

BSBI eNews – March 2019

From Jim McIntosh, Senior Country Officer, jim.mcintosh@bsbi.org

The perils of botanical hibernation!

“This time of year finds many a botanist in the grip of hibernation, waiting patiently for the days to lengthen and the warmth of spring to coax them out again into the field. Nothing wrong with that whatsoever. But perhaps we wait a bit too long. Many charismatic, easy-to-identify spring flowers seem to creep under the radar, their best days behind them by the time we emerge blinking into the sunshine. A search of the BSBI database reveals that widespread, common early-flowering species are remarkably under-recorded in our area of central Scotland.”

So writes [Matt Harding](#), Recorder for [Stirlingshire](#). But it could equally apply over wide swathes of Britain & Ireland – especially in areas further than a Recorder might wish to drive in early spring! In the [newsletter](#) he encourages members of his local group to help and lists under-recorded species such as *Galanthus nivalis* (Snowdrop), *Ficaria verna* (Lesser Celandine), *Adoxa moschatel* (Townhall Clock), *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* (Alternate-leaved Spleenwort) and *Narcissus* agg. (Daffodil) to look out for and record.

Then there are those small early-flowering crucifers, such as *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Thale-cress), *Cardamine hirsuta* (Hairy Bitter-cress) and *Erophila verna* agg. (Common Whitlowgrass) which will also be missed by hibernating botanists!

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Taxonomic changes in Stace edition 4

The taxon list used by BSBI recorders is based substantially on the nomenclature defined in Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles*. Following publication of the 4th edition in January, work is underway to update the taxon lists used by the BSBI Database (DDb), MapMate and to revise recording cards. This is a complex process that will take some time to complete.

Please do not manually update records in MapMate or the DDb to use the new names. Most required changes will happen automatically when the taxon dictionaries are updated.

Recorders are welcome to start using the new nomenclature from edition 4, but we anticipate that the majority of records this year will continue to be based on Stace 3 definitions. Linkage of synonyms in the DDb and MapMate should allow for a gradual and relatively easy transition.

The next Atlas will use the taxon names from the 4th edition wherever possible, but where discrepancies exist, the taxonomic concepts that accord with the definitions used for fieldwork over the past 20 years will be mapped.

[Tom Humphrey](#), BSBI Database Officer & [Pete Stroh](#), BSBI England Officer

Validation Tips

It is worth periodically checking your My County > Data Validation tab and investigating any increase in the numbers of records that have significant errors in “Grid-reference – vice-county boundary matching” table. Records with discrepancies that are greater than 2km are excluded from maps, so it is worth checking to see if you can find ways to correct them. Common mistakes such as the transposition of digits in a grid-reference or use of the wrong 100km square prefix lead to major discrepancies that are often quick and easy to correct. It's not normally productive to spend time on minor issues (e.g. < 2km boundary discrepancies) and records of *Taraxacum* & *Hieracium* are a low priority for the Atlas. Some reported issues may be the result of errors in the VC boundary definitions that the DDb uses (such as omissions of small offshore islands), please let us know if you spot any.

If you use Mapmate, remember to always edit and correct records in MapMate **first**, then synch the changes to the DDb. Note that records are never deleted from the DDb; instead they are marked rejected, and records that are deleted in MapMate and synched to the the DDb, will be marked “deleted externally”. These records are hidden from maps and default queries. But can be seen using [this type of query](#)...

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

MapMate Maintenance

As I said last month, MapMate needs a bit of tender loving care from time to time! So here is the next in our series on MapMate maintenance. If MapMate users haven't already followed the steps outlined in the [February BSBI eNews](#) – please do so now! Then, would all MapMate users follow the next two points, in order, please?

1. Backing up

How many records have you entered since your last back-up and how would you like to have to re-enter them? I suspect “a lot” and “not much” might be typical answers! That's why you should backup your MapMate database after every major data entry session. There are two ways to back-up and we'd like all MapMate users to use **both** methods **now** and certainly before the next steps.

The first way is to create a back-up of your MapMate data using the Replicator and save it to the MapMate server. To do that, Replication > Special > Backup your Database... and follow the instructions. Then remember to send the back-up file to the server: Sync > Send Sync File... To Web. Tick the backup file and then click Upload. If you need any help, there are short YouTube videos on backing-up on the [Set up and maintenance](#) page of the [BSBI MapMate Support](#) website. The second method is simply to copy your entire My MapMate folder (in Documents) onto an external drive.

2. Compact

Periodically, perhaps every 6 months, you ought to run the Compact operation in MapMate. It helps to minimise the size of the underlying database and prevent errors arising when you save or synch records. Having backed-up your MapMate, come right out of MapMate and go back in, click the word “Dataset” on the Toolbar, then select Tools and Compact and follow the instructions. You will get a warning saying that the process may take some time and it is important to allow it to complete – so make sure you have plenty of battery power and don't switch off before it completes. A progress bar will appear in the bottom left hand corner. If you need any help, take a look at the [Compact and Repair](#) YouTube video on the [BSBI MapMate Support](#) website.

3. Repair

The other operation in the same menu (Records > Tools >) is "Repair". There is no need to run this operation routinely, but if you are having any problems with your database, e.g. with data entry or a query is not working properly, then it is worth trying a "repair". It can do no harm. Follow the instructions above for the Compact operation, but selecting Repair instead.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Vice-County Annual Reports – final call

As mentioned last month, we are trialling the use of Survey Monkey to automatically collect and collate Vice-County questionnaire survey responses and Annual Reports. So far, we have had 37 responses from Scotland, 26 from England, 16 from Ireland and 7 from Wales. (Though to be fair, we did start the trial in Scotland well before other countries.)

Thank you to all those who have completed their returns. We'd be pleased if remaining Recorders could complete theirs by the 10th March. If any main recorders have not received an email about this, or can't find the original email, please ask your Country Officer to resend it. Please follow the instructions carefully, noting the word limit (200-250) and the required format of *Scientific name* (Common Name) checked against Stace.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Field Meetings

The field meeting season is underway and the first of the meetings listed in the Yearbook has taken place. A few meetings didn't make it to the Yearbook, others have amendments and some are fully booked. Information about all of these appears on the [meetings page](#). If there are additional meetings that you would like advertising more widely, or local/VC meetings that you would like listing in the diary, just let me know.

I am still in the process of completing the updates to the [guidelines for leaders of field meetings](#), but these are living documents so the work is never likely to be completed! In the meantime, if you are leading a field meeting, do have a look at them, along with the documents on [Safety in the field](#) and the [Code of Conduct](#), which are on the [meetings page](#). This is now found under "News and events".

It is not too early to begin thinking about what meetings you might like to offer for 2020. With our changing climate it does seem possible to continue recording all year round and so any post Atlas projects might like to start by recording common species or habitats in what is otherwise a "dead" period. Equally indoor meetings are possible, perhaps to teach microscope techniques, use of computer packages or visiting a herbarium.

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

Oxfordshire Flora Group: Conference

The Oxfordshire Flora Group is hosting a one-day conference on **Saturday 9th March** at [CEH Wallingford](#). The programme includes talks on the loss of Oxfordshire's plant species (based on last years' [Rare Plant Register](#) for [vc23](#)) and County Recorder David Morris on 'A Future for Oxfordshire's Flora?'. All welcome! [More...](#)

[David Morris](#), County Recorder for Oxfordshire

Irish BSBI Conference

Aquatics demystified, the state of the Irish environment, flash talks, quiz, workshops & more.... we'll have it all at the Irish BSBI Conference on **Saturday 30th March** at the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin. Recorders, members, and interested members of the public are all welcome. It will be a great opportunity to catch up, to hear what's going on, and to make plans for the upcoming final Atlas 2020 recording season. [More...](#)

[Maria Long](#), BSBI Irish Officer

Malham Tarn Annual Summer Meeting

Residential spaces for this year's Annual Summer Meeting - which runs from **13th to 19th July** - have almost all been filled now, but there are a couple of spaces still available for day visitors. You can also ask to be put on the reserve list in case of cancellations. [More...](#)

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

BSBI Exhibition Meeting 2019

Date for your diaries: We have just received confirmation from the Natural History Museum, London, that we can hold this year's BSBI [Annual Exhibition Meeting](#)/AGM there on **Saturday 23rd November**. There will be a flyer and booking form in the April issue of BSBI News, but the Organising Team has already started approaching speakers and potential exhibitors, so if you'd like to get in now and enquire about an exhibitor stand, please [email the Organising Team](#).

[Jodey Peyton](#), Chair of Meetings & Communications Committee

Shetland

Shetland is a surprisingly big and difficult vice-county to record with myriad islands and challenging terrain. But it is a great place to visit and its flora is absolutely fascinating. We are looking for a botanist, or a group of botanists, to visit Shetland in the final field season of Atlas 2020 this summer and help to plug Atlas 2020 gaps. I'm afraid we can't help financially, but you will get a warm welcome from local botanists who can help with local advice and guidance. It would make a great summer holiday destination, perhaps staying in a self-catering cottage. Anyone interested? Let me know!

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

New Gentian Handbook

Just five people responded to Tim Rich's call last month for help with checking the draft distribution maps for the new handbook on Gentians. I wonder if other readers might check the [pre/post 1987 10-km gentian distribution maps](#) and let him know of any additions or corrections to dot status or date-class that they are aware of? Responses direct to [Tim Rich](#) as soon as possible.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

BSBI Scottish Newsletter

[Angus Hannah](#), the editor of the Scottish Newsletter, would welcome contributions to the 2019 BSBI Scottish Newsletter. Please email them directly to him by the 16th March.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

British & Irish Botany

The first issue of British & Irish Botany was published in February, with five papers for you to enjoy. Read the [Table of Contents here](#), and start downloading papers as soon as you have [registered as a reader here](#). You can [contact us](#) if you need any help or if you'd like to discuss submitting a paper.

[Ian Denholm & Louise Marsh](#), *British & Irish Botany*

New on the website in February

The [BSBI website](#) underwent a major upgrade in February – we hope that you can still find all your favourite pages but that you will also find lots more to enjoy. There are so many new pages – with more to come – that this month, instead of listing all the changes to individual pages, I'd just encourage you to look through the [A-Z Site Map](#). It should also be your first port of call if you can't find the page you're looking for. If you have any comments about the upgrades to the website, positive or negative, or suggestions of how we might do things differently, please email me to discuss.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

On the News & Views blog in February

We reported the publication of the [inaugural issue of British & Irish Botany](#) (see above); the second Botanical University Challenge took place at Univ. Reading and we [interviewed founder John Warren](#), who recently took over the Chair of BSBI's Training & Education Committee – we reported on that [here](#) as part of our regular posts about Byron's Gin; we told you about the [forthcoming Oxfordshire Flora Group conference](#) (see above); there's a note about [BSBI Handbooks in the pipeline](#); and there's a report on [what's happening this year for botanists in Wales](#).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

BSBI eNews

BSBI eNews is aimed at all BSBI recorders, referees and members involved with recording. 280 BSBI members have now opted in to receive this monthly news email. Remember you can update your contact details or unsubscribe at any time.

If you are reading this online, or perhaps because it was forwarded to you, and are one of the County Recorders or Referees who did not sign up - you can do so via a link on the new [BSBI eNews](#) page (which is also linked from [BSBI Publications](#) and the new [BSBI Periodicals page](#)) at any time. I'd welcome short contributions from anyone on topics of interest to fellow readers. BSBI eNews is generally published on the 1st of each month so contributions should reach me by the 21st of the preceding month. I'd also be pleased to have feedback on any of the articles in BSBI eNews.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer