

BSBI eNews – November 2019

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

Head of Operations

I'm sure you will all want to join me in welcoming Jane Houldsworth, Head of Operations back after the birth of Sam and her maternity leave. She resumed full time work at the beginning of October.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

BSBI resilience project

As I said in *BSBI News* 141 we are working on how the Society goes forward following the impending end of Atlas 2020 work. We want to ensure the society builds on its firm foundations to be clear about its aims and objectives and to ensure it is ready to meet the challenges of the future. We have funding from Heritage Lottery that is covering the cost and that is enabling us to work with the CASS Charity Business School through 2019. They are working with a Steering Group with myself and Ian Denholm, Chris Metherell and Lynne Farrell and senior staff to guide the process. At the end of the work we will have a new strategy setting out our priorities for the next 5 years, feedback on how we work as an organisation and a funding strategy to ensure we can achieve what we aim for.

In mid-October all Council members, staff and Trustees met with CASS in London for a workshop debating BSBI's direction of travel, our key purposes, what the priorities should be and what our values are. Ahead of our meeting we had the benefit of the preliminary findings from work done to date on what projects we should focus on post Atlas 2020 which has been led by Council and in particular a working group headed by Robert Northridge. This together with the review undertaken in 2016 provides the context for these discussions.

The workshop was an open and honest look at what we do and what we aspire to do. It gave CASS a lot of information to work with as they start to help us to mould this into a new strategic statement. In getting to grips with who we are CASS attended a Board meeting and will shortly attend Council and a staff meeting and will talk to selected partner organisations. The next stage will be for CASS to reflect all of this back to the Steering Group in late November to formulate what the next steps will be.

[Chris Miles](#), Chair of Trustees

Atlas 2020

Despite the days getting shorter and the weather generally getting worse there is still much Atlas recording you can do on good days. Remember there is still another one sixth of the year to go until that 31st December data entry deadline! I was out last weekend and recorded 180 taxa in a tetrad (all to monad resolution, or better) in Scotland. To be fair it was a coastal south-facing square, but I was surprised at how just many species were still flowering or reasonably easy to identify vegetatively. When the weather turns nasty, you then have the perfect excuse to get on with data entry or checking indoors!

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

The end of Tetrad Recording?

So far, of all those records that have been made and added to the [BSBI's Distribution Database \(DDb\)](#) in 2019, 93% have been made at monad or better (6, 8 or 10 figure) resolution. This percentage has been steadily increasing over the 20 years of Atlas 2020. It is no wonder when figuring out tetrad grid references is so tricky and making errors so easy. Also, a monad record is much more valuable as the area it describes is four times more precise than a tetrad record. Should the BSBI only accept records at monad or better in the next recording period beginning on the 1st of January 2020? This wouldn't preclude mapping or sampling at tetrad scale – but it would mean that all recording would be at monad resolution (or better) within those tetrads. That needn't involve any more fieldwork and only a little more data entry work. You can simply make a full set of records for the first monad in the tetrad and then record any 'new' or notable records in subsequent monads visited in the tetrad (preferable on new monad recording cards). We plan to seek Recorders' views on tetrad recording as part of the Annual Report questionnaire.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

iRecord / Indicia records in the BSBI Distributional Database (DDb)

BRC's Indicia database contains records from iRecord, NPMS and many other local and national projects. Most of this large data-set (up to May 2019) is now accessible in BSBI's system. There's a streamlined mechanism to select records for inclusion in BSBI's database.

The records from Indicia are initially partitioned away separately from the main DDb workspace but can be transferred across, either individually or in bulk. Until transferred to the main DDb workspace the records do not appear on maps and wouldn't be used for the Atlas. The newly available data is bound to include useful and interesting records for most counties - it's well worth checking what's available. The transfer process is straightforward and quick, there are more details in a longer post on the [DDb message board](#).

[Tom Humphrey](#), BSBI Database Officer

Atlas 2020 - Records that fail to reach the BSBI Distributional Database

An amazing number of records are being added to the BSBI database just now – ahead of the 31st December deadline. But it would be regrettable if Atlas 2020 records that have been sent to County Recorders don't make it to the DDb. So, if you have sent records to Recorders that have definitely NOT arrived at the DDb, could you please drop the Recorder a line, perhaps forwarding the original email and any attachments. I know from personal experience, as a recorder, how easy it is to overlook emails – especially when they arrive during a busy field season. (Apologies from me, in advance, if it was one of your emails that got overlooked!)

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Seek by iNaturalist

[Seek by iNaturalist](#) is a species identification app available from [Google Play](#) and the [Apple App Store](#) that uses the latest image recognition technology to identify organisms, including flowering plants. It was developed jointly by the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society. Seek will work from photographs but it is better to video all parts of the plant for a few seconds. It is particularly useful for identifying unknown garden escapes and very helpful as a learning tool for

beginners. Even if it isn't able to identify to species level it will usually identify the correct genus. One slightly confusing thing is that it uses American rather than British common names. If you haven't already played with this app, try it out – it is truly amazing!

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

British and Irish *Rubus* images on iNaturalist

Many readers will be aware of the [iNaturalist](#) website to which many naturalists throughout the world are adding their natural history images. Thousands of flower images taken in Britain and Ireland have been uploaded to this site and once sufficient suggestions of identity are made the records reach a research grade and are periodically transferred across to [iRecord](#) a proportion of which are being subjected to verification by County Recorders.

The system works well for well-known taxa but for difficult genera such as *Rubus* most images can only be determined to the aggregate level and it was indeed the case that few of the critical *Rubus* species names were present on the website. To overcome this issue a spreadsheet listing the British & Irish *Rubus* species was supplied to Steve McWilliam and Steve has very kindly added the species names to the iNaturalist species dictionary. I am steadily adding images of critically determined *Rubus* species to the iNaturalist site under the acronym name for our [Lancashire Environment Network LERN](#). I would also like to encourage other *Rubus* and apomictic genera specialists to add their quality images to iNaturalist. Note that up to date critical genera checklists can also be sent to me.

[David Earl](#), *Rubus* Referee and County Recorder for South & West Lancashire

Meetings

The Annual Exhibition Meeting deadline for receiving outline details of field meetings is looming far too fast! I still haven't got the details for two meetings that I am planning for VC29 finalised, so I can sympathise with all of you who haven't been able to send me dates for your meetings yet. If possible, could you send me date and location within the next fortnight. I'll need the final details for the Yearbook by the end of November.

The [BSBI Guidance on Leading Field Meetings](#) will need an update with the arrival of a new hazard for botanists. Tick-borne encephalitis has been detected on the Hampshire/Dorset border and in Thetford Forest. The Guidance document is usually reviewed at the M&C meeting in February, so if you think there should be any other updates please let me know.

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

Irish VCR Validation Day

Remember the records validation workshop on Saturday 9th November, at the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin. For those who came last year, it will be a similar event, where we'll divide into groups to help each other with any validation issues. It would be most helpful if recorders started validation before the workshop so they have an idea of what issues they might want help with. We're hoping to have a good mix of those who are already quite comfortable with validation and those who need a bit more support. If you are interested in attending, but haven't already let me know, please email me, sarah.pierce@bsbi.org, for further details.

[Sarah Pierce](#), BSBI Ireland Officer

Annual Exhibition Meeting and AGM

A reminder that if you'd like to come along to this year's [Annual Exhibition Meeting](#) (AEM) on Saturday 23rd November at the Natural History Museum, London, the deadline to book is noon on Thursday 21st November. Here's the [online booking form](#) and you can see the programme and some essential info about location, catering etc. [here](#).

If you're coming to the AEM for the first time, or if you're not (yet) a [BSBI member](#) but you're thinking about joining, look out for staff and officers wearing green lanyards – we'll be milling around and can answer any questions you may have - or if you just fancy a chat!

We'll be holding the BSBI AGM in the Lecture Theatre between 12.30 and 13.00. The agenda is [here](#) and there will be paper copies available on the day but if you're a BSBI member and you'd like to raise an agenda point, please email [Company Secretary Steve Gater](#) before noon on Saturday 16th November.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

Special offers on BSBI publications

A reminder that BSBI members can still benefit from our special offers on three new publications until the end of November. We've set up a handy 'Hat-trick' PayPal facility on the members-only area of the website so that with just one click, you can order all three new titles - BSBI Handbook #19 [Gentians of Britain and Ireland](#); the 2nd edition of the [Vegetative Key to the British Flora](#); and [Grassland plants of the British & Irish lowlands](#) – and save more than £20 in total or you can order titles individually by clicking on the links.

Forgotten your password for the BSBI members-only area? Email me, include either your membership number or your postal address, and I'll send your password. Then you can benefit from this great money-saving offer which ends on 30th November.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

New on the BSBI website in October

- The [BSBI News page](#) has been updated with the latest advertising rates and contact details for the new Editor, John Norton. Don't forget that the deadline to submit articles for the January issue is 25th November.
- The new [State of Nature](#) page features reports from Wales and Northern Ireland.
- The [Annual Exhibition Meeting](#), AGM and [Scottish Botanists' Conference](#) pages have been updated and regular updates made to the [Meetings](#) and [News](#) pages.
- County pages, and contact details on the [Local Botany page](#), have been updated for Huntingdonshire, mid-west Yorkshire, south-east Yorkshire, South Northumberland, Co. Louth, Kirkcudbrightshire, East Lothian and Outer Hebrides. This follows the appointment by Records & Research Committee of several new (joint) County Recorders, as well as the usual uploading of new resources and changes to email addresses.
- The Autumn meetings season for BSBI committees is well underway so pages on the password-protected [Governance website](#) have been updated with the latest minutes.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

On the News & Views blog in October

We launched the October special offer on BSBI membership with a blog-post setting out all the [many benefits of joining BSBI](#); we told you about the [State of Nature across Britain](#), with Kevin Walker's comments on how plant records collected by BSBI members contributed to the SoN report; we featured [John Faulkner's thoughts on the state of nature in Northern Ireland](#); and we featured a report from botanist Jenn Jenn Clayton Brown, Edge Hill University, on how a BSBI Plant Study Grant helped her carry out [research into *Carex salina* \(Saltmarsh Sedge\)](#), a recent UK coloniser.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer