

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

Atlas 2020 – Data Entry

County Recorders, if you haven't done a sync reset after entering the last of your Atlas records please do so now! As I said in the last issue it is incredibly easy for the MapMate syncing process to go wrong and for records (and edits) to fail to reach their intended destination – and that would be regrettable if it happens to Atlas records. If need be, here is [guidance on how to reset your sync record](#). You should always get an email from the DDb acknowledging safe receipt of the sync.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Atlas 2020 – Validation I

OK it's full steam ahead now on completing validation over the next two months. I think most folk have made a tentative start, at least. But if not, there is guidance on [validation](#) and [editing](#) on the [Atlas 2020](#) page. The place to begin is your [my county](#)'s data validation tab. I'd systematically click each of the links and then click 'display results' – probably starting with Unchecked County Singletons, and work your way down. Key points to note:

- The most important thing to remember is that there is no need to check and confirm all occurrences listed in the 'my county' page. Many 'new hectad' records, for example, will not be at all controversial, and in many cases are a result of better recording. Focus on the oddities, the ones that you feel really need scrutinising. And remember too that all "unchecked" records will be included in the atlas, unless queried at a later stage by the editors.
- The numbers can seem daunting but the same record often appears in different categories so once you validate it in one category, the same record will disappear from other categories.
- Many of the records listed will be of *Hieracium*, *Taraxacum* and *Rubus* microspecies. However, they are not going to be included in the Atlas so they are of lesser priority.
- Under the GB National Status there are lots of records for taxa that may be unremarkable neophytes in your area, only listed because native populations elsewhere in the country are rare or scarce – so, for example, Welsh Poppy (*Meconopsis cambrica*) and Box (*Buxus sempervirens*) in Scotland.

Please focus your effort on removal of incorrect records that would otherwise lead to errors on maps and on checking and confirming notable occurrences that might otherwise be doubted by reviewers. At this stage in the process, it's best to take a precautionary approach. "Reject" if records are clearly wrong, mark "needs checking" if in any doubt but you feel it would be worth investigating further and "Doubtful" if not. "Rejected", "doubtful" or "needs checking" records will **not** be mapped in the Atlas.

Atlas 2020 – Validation II

When you validate a record there are a number of different confirmation levels offered depending on the level of certainty. Generally, I recommend County Recorders use "Positive Identification" for their own records, or vouchered records (i.e. refereed or correctly identified in a herbarium). But other

options including “Considered correct” can be used for other County Recorders (including predecessors) and other experienced botanists. If you don’t know the recorder or how good their botanical skills are, you could opt for “Consistent with accepted distribution” or “Readily Identifiable and Uncontroversial” as appropriate. If you hover over the various validation options a fuller explanation will appear. If it’s a notable species record that is not consistent with accepted distribution then check whether the record is vouchered and if the site name matches the grid reference. Investigate where and what species the recorder has previously recorded. By building up a picture of their recording expertise you can use your expert judgement to decide how likely the record is to be correct and whether to “Confirm”, or mark “Doubtful” or “Needs Further Checking” or to reject it.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

DDb symbols and codes

Following on from the previous articles, a County Recorder asks “There are lots of other symbols scattered through DDb results lists, but many of them are not obvious. Things like validation status, native status, first records, singleton, etc, but unless you use the DDb all the time it is hard to remember the symbol. Is there a handy sheet where these are listed?”

Location	Symbol	Meaning
After taxon	*	hectad singleton
After taxon	†	county singleton
After taxon	1 st	first county record
After taxon	(106km)	Single hectad site within 106km
After VC	*	Grid reference < 2km from VC
After VC	‡	Grid reference > 2km from VC

Well no – not until now! But you don’t really need one because if you hover your cursor over the symbols suffixing taxon names it will tell you what it means. In the case of the VC suffixed symbols it will even tell how far the grid reference is from the VC. Similarly, if you hover your cursor over the ⓘ symbol beside the "status" header it will explain the status coding and over the ⓘ symbol beside the "record" header it will list [the validation state colours and their meaning](#).

By the way, please don’t *reject* records on the basis of VC-grid-reference discrepancies. Records >2km from the VC (marked with ‡) are automatically excluded from maps and those with more minor errors are often valid occurrences, even if the county assignment may not be correct.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Third-party Datasets

County Recorders may have noticed that we have recently added a number of external datasets to the DDb, like the one from [National Trust of Scotland](#) containing 108,000 records covering 31 counties! These third-party datasets contain a lot of valuable records which represent an important contribution to Atlas 2020. However, as in any big datasets, there will be errors and some subsets will be better than others, so they will require some validation effort. We appreciate that this creates extra work for recorders and are very grateful indeed.

Ideally all records would go via County Recorders for upload to the DDb. Unfortunately, given the complex nature of large datasets covering many vice-counties, this isn't feasible. While these datasets are uploaded directly to the DDb, they are subdivided by dataset to make it easier to separate records for validation. If for the [National Trust for Scotland dataset](#) you click on the underlined number of records for each dataset you will be able to see its records.

[Tom Humphrey](#), BSBI Data Officer

New Year Plant Hunt 2020

This year's New Year Plant Hunt was a great success: 1,714 participants submitted 798 lists comprising 14,724 records. They recorded a total of 615 species in bloom across Britain and Ireland. For many participants, it was their first taste of botanical recording – we hope it won't be their last!

An analysis of [the results](#), and what they tell us about how our wild flowers are responding to changing weather patterns, can be [downloaded in full](#) from the [New Year Plant Hunt webpage](#), where you will also find links to the interactive map, to daily highlights and to [previous years' analyses](#).

This year's Plant Hunt data is in a [separate project work-space](#) in the BSBI Database (DDb). We'd like to encourage County Recorders to have a look and to consider moving valid occurrences from the segregated area over to [the main DDb](#) by confirming records - some County Recorders have already started doing this. Of course, they won't contribute to Atlas 2020, so are a lower priority for validation. We'd like to thank them and everyone who took part in this year's Hunt.

[Kevin Walker](#), Head of Science, [Tom Humphrey](#), Database Officer & [Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

iRecord records now available on the DDb

Similarly, recorders can see iRecord records in a separate workspace. To do that enter the VC in a DDb search and in *More options > Source > Project Workspace* click the down-arrow and select "Indicia". Or [click here](#) and then on the link for your VC.

Some of these records are by well-known and trusted recorders and would be worth looking at, as they might usefully contribute to Atlas 2020 in under-recorded areas, however others are from unknown recorders variously with odd names or odd site names and sometimes only at 10km resolution and can be ignored. Some are from iSpot and you will find links to photographs.

Records are best validated and then transferred to your DDb workspace but they can also be transferred to the DDb workspace and validated there. The quickest way is to select records to be transferred then *Selected Records action > Move in to the DDb Workspace*. Alternatively, you can transfer them while confirming - there's a tick-box 'transfer to DDb'. If all this sounds a bit confusing, there is [easy-to-follow guidance](#) written by Pete Stroh on the [Atlas 2020](#) page.

A full two-way exchange of validations is planned which will mean that validations in the DDb are fed back to Indicia and Indicia validations are fed forward to the Indicia Workspace in the DDb. This means that any comments that you add to records are likely to be seen by the original recorder.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Vice-County Annual Reports for 2019

We had planned to call for Annual Reports at the beginning of February, however we realise that County Recorders are working extremely hard on validation just now and don't want to distract them at this crucial point in the Atlas 2020 project. So, we have postponed the call again, for one final time, until the beginning of March. We hope that both recorders (and staff) will be less busy then. Apologies to those of you who were looking forward to completing their reports.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Field Meetings

All BSBI members should by now have received their copy of the BSBI Yearbook, with the plans for the 2020 field meetings and reports of the 2019 field meetings. A big thank you to all who contributed. It is never too soon to think about where and when you would like to hold a meeting for 2021, so if you have plans, then do send them in. While you are at a meeting do take pictures that could be used to illustrate it in the Yearbook and send me these as separate images rather than embedded in the text. It pays to write the report as soon as possible after the meeting and send it in to me and Trevor James.

A quick reminder that details of all the national field meetings and indoor events in 2020 also appear on the [new webpage](#). You can search by time period, by country or county, and under five categories - General, Beginners, Training, Specialised or Recording - to help you find the kind of meeting or indoor event you are looking for. Clicking on an entry expands it so you can see more detail about the event.

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

Aquatics training in Northern Ireland

Thanks to funding from CEDaR, we have another aquatics project on offer for members in Northern Ireland (or from further afield if you want to travel). Nick Stewart will be spending from Monday 17th to Friday 21st February in the herbarium of the Ulster Museum checking out aquatic specimens. The herbarium is normally closed, but we have made special arrangements for him and *a very limited number of recorders* to access it.

On Saturday 22nd October, Nick will be leading a workshop on Aquatics at the Oxford Island Discovery Centre on the shores of Lough Neagh. This workshop is open to anyone interested in learning about aquatic plants. For further details or to book for either of these, contact me, [John Faulkner](#).

Conifer ID course in Northern Ireland

Also with the help of funding from CEDaR, we will be running a two-day conifer identification course at Castlewellan Forest Park on 6-7 March. The course will be run by the fantastic Matt Parratt and will include a mix of classroom and field sessions. Everyone is welcome and you can choose to come for either day or both. An online booking form will be available from next week. For further information in the meantime or to register your interest, please contact me, [Sarah Pierce](#), Ireland Officer.

BRC recording schemes meeting 2020 in Edinburgh

The Biological Records Centre (BRC) organises a meeting most years that focuses on national recording schemes. The next BRC recording schemes meeting will be held on Saturday 7 March at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh.

There is an excellent array of speakers, including Iain Macdonald, SNH, on plant monitoring, as well as April Windle (Plantlife), Chris Cathrine (Caledonian Conservation), Craig Macadam (Buglife), Michael Pocock (CEH), Nick Isaac (CEH), and Tom Prescott (Butterfly Conservation), covering a range of different taxonomic groups and approaches to recording and data use. The [programme](#) will also allow plenty of time for posters, demonstrations and discussions. All BSBI County Recorders and active recorders would be very welcome. Book your place [here](#).

[Martin Harvey](#), BRC

BSBI Irish Spring Conference

The Irish Spring Conference is scheduled for 28 March at the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin. Details are still being finalised and will be posted on the [Irish conferences webpage](#) soon. Booking will open in mid-February so keep an eye out!

[Sarah Pierce](#), Ireland Officer

BSBI Annual Exhibition Meeting 2020

We have a date and location for this year's Exhibition Meeting. It will be held on Saturday 21st November and, in a change to our usual practice, we will once again be at the Natural History Museum in London. We are hoping to offer you an extra feature this year alongside the usual exhibits and talks so put the date and location in your diaries now and keep an eye on the [AEM webpage](#) - we'll confirm the new feature as soon as we can.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

New on the BSBI website in January

- We spotted three great new videos, supported by the FSC BioLinks project, all about biological recording, so we've added links to them on the [Record-a-Plant page](#).
- County pages for NW Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Kirkcudbrightshire and North Eubudes have been updated with newsletters and details of events as well as the usual changes to email addresses. There are also two new county pages, for Hertfordshire and for Bedfordshire. Links to all county pages and contact details for County Recorders are available via the [Local Botany page](#).
- The [New Year Plant Hunt page](#) and the [Field Meetings and Indoor Events page](#) were updated (see notes above) and so, unsurprisingly, was the [News page](#)!

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

On the News & Views blog in January

We offered daily posts about the New Year Plant Hunt (see above): [Day One](#), [Day Two](#), [Day Three](#) and [Day Four](#); we also alerted you to [Plant Hunt coverage in The Telegraph](#) and we posted a [summary of Kevin Walker's analysis of the Plant Hunt results](#). In other news, read this month's account of how a [BSBI Training Grant helped a Natural England staffer](#) sharpen her aquatic plant ID skills; there's a sneak peek [inside the latest issue of BSBI News](#); and following on from the New Year Plant Hunt, there's a guest blogpost about [pollinators and the plants they visit in midwinter](#).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer