders who are on top of Atlas coverage in their own VCs would like to help neighbours, please do get in touch with them. Several members also made very significant Atlas contributions; the late Eric Meek collected a remarkable 8,000 records in North and South Aberdeen and Stewart Taylor collected 6,750 records in Moray and Easterness. Many recorders would warmly welcome such contributions and if you are able to help please offer to do so.

Grateful thanks are due to all those involved in these initiatives.

Cairngorm National Park (CNP) Recording Project

We prepared a further funding bid to the Cairngorm National Park Authority for a third and final year of the project to support BSBI recording in its area. The bid was successful and Andy Amphlett again managed the project to a successful conclusion. Over its three years some 87,000 records have now been collected by about 100 recorders - a great achievement. These have all been digitised, uploaded to the DDb and validated by the Recorders and have made a significant contribution to Atlas 2020 in one of the most remote and mountainous areas of Scotland.

VCR Network Support

Two one-day conferences were held in April with major sessions on Atlas 2020, MapMate and the BSBI database. The same material was repeated once in the north at Strathpeffer and again in the south at Edinburgh to minimise travelling time for attendees. Fifty-two attended in total, half of whom were county recorders, and the other half were potential recorders or interested members. The presentations and handouts were made available on the BSBI Scottish Conferences page for those who did not make it, as well as an aid to memory for those that did.

Early in the New Year we asked for Annual Reports for 2015 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 taking place across Scotland!

Recorder vacancies were filled in Lanarkshire (by Michael Philip), Caithness (Margaret and Francis Higgins) and Shetland (Paul Harvey and Alex Prendergast). Time was spent variously in the field and at the computer training these new appointees. There was no response to the vacancy advert for Berwickshire. Sadly, Jackie Muscott (West Lothian) tendered her resignation just before the Scottish Annual Meeting. At the time of writing, both are being (re-)advertised in BSBI News.

I took over as editor and compiler of the monthly Recorder & Referee support newsletter, BSBI *eNews* in March. A VCR support newsletter was also sent to Scottish Recorders just before Christmas.

Publications

Two excellent Rare Plant Registers were published for Ayrshire by David Lang and Dumfriesshire by Chris Miles bringing the total of Scottish RPRs to sixteen (including one for the Cairngorm National Park). They are all available on the BSBI website and local and visiting botanists are invited to use them to track down long lost populations and update old records! The splendid Flora of Lanarkshire was also published during the year by the family of the late Peter Macpherson.

Training

2016 was the fourth year of the Plant Family training initiative. Three one-day Plant Family Workshops were attended by a total of 55 beginners. They were mainly young adults working, studying or volunteering in plant-related activities. Thanks are due to volunteers, Faith Anstey the main organiser and tutor, and 12 assistant tutors and to our partners this year – Plantlife Scotland, National Trust for Scotland and Dundee Botanic Garden.

In addition, two training days were organised on Shetland for twenty local botanists after our Recording Week in August with the help of BSBI volunteers Jenny Farrar, Jay MacKinnon, Matt Dodd, Alex Prendergast and Paul Harvey.

BSBI Meetings

We held a very successful Scottish Annual Meeting at the SNH Conference Centre at Battleby in November. A new innovation was the inclusion of six breakout workshops – on Sedges, Bents, Stoneworts, D*ryopteris affinis* agg., Microscope techniques and the BSBI Review. The concept proved to be very popular and will be repeated when we return to RBGE this November.

Twenty-five BSBI members enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch with wine kindly supplied by Iain Macdonald and convivial company in the RBGE conference room.

Site Condition Monitoring

The BSBI's contribution to SNH's vascular plant Site Condition Monitoring has helped us to make a strong case for SNH funding for the Scottish Officer post. The fieldwork and reporting is largely done by BSBI volunteers with help from me. In the early part of the year, reports were completed, checked and forwarded to SNH for the six sites surveyed in 2015. These were Loch Leven, Eigg – Cleadale, Glas Tulaichean, Kyle of Sutherland Marshes, Morven & Mullochdubh and Hill of Towanreef.

Another full SCM program was agreed with SNH in 2016. Fieldwork was completed and reports drafted by volunteers for The Cairnwell (by Eric Meek) Loch Moraig (Martin Robinson), Raasay (Stephen Bungard), Rescobie & Balgavies Loch (Theo Loizou), Torrs to Mason's Walk (David Hawker) & Whitlaw Mosses (Sarah Eno).

In addition, I helped SNH area staff identify suitable fence lines so grazing can be controlled at the *Saxifraga hirculus* flushes at Craigengar SSSI site in the Pentlands. I also worked with Aline Finger of RBGE to collect DNA samples for an SNH-funded project and to gather seed for the Millennium Seed Bank from six *Saxifraga hirculus* populations in Caithness.

BSBI members Ian Strachan, Dan Watson and Matt Harding worked with climbing guides to find and monitor rare plant populations on Ben Nevis as part of third and final year of the North-face project. Many thanks to all the BSBI volunteers involved with monitoring work in 2016.

Thanks

Grateful thanks are due to all the BSBI Recorders, members and volunteers who contributed so magnificently to the BSBI's work in 2016! I look forward to seeing you in the field in 2017!

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer, March 2017