BSBI *eNews* – August 2017

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

Bob Ellis retires

By the time you come to read this I will have fully retired as BSBI Projects Officer, although I'll still be doing bits and pieces for the Society in a voluntary capacity - not least continuing with Atlas recording in my own vice-county of East Norfolk as 2020 rapidly approaches. I have hijacked a little bit of space in BSBI *eNews* to thank all the people I have worked with over the last 14 years. It has been great fun working with all the officers and staff of the Society over the years, but most of all I have enjoyed meeting members, vice-county recorders and referees. Thank you one and all!

A couple of things about continuing support for MapMate:

1. The first port of call for help will be your Country Officer or Pete Stroh for England. Tom will supply new copies of MapMate, renew the group licence annually and deal with requests for existing users to join the BSBI group and transfers of editorial rights to cuks. Enquiries and requests should come through your country officer (or Pete for England) in the first instance.
2. A number of people still have issues sending sync files to the DDb via the MapMate web server (usually caused by firewalls or poor internet connections) and I have been forwarding sync files to the DDb sent to me as email attachments. You can now upload sync files directly to the DDb yourself. To upload a file, log in to the DDb, select Tools>Data Import>Import mapmate records then browse to the file in your Cache\Upload folder, select it and click Upload. Even if you don't have problems with transmitting sync files at the moment it's good to be aware that this facility is available.

<div style="text-align: right">Bob Ellis, Projects Officer (retired)</div>

Moving MapMate to a new computer

Continuing on the MapMate theme…. MapMate has just revised the downloadable single file installer (available at www.mapmate.co.uk/alex) to include all patches to 487 inclusive (excluding optional patches). This creates a new baseline and the installer now includes the additional and extended maps (hydrology, contours etc). So, if you need to install MapMate on a new computer, use the link, rather than the original MapMate Installation CD which will, doubtless, be well out of date by now. But before you discard the CD itself – take a careful note of the serial number that is on its plastic cover. You will need that and your CUK when you install MapMate on a new PC. Follow the installation instructions in www.mapmate.co.uk/alex very carefully, and you should find MapMate will work fine!

MapMate patches

I see MapMate now advise users to run one patch at a time, after recent Windows updates. After running any patches, remember to always do a View > My Configuration, check your preferences, and then at the last step tick option to 'Optimize my checklist' then click OK.

<div style="text-align: right">Jim McIntosh, Senior Country Officer</div>

Data Entry & Validation

As far as possible do try to keep up with data entry throughout the field season. The little and often approach to data entry, synching and validation is much preferable to an end-of-season splurge! It also has the advantage that if queries arise, you are more likely to remember the answers. Wet weather (not in short supply this summer) is the perfect opportunity to catch up.

Atlas 2020 Validation: 2

Last month, I talked about validating data that you have just entered and sent to the DDb. So even if you have a big validation backlog – it won't get any bigger! I outlined some of the most important checks - how to use the DDb to check that all your recently entered sites are where they ought to be in your VC - and not in the sea, or in neighbouring VCs! However what other validation checks should you undertake? Well here is a selection to get you started. Check:

- whether records are the only ones in the hectad in the dateclass. Login first, then click here and click display results to see a demonstration of that for records collected during July in vc88
- whether records are the only occurrence of that taxa within 25km - click here. (There are none in this case – which is reassuring!)
- whether there are records of species where there are four or fewer adjacent hectad occurrences - click here, and
- whether you have recorded GB Red Data List taxa – click here.

In each case take a look at the example query and the results, then alter the VC to your own, make any adjustments required to the date (range) and click "Display results". Going through all the steps outlined last month and above only takes a few minutes and efficiently finds the more unusual and interesting records, even if there were several hundred records to be checked. If the records returned by these queries were correct, then I would just confirm the <u>whole lot in one go</u>. To do that, carefully select all the records for the period tested and using the features at the bottom of the results table, click the down arrow in the box prefixed by "mark validation state" and select "confirmed". Finally click the button "apply change to selected records". It is that easy!

