



Hello Irish VCRs,

This is the sixth Irish VCR Newsletter and I hope you find some items of interest in it for you. As usual, please feel free to suggest items for inclusion in these newsletters, and I would be delighted to receive short pieces from any of you. Maria

RECORDER NEWS

Mairéad Crawford and Oisín Duffy, after a period in training with mentor Ralph Sheppard, have become joint-VCRs for east Donegal. They have already contributed a great deal to BSBI in Ireland with their enthusiasm and their willingness to work hard. You never know what end of the country you will see them turn up for events at! We look forward to many years with you on board guys!

Vacancies:

H24 – Longford

H04 – Mid Cork

H05 – East Cork But note that Edwina Cole has been performing an important care-taker and co-ordinator role in East Cork for the past few years. Edwina does some recording and also manages the email list for the vibrant BSBI local group in Cork (to check out their Facebook page search: 'BSBI Plant Atlas Recorders Cork').

IRISH OFFICER NEWS

I am delighted to say that I have a number of volunteers who are helping me and BSBI with a number of tasks, but mainly with digitising data. Sunniva Hanley, a regular BSBI attendee, worked quickly through the Mayo recording week data from 2015, and will move onto other tasks soon. Hannah Mulcahy, an active BSBI member, has been helping with digitisation of a historical dataset, and Shane Brien, a current MSc student, is digitising more recent datasets (some ad hoc, and others in support of individual VCRs).

The Irish Officer attended the main National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff conference in Kilkenny in January this year, and delivered a talk about the great work that the BSBI does. She focused on the strength of the organisation being based on its network of expert volunteers, and also conveyed a sense of how vibrant the BSBI currently is in Ireland, and the

success the BSBI is having in Ireland in getting new faces on board and increasing recording activity. The talk was very well-received.

The Irish BSBI Conference was held over two days on 12th and 13th March 2016 was another great success, with workshops, talks and a really super botanical table quiz (designed and hosted by world puzzle champion, Antrim VCR, David McNeill). There were approximately 50 attendees. This year we trialled having some mini-workshops, and these covered groups such as *Hedera*, *Ficaria verna*, grasses (*Poa* and *Agrostis*) and *Euphrasia*. There were also sessions on MapMate and the DDb, and importantly, a number of one-to-one problem-solving sessions which some VCRs said were very valuable. All in all, another successful get-together.

Grant funding received from NPWS in 2015 and 2016 has proved to be invaluable in allowing me to do my work as Irish Officer. Because of it, I have an extra day per week (bringing the total to three) to put towards my job of supporting the network of BSBI recorders in Ireland, as well as to supporting the growing membership, and also to raising the profile of the BSBI in Ireland and highlighting the important and irreplaceable work we do. As BSBI activity has been ramping up significantly in Ireland over the past few years, so also has the workload involved, thus as we move ever closer to the deadline for Atlas 2020 (remember... just 3.5 field seasons left!), this extra time is more and more valuable.

FIELD MEETINGS

So far, the following field meetings have taken place in 2016:

- 21/22 May - North Kerry
- 28/29 May - West Galway
- 4 Jun - Leitrim
- 18/19 Jun - Cavan
- 10 Jul - Monaghan

I was only able to make one of those (the Cavan weekend, more below), but I am reliably informed that all were successful. Photos and accounts of many trips are posted on the Irish BSBI Facebook page, so if I can tempt any of you on to Facebook, it's a really great place to see and hear all that's happening. Of course all field trip leaders are still encouraged to write up accounts for the yearbook or IBN (Irish Botanical News). Below are a few photos from the West Galway and Cavan trips.



Loch an Oir on the Carna peninsula (Ph: John Conaghan)



Lunch time on Mweenish (Ph: John Conaghan)



Botanists around a large tussock of *Carex paniculata* at the sedge workshop. (Ph: Caroline Pannell)



Searching for sedges, with Castle Saunderson in background. (Ph: Maria Long)

The sedge workshop run by Robert Northridge is worth a particular mention. This cost €20 or £15 to attend (to cover cost of room rental and refreshments). We had initially hoped to get 10 to 14 people, but ended up with a full house... 17 attendees, and 3 tutors! It was a very enjoyable day – great fun and energy in the group, and a whopping 21 species of sedges seen. (Sixteen of these were on-site at Castle Saunderson – we'll definitely be back!)

There are seven remaining field meetings to look forward to, along with the two-day charophyte workshop in September and the follow-up *Euphrasia* workshop in November. And all of this is not including the 'rough crew', of which more below, nor the outings of various local groups. It's all go! Remember that you can download the schedule of the main field meetings in the form of a hand flier at any time from the Irish BSBI webpage: <http://www.bsbi.org.uk/ireland.html>

Here's a quick summary of the remaining field meetings:

Sat 16 July	– Laois
Fri 22, Sat 23, Sun 24 July	– Longford recording weekend
Sat 30 July	– Carlow
Sat 6, Sun 7 Aug	– East Donegal
Sat 13 Aug	– Derry/Londonderry
Sat 20, Sun 21	– South-east Galway
Thur 1, Fri 2, Sat 3, Sun 4 Sep	– Cork (multiple sites, long-weekend of recording)

Please note that we have longer recording events planned in the vacant vice-counties of Longford and Mid and East Cork in order to bring in records for Atlas 2020 – please consider lending your support to one or more of these.

ROUGH CREW NEWS

The 'rough crew' continues to be a big draw for adventurous botanists, and they bring in fantastic and much sought-after records from sometimes very inaccessible places. Rory Hodd, joint VCR for both Kerry VCs, spear-heads most trips as well as co-ordinating the mailing list, and great thanks are due to Rory for all his hard work. On that note, we'd love to ask others to

volunteer a day here and there to lead a rough crew trip – if you have a mountain/bog/island that you'd be willing to lead a trip to, please let myself or Rory know.

A note from Rory on 2016 happenings:

“So far this year the rough crew has had two very successful outings. In April, a keen group spent an enjoyable day on Ireland's Eye off the Dublin coast, an outing organised in conjunction with the Dublin Bay Biosphere Reserve, coming across an interesting and unusual mixture of species including the very rare and protected Henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), the uncommon species Bur Chervil (*Anthriscus caucalis*) and an abundance of less common species like Slender Thistle (*Carduus tenuiflorus*). It was not the biggest physical challenge the rough crew has faced, admittedly, but a boat was needed! In addition, we received coverage on the ‘Mooney Goes Wild’ radio programme (listen here, slot starts at approx. 36mins in: <http://bit.ly/211ISsu>).

In July, we were blessed by unexpectedly good weather for two days exploring the Caha Mountains on the Cork/Kerry border. A nice variety of rare and scarce montane species kept the group entertained, including *Minuartia recurva*, *Lycopodium clavatum*, *Sagina subulata*, *Listera cordata*, *Salix herbacea* and *Antennaria dioica*. More outings are planned over the summer in counties Donegal and Mayo, among others. As always, if you have any suggestions for sites that require a rough crew visit in your VC, please get in touch.”

ATLAS 2020

A big thank you to VCRs who **uploaded data to the DDb** earlier this year to allow CFI and the Irish Officer to better understand where our strengths, weaknesses and gaps lie across the network. Keeping data flowing as regularly as you can really makes a big difference – to you, to us and to BSBI in general. Please get in touch at any time... we have a number of ways in which we can potentially help VCRs – e.g. support with digitising, support with organising field meetings, support with reaching out to other botanists who may be able to help, support with actual recording, and more. Please do get in touch if you feel that you are struggling at all.

Here is one idea which is catching on in some VCs more than others. Could it work in yours? ... More and more people are **‘taking on a square’**. Can you think of anyone in your VC with the potential to do so? Sometimes they take a small area (even just to begin with), like the 1km square they live in. Others undertake a 10km square. Yet others prefer a smattering of squares across a wider area. Either way, there are people out there all across Ireland supporting their VCRs by making plant lists and feeding them back in (either via cards, excel sheets, or MapMate, depending on the preference of the individual VCR). Some of these people are competent and accomplished botanists, others require significant support. But as long as they are keen and willing to work hard, as long as they understand their limitations, and as long as they continue to improve, they are a great help, and what's more, they represent the potential future of the BSBI.

‘VC plan of action’.... Do you have one?

Given the rather intimidating fact that there are just three and a half field seasons from now until the Atlas 2020 deadline (end of 2019), it is time for all VCRs to take stock and make a simple plan of action for their VC if they haven't already done so. It could work a little like this:

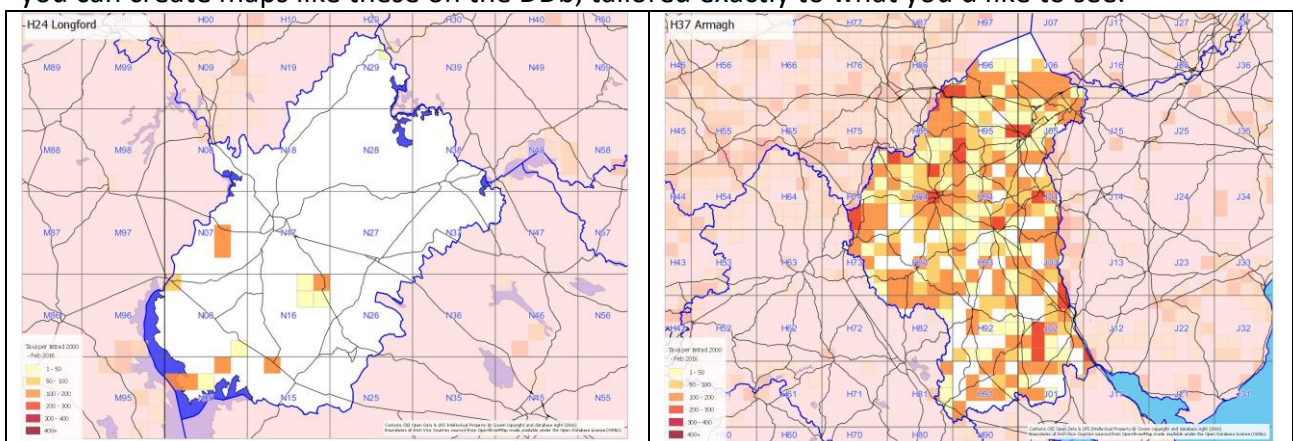
- list hectads in your VC, noting those that are full, +/- half, and those with only a small area
- check on the DDb how many records/species you have for each hectad
- perhaps check at tetrad and monad level also, within the hectads

- see where the biggest gaps are
- calculate (again approx. is fine) the number of records you make per season (think about the average no. per card, and the ave. no. of cards you make in a year)
- see if this will be enough to take you to where you want to be for Atlas 2020.

I think that some of you will be aware that it will be a significant challenge to achieve adequate coverage for Atlas 2020, based on current rates of recording. I will be getting in touch with many of you, and together we'll work out some solutions and supports. As a reminder of the type of coverage we are aiming to have as a minimum: BSBI hopes to have a 'good' list of plants from a minimum of 3 tetrads or 9 monads in each hectad.

So with that in mind, in your VC, will you achieve this?... i.e. records from a minimum of 9 monads in each hectad? If not, how many would be realistic for you? In order to get a handle on this, and to provide support where needed, I'll be in touch with many of you over the coming months to discuss. This is not to put pressure... rather it's to help VCRs plan, and to continue to provide supports where they are most needed and will be best used.

In case these would be useful, a set of maps created by Scottish VCR and enthusiastic helper Andy Amphlett are available which show coverage for Ireland (and GB too). Here are the maps for Longford and Armagh as examples. Let me know if you'd like to see yours, but remember, you can create maps like these on the DDb, tailored exactly to what you'd like to see.



OTHER NEWS

Stoneworts

This year there has been a lot of talk about stoneworts. We are just three and a half seasons out from Atlas 2020, and charophytes are included this time round. Do you know your charophytes?! If, like me, you are weak on this group, there are a number of options. One (but not much use unless you are already signed up, as it's booked out!) is to attend the BSBI/NBDC two-day workshop on charophytes which will take place in the Burren in September, run by Cilian Roden. Another is to collect specimens you come across and send them to the experts for verification. Nick Stewart recently wrote to me to ask me to encourage Irish VCRs to do so. Nick also has support from Claudia Ferguson-Smyth. Please consider trying to collect and name as many charophytes as you can in your area. You can contact Nick at: nfstewart@freeuk.com In addition, Nick has also asked that if VCRs have older records never entered or just neglected specimens collected but never dealt with, please get in touch with him about these also.

Plant Monitoring Scheme

A pilot Plant Monitoring Scheme for Ireland has just been launched by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC). The Project Officer, our very own East Donegal VCR Oisín Duffy, has this to say: "The Irish Plant Monitoring Scheme has been developed so that we can better understand our environment and track changes in Ireland's flora. The scheme sets out to encourage, support and co-ordinate volunteers interested in botanical recording. In taking part you will collect very valuable data that will help further the conservation of Ireland's flora. In return, the scheme provides an opportunity for you to upskill and improve your identification skills, particularly if you are a beginner to botany. Volunteers will be provided with ID guides, a structured way to record and a learning support system. You can find all the information regarding the scheme at - <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/plant-monitoring-scheme/> You can sign up for an account for the scheme at - <https://surveys.biodiversityireland.ie>

Sites for the Irish Plant Monitoring Scheme are placed throughout the country, so hopefully there will be one near you. Your help in surveying across the country is greatly appreciated and if you have any difficulties with any aspect of the scheme just get in touch with me (Oisín Duffy) at oduffy@biodiversityireland.ie"

The NBDC have set up this scheme to try and collect data in a more structured way, as it is a lot more powerful and can be better used to work out trends in species and in habitat quality. Within the scheme, volunteers are asked to record all plant species found within 2x2m grassland plots. You can choose your site and you are asked to record there just once between June and August, with typically two plots at a site. Of course, even if you are not a beginner/improver, you are welcome to take part and can make a valuable contribution! In fact, the NBDC would really welcome constructive feedback from established botanists and recorders who take part.

The conservation importance of graveyards for orchids – request for sites:

"Hello, I'm Viktor Löki, a PhD student from Debrecen, Hungary. My PhD topic is the conservational importance of graveyards for orchids in Europe. My topic was only limited to Turkey till the end of 2014, where we visited totally 472 graveyards, but with my supervisor (Dr. Attila Molnár V.), we started to visit graveyards in the Carpathian Basin (Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Slovenia, Czech Republic), and in South (Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus) and Southwestern (Spain and France) Europe. To our surprise, graveyards are often offering significant and safe shelters for orchids, and for other protected and rare plants widely in Europe. We would like to extend our research to make a comprehensive field survey in this topic in a whole European scale, that's why I would like to currently visit graveyards, and churchyards in Ireland, and in the UK. I'm also interested in other anthropogenically influenced, but still suitable habitats for orchids, like road verges."

Please email Viktor asap if you know of any graveyards, churchyards or road verges that might fit the bill. It will really help him out. Steve Waldren of Trinity College Dublin is also involved in this project. Viktor's email - lokvi89@gmail.com

Other news in brief:

- For those of you who Tweet, or those considering it, the @BSBIBotany #WildflowerHour every Sunday evening is just fantastic. Botanists all across Britain and Ireland busily post photos of the plants they've seen during the week. A lovely way to compare notes, see great species, and communicate with like-minded souls across the internet.
- Remember – as well as using social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) to hear about things that are happening, looking at the BSBI 'News and Views' blog, written or collated by

Louise Marsh, is another great way to keep in touch. See two recent pieces as examples, by Irish VCRs Clare Heardman and Mairéad Crawford, on the National Biodiversity Data Centre Island BioBlitz, in which a great number of Irish VCRs took part:

1. <http://bsbipublicity.blogspot.co.uk/2016/06/five-island-bioblitz-part-one-tory.html>
2. <http://bsbipublicity.blogspot.co.uk/2016/06/five-island-bioblitz-part-two-bere.html>

- On the BSBI website - Two things to check out if you haven't already:
 - I. List of Floras compiled by David Pearman is available under the heading 'County Floras' on this page: <http://www.bsbi.org.uk/resources.html>
 - II. 'Species Accounts' for well over 50 species are available here: http://www.bsbi.org.uk/species_accounts.html
- Attached to the digital version of this document are two PDFs which give great detail on the ID of species of bromes and wild oats which occur as weeds of arable crops. Both are prepared by Dr Stephen Moss. Some of you may find them useful.
- For the past two or three editions of the NBDCs 'Biodiversity Ireland' magazine, I have compiled the notes on vascular plants for their 'Biodiversity Tales' section. I have, each time, been really grateful to receive titibits of info on nice finds from VCRs all across the country, along with some nice photos. I will probably be in touch again later this year, so I look forward to hearing snippets about your top finds this summer.

PROJECT UPDATES

Irish Species Project

The ISP data has all been submitted, collated, and currently sits with the eight volunteers who have each taken on to look in detail at one species and to analyse the findings. Some of these volunteers have already completed the task, and others are still working on it. The group hopes to have made significant progress over the summer, but finding time when the field season is in full swing is not easy! As a reminder of the data received, here are some figures:

- Number of people who took part: 26 VCRs, 29 non-VCRs, and three groups
- VCs with data: 29
- Number of record cards received: 224

	No. surveys
<i>Botrychium lunaria</i>	18
<i>Carex pseudocyperus</i>	24
<i>Gentianella amarella</i>	17
<i>Lathraea squamaria</i>	53
<i>Parnassia palustris</i>	34
<i>Primula veris</i>	39
<i>Pyrola minor</i>	12
<i>Vaccinium oxycoccos</i>	41

Funding from Wildflower Society (WFS)

Paul Green has been funded by the WFS for 20 days to do some gap-filling recording in Ireland. CFI felt that Mid and East Cork were most in need of a boost, along with a quick foray into Mayo in Spring. Well done Paul, and thanks to the WFS – the records gained are much valued.

‘Spring Flowers Project’, and NEW: ‘Early Summer Species Project’

Special thanks to all of you who have contributed to the spring flowering plants project. This was a joint initiative with the NBDC – born from a spontaneous idea from Robert Northridge at a meeting in Jan 2016. The project was successful in getting botanists, of both the budding and mature varieties!, out early in the year picking up vernal species. This data could be helpful for VCRs who are under pressure to cover the ground in their VCs, as it is one thing getting out to all the squares you want to cover, but quite another trying to get to them early in the season too.

As an example of the data generated by this project, in May a total of 822 records of the 14 spring flowers was received. These were submitted by 151 different people across 27 counties. May saw Cuckooflower taking over from Primrose as the most recorded species. The spring flowering plants project has now ended, but a new suite of 12 **early summer species** has just been launched, so keep an eye out for these until the end of July. More info, and submit records, here: <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/vascular-plants/>

All of the data generated by these projects sits at the NBDC, as data is submitted online on their website. This data is currently held separately to both their and our main datasets. CFI, in conjunction with VCRs, will decide how best to integrate this data. And VCRs can rest assured that they will have the final call on what happens to it for their own VC.

The list of Early Summer Species is: Ragged-Robin, Yellow Rattle, Bog Asphodel, Foxglove, Pyramidal Orchid, Scarlet Pimpernel, Meadowsweet, Guelder-rose, Navelwort, Maidenhair Spleenwort, Silverweed and Bilberry. All are species that are easily recognisable, and so well within the grasp of beginners/improvers to record. Please do encourage any budding botanists you know to contribute.

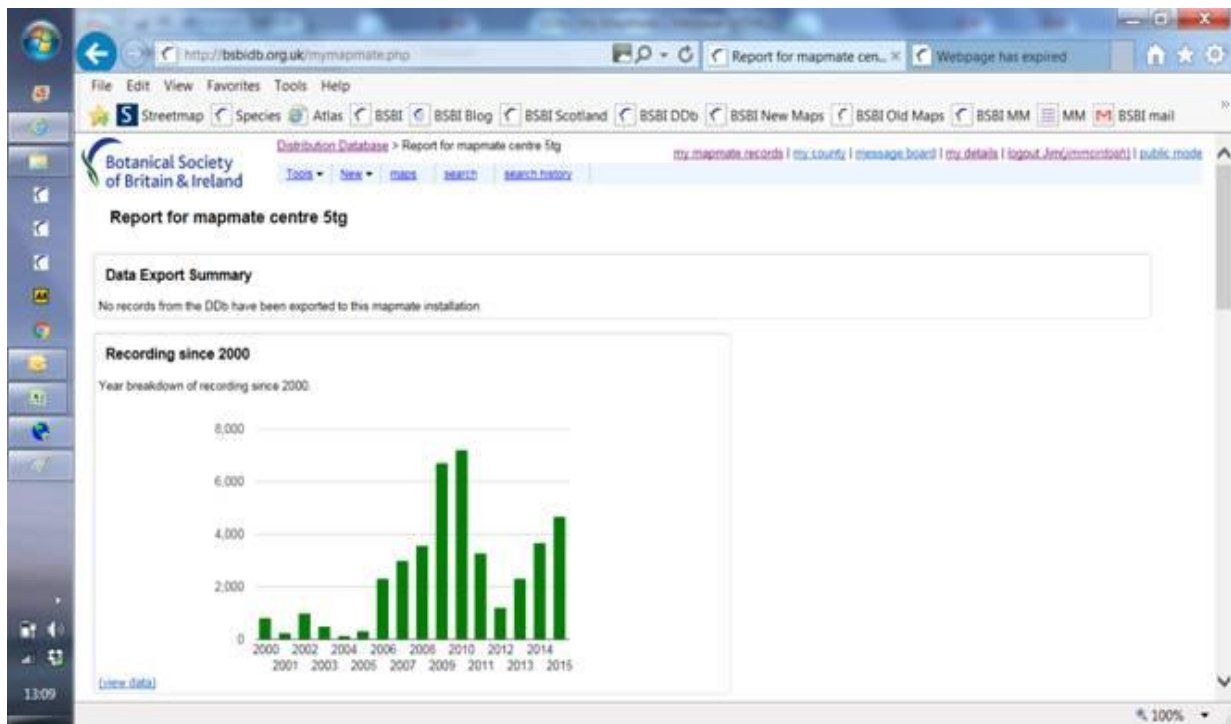
TECHNOLOGY & MAPPING SECTION:

Irish Grid, changover to Irish Transverse Mercator

There is a big change afoot in the world of Irish mapping. Many agencies, and indeed all official maps, will be changing from Irish Grid to a new system called ‘Irish Transverse Mercator’ (ITM). This has the potential to cause problems for biological recording, or at least significant confusion. All Irish VCRs should ***please continue to record using Irish Grid***, and make sure that your GPS is set to Irish Grid. If you work as a consultant, increasingly clients may want data in ITM. If this is the case, please ensure that you use IG when recording for BSBI.

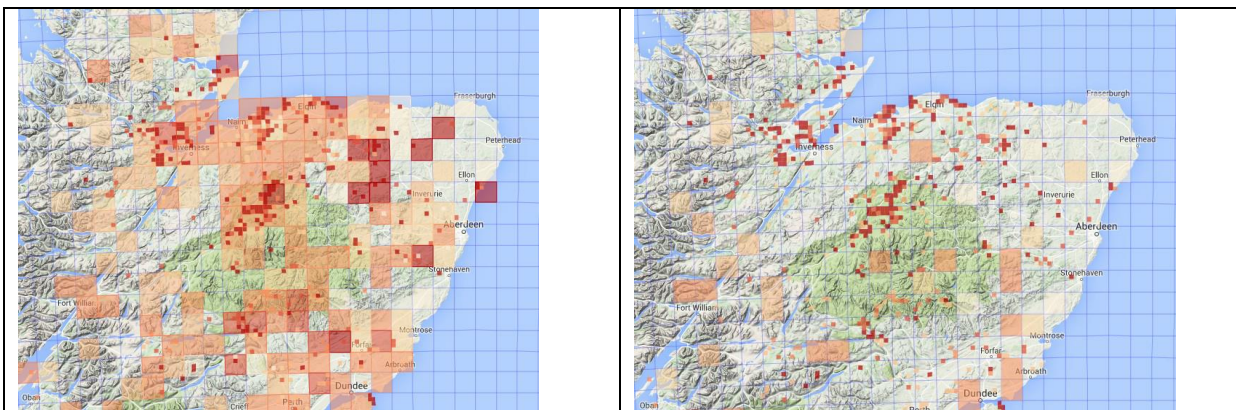
MapMate CUK and the DDb (from Jim McIntosh)

It’s really useful to have your MapMate CUK in your DDb registration information, so if you haven’t added yours, it’s worth going and doing it now. This will give you access, when logged into the DDb, to an additional feature entitled “my mapmate records” on the top left. If you click on this it will give you additional information about your MapMate, see below for an example. If you click the little links in the bottom left of the charts you can see the query that was used to create the chart, the underlying data, and drill down a bit further by modifying the queries slightly to see lists of records rather than grouped queries.



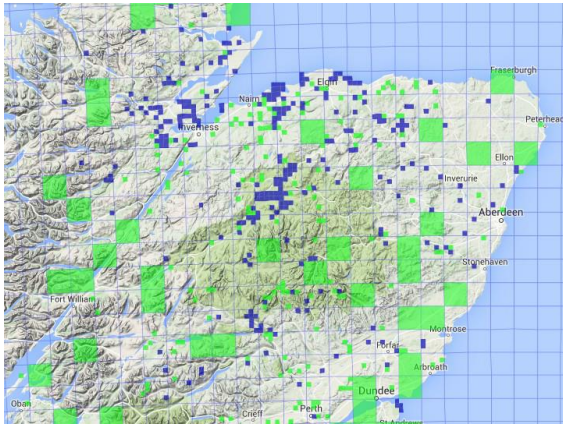
Mapping species distributions using the DDb (by Jim McIntosh)

If you have not looked at the new DDb maps yet, then it is well worth it. Even if you have, there are several useful features that you may not have spotted. For example, when you view a species map (from the maps tab on the DDb home page), the default option is 'zoom to best available'. But, under taxon name, this can be changed to 'Zoom to best available (without residue)'. This hides less detailed records as you zoom in. The screenshots below are for *Pyrola minor*. The left hand map is the default; the map on the right uses the 'Zoom to best available (without residue)' option. I think this is much clearer, and for many purposes would be my personal preference.



[These are best seen in the digital version of this newsletter sent by email, or available on Irish webpage.]

There are other options available, like using different colours and showing pre- and post-2000 distributions – like that below for *Pyrola media*. You do need to be using an up to date web browser, e.g. Chrome or Microsoft Internet Explorer 11 for the maps to work properly. On an average broadband connection the maps appear very quickly.



[Again, best viewed in the digital version of this newsletter.]

FINAL WORDS

As usual this newsletter will be sent to all Irish VCRs by email and as hard copy, and will also go up on the [Irish webpage](#). I would really be pleased to get feedback on the newsletter – do you find it useful?, what other content would you like to see here?, etc. Please do let me know.

I am always delighted to welcome VCRs to the National Botanic Gardens, so please feel free to call in any time for a coffee or a chat, or if you would like me to visit you in your home, or in your vice-county, I am happy to do that also.

Maria Long, BSBI Irish Officer

Tel: +353 87 2578763 **Email:** maria.long@bsbi.org

Remember: If your contact details change, **please** let me know (postal address, email or phone number).

Note on hyperlinks: blue/pink underlined pieces of text in this document show you that there is a hyperlink – i.e. you can click on it (or use Control + Click) and it will bring you to that webpage or document. Contact me if you want more information, or if you would like certain documents sent to you directly by email or post.