



## Recorder eNewsletter

*for the botanical recording community*

March 2024

### **BSBI England Officer**

I am delighted to announce that we have recruited Sam Thomas for the position of BSBI England Officer.

Sam is an experienced botanist and entomologist with particular interests in plants, flies and moths. He has worked on urban biodiversity monitoring with the Natural History Museum and across ecological consultancy and large scale vegetation monitoring projects in the UK and Ireland. Sam currently lives on the Hampshire coast and spends a lot of his free time recording in the New Forest. He is looking forward to getting to know members and helping to deliver a range of support for recorders in England. Sam will be at the Recorders Meeting in April so please do come and say hello.

This role is a one-year pilot funded by Natural England which seeks to identify support needs of County Recorders, improve data flow, and increase participation in structured surveys.

From April, Pete Stroh - who has been serving as England Officer one day a week alongside his Scientific Officer role - will return to being Scientific Officer full time.

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager

### **BSBI events for 2024**

The full programme of national [field meetings and indoor events](#) for the year ahead is now live, with booking links, contact details, and shareable links so you can alert your botanical networks to any particular event that you think might interest them. You can also filter so that you see only recording events, or only specialist training events. The programme - which is our biggest ever! - goes up to the end of the year, so you can save the dates now for the Irish Autumn Conference, the Scottish Botanists' Conference and the British & Irish Botanical Conference and then keep an eye out for more info.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

## **Welsh AGM, 5-7th July**

The Welsh AGM, 5th – 7th July, will be in South Wales this year and we will be based at the Swansea University Bay campus, on the coast, with accommodation, meals, talks and exhibits all within the campus. The theme of the field visits will be brownfield, post-industrial habitats and we have some great sites lined up. There will be talks from Plantlife, National Botanic Garden Wales and local botanists.

See the [Wales Annual Meeting & AGM page](#) for details and booking. Hope to see you there!

[Julian Woodman](#)

## **Irish Spring Conferences from BSBI and CIEEM**

Plans are afoot for a great [Irish Spring Conference](#) on Saturday 20th April, at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin. An exciting lineup of talks is promised: find out more about Ireland's newest book on aquatic plants from one of its authors (and a chance to get your hands on a copy!), hear about the new BSBI recording app and get inside information from the County Recorder of what may be Ireland's most idyllic location? Booking will go live [here](#) in early March, when the rest of the programme will be revealed...

There's also a [CIEEM Irish Conference on 17th April](#) with a theme of 'Examining the Practical Impacts of Environmental Policy and Legislation on Ireland's Ecology' so lots on offer for botanists and recorders in Ireland this Spring!

[Bridget Keehan](#), BSBI Ireland Officer

## **Members' access to the BSBI Distribution Database**

BSBI will be providing members with access to the Distribution Database from April 2024. We have emailed all VCRs in preparation. For more information see the notice on the [members area of the website](#).

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager

## **Tim Rich and the 'Difficult Plant Problem'**

Tim Rich is giving an online talk at 7.30 on Tuesday 5th March for Reading and District Natural History Society (RDNHS) on the 'Difficult plant problem'. The talk is based on Tim's article in

[BSBI News no. 149](#) (pages 23-29) and aims to draw attention to some of the difficult groups, cover why they are difficult, suggest ways that they can be identified and encourage more botanists to tackle them. RDNHS are making 30 free spaces available on a first-come-first-served basis for any BSBI members who wish to attend. Please contact [rdnhszoom@outlook.com](mailto:rdnhszoom@outlook.com) to book your space.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

### **Request for surveyors for NPMS squares in Northern Ireland**

Are you, or do you know, someone who would be interested in surveying NPMS squares in more remote and/or less accessible areas of Northern Ireland?

We need several folk able and willing to set up and survey seven NPMS squares in March 2024. This is contract work and surveyors would be paid a daily fee and expenses.

The seven squares are situated in Counties Armagh, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Derry/Londonderry and Antrim and are in upland and/or more remote areas.

If you would be interested in this yourself, or know someone who might be, [please contact me](#) at your earliest convenience.

[Jen Farrar](#), Botanical Skills Officer Northern Ireland

### **Searching for 'blurred' or 'sensitive' records on the DDB**

James Drever has added a [page to the guidance site](#) on how to find 'blurred' or 'sensitive' records on the DDB for your county - this may be useful for newer VCRs who might not know what a previous VCR has obscured. What's the difference between the two? 'Sensitive' refers to records that have been flagged specifically at record-level, whereas 'Blurred' also includes those that are part of a blurred data-set or are [nationally sensitive](#).

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager

### **Responding to planning issues - guidance for members and VCRs**

The Policy on Conservation sets out that the BSBI will: 'provide guidance to Vice County Recorders and Members when they wish to respond independently to local issues.'

[This document](#) on the guidance website sets out that guidance and is intended for use by Members and Vice-County Recorders.

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager

### **Draft RPRs for Scottish vice-counties on the DDb**

I'm pleased to report that draft Rare Plant Register (RPR) lists for [VC88 Mid-Perthshire](#) and [VC91 Kincardineshire](#) are now uploaded to the BSBI Distribution Database (DDb), and are viewable under the 'Checklists' option in the 'Tools' drop-down menu. Click on the 'Items' tab to view the taxa on each list, along with a link to download them as a .csv file, easily convertible to Excel.

Although these RPRs are not finalised, adding them to the Database in draft form allows records to be searched against the vice-county RPR taxon list – a great way to help target your local recording effort.

Here is that [search set up for VC86 Stirlingshire](#). Alternatively, from the 'More Options' drop-down menu on the [search page](#) select 'attributes' and then 'conservation status summary', then tick the 'County Rare Plant Register' box.

Many thanks to Jim McIntosh and Neale Taylor for Mid-Perthshire, and David Elston and David Welch for Kincardineshire, for their draft RPR submissions. If you would like to include yours on the Database, even in draft form, email the BSBI Country Support Team.

[Matt Harding](#), BSBI Scotland Officer

### **Snowflakes**

I am interested in *Leucojum aestivum* subsp. *aestivum* and subsp. *pulchellum* and *L. vernum*. In this area we have only one site which appears to be ssp. *pulchellum* (smooth stems but larger tepals than expected; interestingly the pollen is not fully fertile! Could an intermediate be in cultivation already?). *L. vernum* may not be well recorded and may be over-recorded for one of the other two taxa (the subspecies treated by some as species). In terms of vernacular names, flowering times seem to be less useful in these plants now, as I have seen the putative subsp. *pulchellum* with some flowers (more later) in early February so ID cannot be based on flowering. Seeds are said to be different between *L. aestivum* *s.l.* (black) and *L. vernum* (pale/whitish) but it would require visiting later to see if that works. Please, if possible send a photo of the plant(s) in situ and a few stems and flowers, some just open, (in a plastic bag, no

special packing needed) with some details. For plants thought to be genuine, at some point I would be interested in a bulb or two.

[Michael Wilcox](#) – see [BSBI Yearbook](#) for postal address

### **Upcoming events**

A reminder that booking for the [Recorders' Meeting](#) at Preston Montford, which runs from April 19 to 20, is open. These meetings are an opportunity to learn hints and tips on identification, learn about BSBI facilities such as the DDb and recording app and to meet other botanists and recorders. Although particularly targeted at botanists who are just starting to record, there will be plenty of content for botanists of all levels. Although organised by the Committee for England, botanists from anywhere are welcome to attend. At the moment there are no plans for an autumn meeting for more experienced botanists.

Booking for the [Annual Summer Meeting](#) in Guernsey, from May 20 to 24, is also open, and there are still a few places left in the group booking at the hotel where we are based. I must apologise for the typo in the Yearbook – the cost quoted is for the four nights, not per night!

[Jonathan Shanklin](#), BSBI Hon. Field Meetings Secretary

### ***English Botanical News***

Having held the [England Annual Meeting](#), the next thing for me to start organising is the 2024 edition of [English Botanical News](#). This will include the VCR reports, details of new BSBI staff, meeting reports etc. I'd welcome some additional contributions, whether articles, field notes, unusual finds, or something of peripheral interest, so do consider sending me anything that you think might be of interest to other botanists in England. I'd certainly like to hear of experiences in tracking down [LORE species](#), or how you are getting involved with Local Nature Recovery Strategies. There may well be experiences to share.

[Jonathan Shanklin](#), Chair, BSBI Committee for England

### **New Year Plant Hunt Visualisation**

The [New Year Plant Hunt](#) annual summary reports only include a map showing locations of the individual 'hunts'. Since 2020 the data are on the DDb. I [created this map](#) which just covers GB (sorry Ireland ...), for the period 2020-2024. I calculated the total number of taxa recorded per hectad in each year (a DDb query), and then the maximum in a single year (in

Excel). I then used a tool on the DDb to generate centre points for each hectad and imported the data into QGIS. The records on the DDb do not appear to include zero records, so the map only shows hectads with one or more taxa in flower. I'm not sure to what extent the maps show real differences across the country and how much is recording bias; a bit of both probably. For those of us who live and often record in upland, northern parts of GB, the number of taxa in flower at New Year in southern Britain is extraordinary!

[Andy Amphlett](#), joint County Recorder for Easternness

### **Recording Ash dieback**

Ash dieback can be recorded in the comments field for records of Ash submitted to the DDb, but a more direct way of reporting this disease would be via the bespoke apps [Treecheck](#) (in Ireland) or [TreeAlert](#) (in Britain).

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager

### **BSBI Recording app**

Over 25,000 records have been submitted through the new [Recording App](#) so far. I've had many bug reports and suggestions for improvements; thank you very much to everyone who has contributed data or feedback.

The app is currently open to anyone who already has a DDb account but, from April, we will make it available to all BSBI members. You can use the app through your web browser or in the field on a smartphone. There are more [details about how to get started](#).

The software is still under development, but appears to be working well for most people, so could be a good solution if you are frustrated with MapMate or just curious to try the new system.

[Tom Humphrey](#), BSBI Database Officer

### **Mistletoe berries required**

I've been contacted by a photographer who wishes to photograph the germination of Mistletoe and possibly even capture a timelapse of this. She does not have access to Mistletoe to collect any berries, however, and all of the Mistletoe I am aware of in my area would require a cherry-picker!

If anyone has an easy supply of Mistletoe berries near them (literal low-hanging fruit!) and is willing to post some out, then please send me an email.

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager

## **County Membership Lists**

If, as a BSBI volunteer such as a County Recorder, you need access to members' contact details in your area, we can arrange this. We will need you to read and sign our Volunteer Confidentiality and Data Protection Agreement. For more information see [Membership List – Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland](#)

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Support Manager

## **Recorder eNewsletter**

Recorder eNewsletter is aimed at all BSBI recorders, referees, members and supporters involved with recording. If you have active recorders in your county that you think would appreciate receiving it then please encourage them to [subscribe to it here](#).

I'd welcome short contributions from anyone on topics of interest to fellow readers. Recorder eNewsletter is generally published at the beginning of each month so contributions should reach me at the beginning of the preceding week. I'd also be pleased to have feedback.

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Support Manager