

Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland

Irish BSBI Newsletter No. 10, December 2019



Dear Irish BSBI vice-county recorders (VCRs) and members,

It's been an exciting year for Irish botany, and I am very grateful to have been part of it. I hope you enjoy this newsletter, my first as BSBI Ireland Officer, with its mix of news and updates from across Ireland. Happy holidays! Sarah

RECORDER NETWORK NEWS

This year we are able to welcome two new VCRs to our ranks. Cliona Byrne and Kate Harrington have been officially confirmed as joint-VCRs for Louth. Cliona and Kate had both been 'VCRs in training' for the past two years under the mentorship of John Faulkner. In October they were proposed by the Committee for Ireland, and confirmed by BSBI's Records and Research Committee. Many of you will already know Cliona and Kate. For those who haven't had the pleasure of meeting them yet, you will have your chance this year as they host their first field meeting.

Sadly as we say hello to new VCRs, we are also saying goodbye to some of our veterans. After many years, Stephen Ward and Sharon Parr have both decided to step down at the end of this year as VCRs for Clare. Stephen and Sharon leave the vice-county very well recorded, with an active group of local botanists keen to continue their work.

Also retiring is Ian McNeill, VCR for Tyrone. Ian McNeill is author of the wonderful "Flora of County Tyrone" and has done incredible work recording across the county. Ian will continue to help with validation for Atlas 2020 over the coming months before handing over the reins entirely.

A partial retirement is also in store for Paul Green. After an absolutely incredible effort recording just about every plant in Waterford, Paul has decided to retire as VCR for that county, but will continue as joint VCR (with Paula O'Meara) for Wexford. Paul has also decided that 2021 will be his last year for editing Irish Botanical News, though I'm certain he will continue to be an active part of BSBI through training, recording, and his many other endeavours.

No doubt all these recorders will be sorely missed and leave very big shoes to fill. In some cases there are volunteers who have already expressed interest in the positions, but if you know someone who would be a good candidate please let me know. The Committee for Ireland will be discussing this at the next meeting on 1 February.

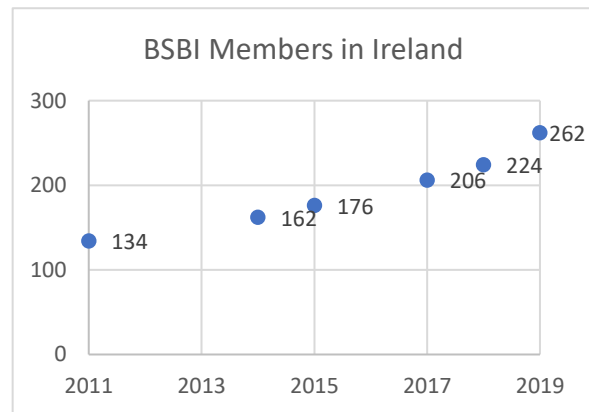
IRELAND OFFICER'S REPORT

This year BSBI said goodbye to its first Ireland Officer, Maria Long, as she moved to a new position at the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Maria was Ireland officer for 7 years and oversaw a lot of big changes and new initiatives that helped to grow BSBI in Ireland in terms of members and wider recognition. I took over in June and have been finding my feet. If you want to find out a bit about me, there is an interview posted on the [BSBI blog](#).

Members in Ireland

Our membership numbers have continued to grow again this year, reaching a new high of 262 members in Ireland as of December. This includes 207 in RoI and 55 in NI.

As we continue to grow our goal is to make sure all members have opportunities to get involved with our work and improve their skills.



Communications

Social media (Twitter and Facebook) continue to play a big part in how we keep in touch with members and others who are interested in Irish botany. At the moment we have over 1000 followers on Twitter, and over 2200 on Facebook. For those who use Twitter, joining in with [#wildflowerhour](#) from 8-9pm on Sundays is a great way to interact with hundreds of other botanists across Britain and Ireland and to share the plants you've found in the previous week. Other hashtags are used to link posts from other events, for example [#NewYearPlantHunt](#).

Recently I have been updating and reorganising the [BSBI Ireland webpage](#), including adding a few sub-pages to make it easier to find things. I'll continue with the job in the new year, but would love to hear what you think about the new look!

In August, I started an email list to help everyone keep up to date with news and events specific to Irish members. I send emails as needed, which so far has meant approximately once per month. There have been some issues with making sure everyone has had an opportunity to sign up for the list though. If you are not receiving these emails, but would like to, please contact me so I can make sure your correct email address is added to the list. If you think you did sign up but haven't received anything, please check your spam folder.

Jim McIntosh has asked me to remind you all of the monthly eNews bulletin. This is open to everyone associated with BSBI across all countries, but is especially relevant to VCRs. As we approach some important deadlines for Atlas 2020 it is even more important that everyone gets the messages. To see past issues and subscribe, go to the [eNews webpage](#).

Conferences

Once again we held two main meetings this year: the Spring Conference in March and the Autumn Meeting in September. Both were held at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. The Spring Conference in particular was a huge success, with more than 90 people in attendance! Check out the [conference webpage](#) for a summary of the event and links to blogposts, presentations, and even the ever-popular quiz!

Plans are now underway for the 2020 Spring Conference, scheduled for 28 March, and information will go up on the website early in the new year.



Funding

BSBI Ireland has been very fortunate to be awarded funding to support our Irish work by a number of bodies this year.

NPWS: The National Parks and Wildlife Service has continued to support the BSBI in Ireland by funding the equivalent of over one day a week of Irish Officer time. This fantastic support lets us do so much more to support botany and botanists in Ireland. NPWS also awarded us a large grant to run the [Aquatic Plant Project](#) across RoI, providing a huge boost in aquatics training and recording.

CEDaR: Earlier this year, the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording awarded us a grant to run the Aquatic Plant Project in Northern Ireland, again providing a huge boost in aquatics training and recording. They have recently very generously offered us additional support for some training workshops and work to prepare for further aquatic surveying in Northern Ireland.

WFS: The Wildflower Society once again provided support towards the expenses of a fieldworker to carry out recording in some under-recorded areas. Paul Green was commissioned to do this work and has done a fantastic job, as always.

Huge thanks are due to NPWS, CEDaR, and WFS for all they do to support the work of BSBI in Ireland!

IN THE FIELD

Field meetings

As usual there was a great range of field meeting across Ireland this year, visiting East Mayo (H26), North Longford (H24), Louth (H31), East Cork (H5), West Sligo (H28), West Galway (H16), East Tyrone (H36), Derry (H40) and South-East Galway (H15). Huge thanks to John Conaghan for putting the schedule together and to everyone who hosted a meeting.

The main meeting of the year was the four-day trip to Connemara, West Galway. 39 people came across the four days, helping to make around 5500 plant records! John Conaghan wrote a [blog post](#) about the event, and a slightly longer piece will be in the yearbook.

The field meeting schedule for 2020 has now been set and will be in the yearbook and online soon. We have 8 meetings currently on the schedule, visiting Antrim, South-east Galway, West Cork, Laois, Louth, Clare, East Cork and East Donegal. These are all one-day meetings. If anyone is interested in planning another, or thinking about hosting another multi-day recording event, please get in touch with me or John Conaghan.



Local groups

Our local groups were incredibly active this year, helping to push us over the line for Atlas recording in many areas. For example, the new Leitrim group managed a massive 13 recording days this year with an ever-growing list of new members, as Aoife Delaney reported at the Autumn meeting.

Local groups are a fantastic way to get to know other botanists and improve your skills. Check the list of a groups on the [Ireland webpage](#). If there's a group near you, why not join? If there isn't, why not consider starting one up? You can get in touch with me for an informal chat about the possibility, or even talk to one of the other group leaders about their experiences.

Rough Crew

Rough Crew had another exciting year, with a number of rainy days in the mountains! The schedule included Slievenamon in May, Beara and Slieve Foye in June, Benchoona in July, and Kerry in August. A late trip to Sligo was added in September, but sadly Rory wasn't able to attend, and we aren't sure if it can really count as a Rough Crew trip without him!

As always these trips yielded interesting records from challenging locations (for example, *Saxifraga stellaris* (Starry Saxifrage) and *Phegopteris connectilis* (Beech Fern) from Beara this year). Many thanks to all the intrepid botanists involved!



