



Scottish Officer's Report for 2019

Progress with Recording for Atlas 2020

We have had an extraordinarily busy field meeting programme in 2019 in Scotland. As well as VCR-organised long-weekend field meetings in Roxburghshire, VC80, Stirling, VC86, Orkney, VC111, Angus Hannah, organised a Recording Week in Argyll, VC98 and the Scottish Officer helped VCRs with the organisation of a number of field meetings:

- A week long residential meeting based at Whitebridge, Easternness, VC96 attended by 18 residents and 4 non-residents, collected 10,770 records. This was supported by WFS funding.
- A long-weekend at Haddington, East Lothian, VC82 (with 18 folk), collected 2,820 records
- A long-weekend at Dunfermline, Fife, VC85 (with 18 participants), collected 2,740 records
- A long-weekend at St John's Town, Kirkcudbrights (8 participants)

Sadly, our joint BSBI / BSS joint Alpine meeting to Ben Cruachan had to be cancelled at short notice due to poor weather. However, Jeff Waddell did manage to visit the hill subsequently.

However, six botanists did tackle a large gap in Atlas 2020 by visiting the remote central parts of the Cairngorms in VC92, south Aberdeenshire in July. 18 monads spread across 10 tetrads were visited in 38km of walking, and this generated around 900 records.

The Scottish Officer did some autumn Atlas 2020 mopping-up in under-recorded Vice Counties, in Fife & Argyll, as well as recording in his own VC, Mid-Perthshire.

Progress with Digitising Atlas 2020 records

Scottish Recorders are making great progress collecting and digitising records: - now 299,000 for 2017 and 249,000 records for 2018, and 166,000 for 2019, so far. Of particular note:

- Marion Moir digitised 6,800 2018 records for Mid-Ebudes, VC103 in an Excel spreadsheet and we imported them into Lynne Farrell's MapMate and synched them to the DDb.
- Marion has also digitised some 12,000 records for 2019 for East Lothian – variously collected by those attending the East Lothian recording long-weekend, herself & Sue Jury.
- Andy Amphlett digitised 14,400 Easternness records – 5,000 collected by himself and another 9,500 collected by the Easternness Recording Week.
- With the help of Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest Funding (administered by Glasgow Natural History Society) to cover expenses Jeff Waddell spent time Recording in Argyll, vc98 and Dumbarton, VC99.
- Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest Funding also supported recording in remote areas of West Sutherland by Ian Evans, the VCR and fellow botanists.

- Jim McIntosh collected and digitised a total of 2,100 records in Easternness VC96, Westernness VC97, Argyll VC98 and Skye VC104 in addition to 6,200 for his joint VC of Mid-Perthshire VC88.
- Recorders and the Scottish Officer have been extraordinarily busy digitising the big backlog of records that has accumulated while the emphasis was on getting as much field work done as possible before the end of the field season. Currently, we are still waiting for this year's updates from the two Recorder users – Paul Smith in the Outer Hebrides, vc110, and Paul Harvey, Shetland, vc112 and several other recorders have also requested extensions and are still digitising backlogs. Despite this, Scotland has already added more records to the DDb in 2019 than in any single previous year, and for the first time have exceeded one third of a million.

Data Issues

Several national datasets were obtained, processed and uploaded to the DDb. These included: -

- A dataset that included 18,700 post 2006 records of aquatics and emergent from riparian transects across Scotland from Scottish Environmental Protection Agency which has gone some way to address the general under-recording of aquatics in Scotland.
- A dataset with 55,000 Scottish Wildlife Trust records, of which 49,000 are post 2000.
- A dataset with 108,000 National Trust for Scotland records, of which 87,000 are post 2000 from 31 vice-counties but predominantly Mid-Perthshire, Argyll, West Ross & Berwickshire.
- Andy Amphlett has secured a 30,000-record update from North East Scotland Biological Recording Centre (for 2015-2018) covering several VCs in the NE of Scotland.
- A contractor is making good progress with an SNH funded project to extract records of Nationally Rare or Scarce species from Site Condition Monitoring reports from across Scotland. 31 out of 48 third cycle reports have been extracted so far.

The Scottish Officer has had to step in as acting VC Recorder for Wigtownshire. We have worked closely with South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre to digitise 6,700 post 2004 records collected by local BSBI member, Alan Wake into the DDb and a further import of some 16,000 records from SWEIC is pending. BSBI star volunteer digitiser, Marion Moir, digitised 3,600 post 2000 records by local member, Jim McCleary.

Marion Moir has also been busy digitising East Lothian records. In addition to the 10,600 records she collected in her first year there as joint recorder, she has also digitised over 26,000 post 2000 notebook records from her joint recorder, Helen Jackson.

Recorder Support

- The Scottish Officer has produced 11 editions of the monthly [BSBI eNews](#) which is targeted at everyone in the BSBI recording community. By the end of the year it had 350 subscribers.
- The 2018 VC Annual Reports were collated and [published online](#) & in the [Scottish Newsletter](#).
- Two one-day [Spring Conferences](#) were held in April at RBGE and at RSPB offices in Aberdeen – with the same programme repeated. A total of 40 attended including 17 VC Recorders. There was an update on Atlas 2020, we discussed VCRs' plans for its final year and how all our members can help. There were also short talks by a variety of speakers and mini-workshops on Dryopteris & Dandelions.
- I met up with Recorders, Jay Mackinnon, David Welch, Helen Jackson, Lynne Farrell, Luke Gaskell and Sandy Edwards (in the field) and with prospective Recorder for Berwickshire, Rob Cowe for one-to-one support meetings.
- A Christmas Newsletter was sent to all Scottish VC Recorders.

Training

- The Plant Families Workshop held at Mar Lodge, Braemar by Aileen Meek attracted 18 participants and was followed by a day in the field on the following day.
- There were two Introduction to Grasses workshops – one led by Chris Miles in Dumfriesshire and another led by Faith Anstey at the University of Stirling – attracting 14 and 25 respectively.
- The new Introduction to Sedges workshop at Mugdock Country Park led by Faith Anstey attracted 25 folk.

Scottish Botanists' Conference

The [Scottish Botanists' Conference](#) goes from strength to strength – this year attracting 200 participants, up from 176 last year and 148 the year before. There is never really enough time to look at all the exhibits properly, so we've created a [virtual exhibition](#) (as well as [abstracts](#)). The talks are also available to view on the SBC page. We organised 8 mini-workshops on the day: Introductions to duckweeds, ferns, firs, grasses, the vegetative key, the BSBI Database and one looking at tricky species pairs and another demonstrating how to make your own grapnel! Each workshop was attended by about 20 people and ran twice

Communication & Liaison

- I've published eight short email newsletters for Scottish members.
- I participated in a Plant LINK Scotland meeting at RBGE in June and a Plantlife Scotland workshop in Edinburgh on the impacts of nitrogen from air pollution on Scotland's flora.
- I met up with SNH for a Species Prioritisation meeting and spent several days working on the initiative using the BSBI Database.

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer, June 2020