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Senior Country Officer

Melampyrum pratense **(Common Cow-wheat)**

Melampyrum pratense comprises two subspecies, the widespread subsp. *pratense*, and the much rarer subsp. *commutatum*. In turn, subsp. pratense has two varieties, var. *pratense* and var. *hians.* The two varieties are not mentioned in Stace's Flora, but are distinctive: var. *hians* has flowers entirely deep yellow – see photograph.
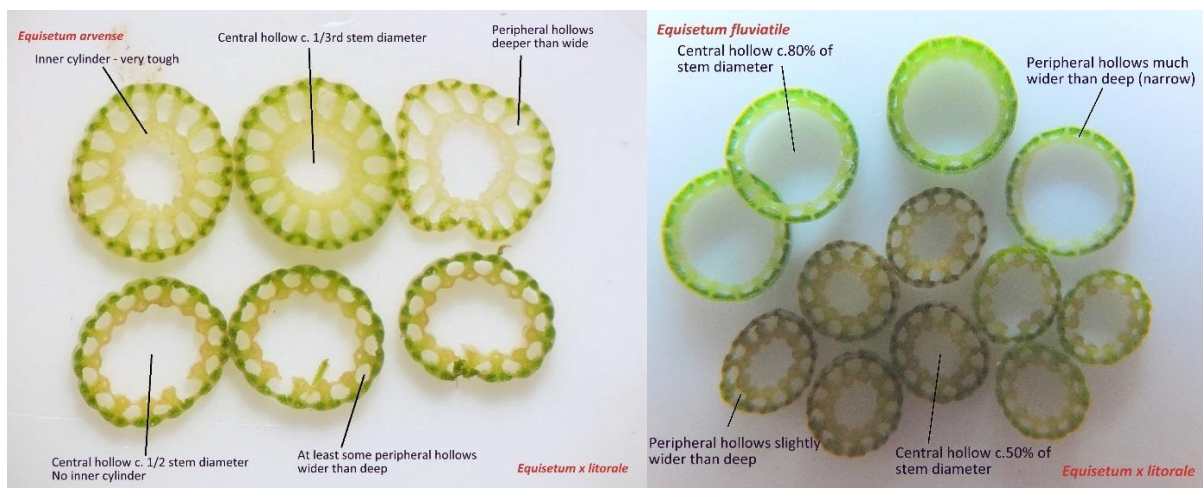
In Scotland, var. *hians* appears to have an eastern distribution, where it is locally frequent in Caledonian Pinewoods and Scots pine plantations, with no records from more western areas. However elsewhere in GB it displays a western bias and there are records from Ireland. See the DDb distribution map. It would be worth looking out for var. *hians* in western Scotland.   The Plant Crib has further details, and note that var. *hians* has been (and may still be being) confused with the much rarer *Melampyrum sylvaticum* (Small Cow-wheat).

Andy Amphlett, County Recorder for Banff

Equisetum x *litorale* **(Shore Horsetail)**

Equisetum x *litorale* (*E. arvense* x *fluviatile*) is a widespread hybrid horsetail, but the DDb map shows that a few vice-counties have a strong concentration of records, suggesting it is being overlooked elsewhere.

Descriptions of this hybrid in Floras are not always consistent or accurate. The stem cross-section drawings in Plant Crib are good, but the text on page 13 is wrong, as info for *E.* x *litorale* and *E.* x *dycei* has been muddled up! Poland gives the central stem hollow as >2/3rds the stem diameter; it is about 1/2 the diameter (which is what Stace says). The photos show the key ID features of the stem cross-sections of the 3 taxa:

E. x *litorale* (photo on left) looks like a branched form of *E. fluviatile*, and some forms of *E. arvense* are identical in general appearance. Plants with branches but with the stem apex unbranched should be investigated. The only sure way to confirm a plant's ID is to examine the stem cross-section. This can be done in the field with a sharp knife and a x10 lens. *Equisetum* specimens should be examined as soon as possible after collecting, as they dry rapidly and the features are then less easily observed.

E. fluviatile has a very wide central stem hollow, so typically, the stem is easily crushed between finger and thumb. The same force applied to a stem of *E.* x *litorale* will compress it, but it feels elastic, expanding back to normal when you release your fingers. *E. arvense* has the smallest stem hollow, so feels firmer than *E.* x *litorale*, but this is a subtle distinction and not reliable. The stem of *E. arvense* has an inner core that is very tough; try to break the stem between two nodes - it is tough to break, and leaves the inner core protruding. *E.* x *litorale* tears easily between stem nodes as it lacks an inner tube. The stem cross-sections of the three taxa seem to be completely distinct.