If you're interested in botany up mountains and on remote islands, get in touch with [Rory Hodd](#) to find out more.

New Year Plant Hunt

The 9th [New Year Plant Hunt](#) will run 1-4 January 2020 - a great excuse to get outside and record some plants after all the holiday festivities. Details on how to take part are available on the website. If you want to get involved but prefer to work in a group, check out the [Group Hunts page](#) to see if there is one near you. Equally, if you'd like to host a group hunt, let the NYPH team know and they will add it to the page. Just email nyplanthunt@bsbi.org.

Please note, it is essential that you use the [2020 version of the recording app](#) and delete any previous versions installed on your phone: they won't send your records direct to the NYPH team so your finds would not appear on the [interactive results map](#) or be included in 2020 analyses.

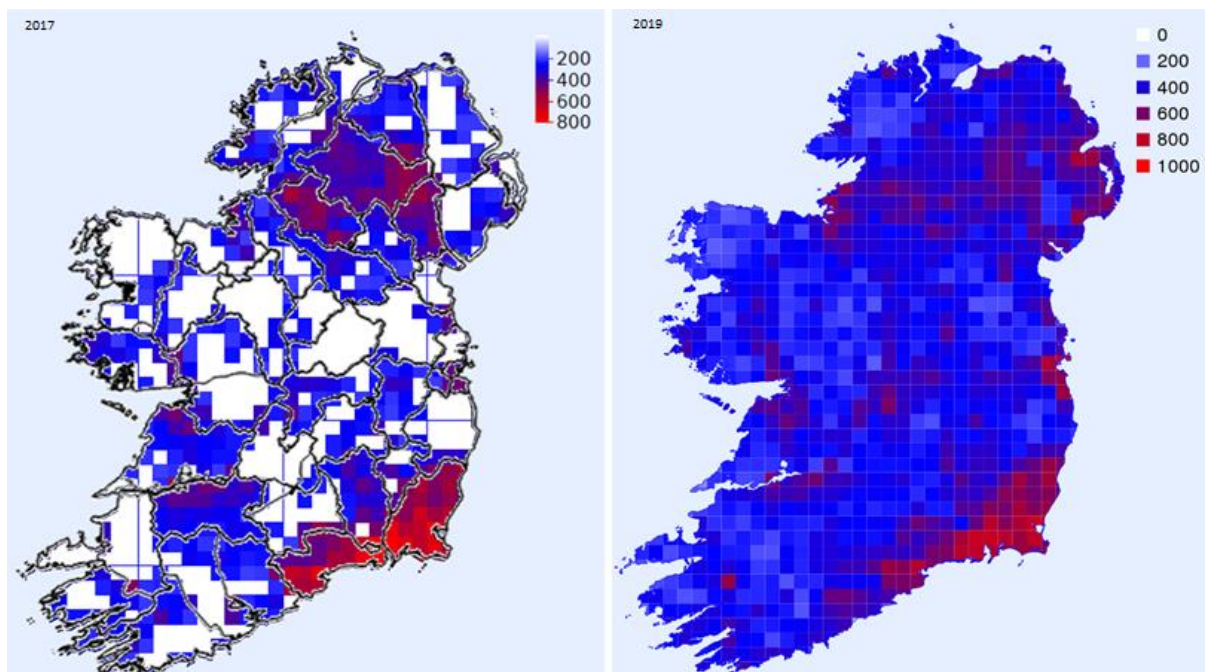
If you use social media, please remember to use the [#NewYearPlantHunt](#) hashtag so your photos and comments are seen by everyone else involved in the New Year Plant Hunt.

Happy (Plant) Hunting!

PROJECTS

ATLAS 2020

The biggest project across BSBI for the past few years has been [Atlas 2020](#), which aims to produce a full Atlas of all native and introduced plant species, where they occur across Britain and Ireland, and analysis of how their distributions have changed. All records for Atlas 2020 must be submitted to the DDb by 31 December 2019 at the very latest (just a reminder if you're still holding any records!). A quick look at the DDb suggests that recording for the Atlas in Ireland has been a huge success thanks to the tremendous efforts of all our recorders. Over 200,000 plant records have been submitted for Ireland each year for the past five years, and a total of more than 2.6 million records since 2000. Thanks to analysis by Robert Northridge we also know that nearly every hectad in Ireland has been well-recorded. Fantastic work and many thanks to all involved!