Andy Amphlett, County Recorder for Banff

Specimens

A reminder - the Referee network is a great but underused resource. Recorders should take specimens if in any doubt and where the population is big enough to withstand it (and you are not in a protected

area – like a SSSI). Select a good specimen ideally with both flowers and mature fruits. Unless rhizomes or roots are important diagnostically, cut perennials off at ground level so they may grow again. Then send to the referee. Follow the instructions in the Yearbook, and remember to note details on the Recording Card or notebook of the specimen, location and grid reference, name of collector, date of collection, habit (e.g. whether spreading or tufted) and notes of features likely to be lost on pressing such as flower colour and include a copy with the specimen.

It is always good to attempt identification yourself, as part of the learning process and seek confirmation but if you are unable don't let that you put you off asking for a determination. Include your email address to make it easier for the referee to respond. If you collect a duplicate specimen, you won't need to trouble the referee to return your specimen.

Jeremy Ison, Panel of Referees and Specialists

Publication of 'Threatened Plants in Britain and Ireland: results of a sample survey, 2008-2013'

After a very long gestation, the TPP book has finally gone to the printers and will be published later this year. The book includes a very readable preface by Peter Marren, a short introduction including a summary of the overall results and species accounts for all fifty species covered. The conclusions cover the main findings and implications for conservation. All the data are summarised in a series of tables at the end which include summary statistics for each species.

Thank you once again to all who were involved in the project, and apologies that it has taken so long to write up! There will be a pre-publication offer in the September issue of BSBI News. We hope you enjoy it!

Kevin Walker, Pete Stroh & Bob Ellis

The Vegetative Key

After I mentioned in last month's BSBI *eNews* that I take the *Vegetative Key* with me whenever I go into the field, John Poland got in touch to thank me for the plug and ask for any comments, corrections and constructive criticism of the book from BSBI *eNews* readers. Please send your feedback directly to John Poland.

He went on to say that he is working on a second edition but that it won't be out for a few years yet. However, there is an ebook version (available on Amazon) which is very useful if you are in the field without the book and need to check something unexpectedly. You can view it on a smartphone (and any other computer device of course). It is hyperlinked so you can quickly jump through the key rather than scrolling.

The ebook is the same price as the printed book but now available for anyone for £0.76 who buys (or who has bought) the printed Vegetative Key from Amazon, at least for a limited time. John has also arranged a 3-day promotion where anyone can get the Vegetative Key eBook free on Kindle from Amazon between 28th-30th August 2017. I'll email a reminder.

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Senior Country Officer

BSBI Photographic Competition 2017

Another reminder to take your camera when you are out and about in this lovely summery weather(!) and use it to take photographs that you could enter in the 2017 BSBI Photographic Competition. It has two categories: 1) Plants in the Landscape and 2) Archaeophytes. More…

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Senior Country Officer

BSBI News & Views

On the News & Views blog in July: a report on botanical exhibits at this year's Cambridge Conversazione; two notes - here and here - about the National Plant Monitoring Scheme (BSBI is a partner in this initiative); a remembrance of Scottish polymath/ botanist Robert Brown; an account of a botanical survey carried out in Ely; a summary of the latest links to conferences and scientific papers on the News page of the BSBI website; an account of Faith Anstey's Grass ID workshop, held recently in Edinburgh; and a report by Dublin volunteer Shane on how a BSBI Training Grant helped him get to grips with sedge ID.

Louise Marsh, BSBI Communications Officer

BSBI *eNews*

The current and recent back issues of BSBI *eNews* are available on the Publications page of the BSBI website. An email with a link to BSBI *eNews* is circulated to BSBI Recorders, Referees, staff and committee members. Please feel free to forward it to anyone (including non-members) who you think might be interested.

I'd welcome short contributions from anyone on topics of interest and relevance to fellow readers. BSBI *eNews* is generally published on the 1st of each month (unless it happens to be a bank holiday!) so contributions should ideally reach me by the 21st of the preceding month. I'd also be pleased to have feedback on any of the articles appearing in BSBI *eNews*.

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Senior Country Officer