Hectads with 200+ records since 2000: Left is 2017, right is 2019 (courtesy of Robert Northridge)

After the data is uploaded, the next step is validation by VCRs. The aim of validation isn't to ensure a perfect dataset, but to confirm occurrences of rare or interesting species and to correct or exclude records which are incorrect. In November we held a validation day at the National Botanic Gardens (thanks to Teagasc for letting us use their computer room!). A lot of questions were asked and answered on the day, and more information was sent out afterwards. If you missed this or would like me to re-send any of the information, please let me know. Tom Humphrey is generally happy to answer questions about validation as well, so please feel free to contact him or me with any you may have. The goal is to have all Atlas data validated by April 2020 if possible.

Aquatic Plant Project

Helping to fill some of the gaps in Atlas recording this year was our [Aquatic Plant Project](#). This project succeeded in the twin goals of increasing aquatic plant recording and training recorders so that aquatic records will continue to be made in the future. All told, nearly 6400 aquatic plant records were made across 27 vice-counties during the project, and over 100 people attended training and recording days.

In RoI, the project hosted 26 days of training. Two days were solely training on how to identify aquatic plants. These were led by Lynda Weekes and Cilian Roden. A further 24 days were training and recording, led by Nick Stewart, Chris Preston, and Cilian Roden. 87 people took part in at least one day of training, with many attending multiple days. Recording took place at 186 sites (monads) in 73 hectads across 22 vice-counties. In total, 5026 records were collected for 402 species, including 339 new hectad records for 70 aquatic species.

In NI, the project hosted 9 training and recording days led by Nick Stewart, with 35 people attending. Recording took place at 53 sites across 24 hectads in 5 vice-counties. In total, 1371 records were collected for 314 species and hybrids, including 57 new hectad records for 31 aquatic species and hybrids.

Nick Stewart also provided two fantastic presentations at the BSBI Autumn Meeting: one on the importance of Irish aquatic habitats and another on identifying challenging aquatic species.

Hopefully this project has put us on track for much more aquatic recording in the future! A massive thanks is due to Paul Green for managing the project, all those who helped with organisation, those who ran the training days, and NPWS and CEDaR for funding. We are working now to develop plans for the next phase of the Aquatic Plant Project, with more targeted recording and monitoring, as well as further training. Keep an eye on the website and other communication channels for details.



EXTRAS

British and Irish Botany

[British & Irish Botany](#), BSBI's new online academic journal went live this year, with 16 articles across three 'issues' published so far. Sadly, only one of these articles was from Ireland! The editors are really keen to receive more contributions from Irish botanists, so if you have an idea for an article - either a full paper or a short note - please email them at bib@bsbi.org to discuss it. They are particularly keen to receive submissions from anyone who has never published in a scientific journal and are happy to help guide you through the process.

Targeted Recording

It is often useful to have targets when recording – how about keeping an eye out for Red List taxa or alien plants listed on EU Directives? The list of commonly encountered alien species now includes: *Elodea nuttallii*, *Gunnera tinctoria*, *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*, *Impatiens glandulifera*, *Lagarosiphon major*, *Ludwigia grandiflora*, *Lysichiton americanus* and *Myriophyllum aquaticum*.

Conferences

There are a few conferences coming up this spring which might be of interest:

- 28 March: BSBI Ireland Spring Conference. National Botanic Gardens, Dublin.
- 21-22 April: [CIEEM Irish Conference](#): Conservation Approaches to Benefit Biodiversity. NUI Galway.
- 20-21 May: [Ireland's Buzzing](#): International Conference on Pollinator Conservation. Limerick City.

If you hear about events which would be of interest to other BSBI members, why not let me know so I can share the details?

Finally, I would like to say thank you to everyone for all your efforts over the last year, and particularly for welcoming me over the past few months. It has been wonderful to meet and work with so many of you, and I look forward to meeting many more of you in the new year. Until then, best wishes for a very happy holiday season!

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