



Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland

Irish BSBI Newsletter No. 8, December 2017



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

As I think more people are reading and enjoying this little newsletter than just the VCR network, I've renamed it the 'Irish BSBI Newsletter'. I will still compile it with VCRs chiefly in mind, and I hope it continues to be a helpful mix of news and tips and updates. Please let me know if you find it useful, and what you'd like to see more or less of – I would really value the feedback. VCRs will still receive this by post, and the email/web version will have colour photos and hyperlinks. And I must apologise for the lack of a summer issue in 2017 – circumstances conspired against it! Maria

RECORDER NETWORK NEWS

Sad news in the Irish VCR network this year, which you will all have heard, was the death of Michael Archer, VCR for Leitrim. Mike was much loved, and touched everyone he met with his warmth, his sense of humour, his sincerity and with his passion for life. A good BSBI contingent attended what was a lovely and fitting funeral service for Mike, and Don Cotton gave a lovely contribution to the ceremony. Don is also writing an obituary. Mike will be missed and the contribution he made to BSBI over the years is greatly valued.

I am delighted to welcome on board three new people who will hopefully be joining the Irish BSBI vice-county recorder (VCR) network in 2018. For the moment, all three are coming on board 'unofficially' (so you won't see their names listed in the Yearbook that you'll receive early next year, for example). They are going to see how they like the role and how it all works, and CFI (Committee for Ireland) is happy for both sides to have the opportunity of a trial period. For now, I'm calling them 'VCRs in training'! The newbies are:

- Aoife Delaney, joint Leitrim
- Eamon Gaughan, joint Leitrim
- Eamonn Delaney, joint east Mayo

A big hearty welcome on board guys, and do just call on your neighbours and other VCRs for help and advice - they are a great bunch. And I'm always at the other end of email and phone, so get in touch any time.

Vacancies/Retirements

H24 – Longford – vacant. Great thanks are due to Sylvia and Julian Reynolds, however, for recording in Longford in recent years and achieving good coverage through strategic planning and hard work in the field.

H29 – Leitrim – see both paragraphs above

H31 – Louth – vacant. Melinda Lyons retired from her position as VCR for Louth earlier this year. Thanks to Melinda for recording in spite of a busy schedule at times.

“Could you be a referee?” ...

...So asked Jeremy Ison, the BSBI person who co-ordinates the referee network, in a poster presented at the recent AEM ([Annual Exhibition Meeting](#)) in November. Jeremy posed the questions:

- do you have a special interest in a particular group of plants?
- do you have, or are you prepared to develop, expertise in your chosen group?
- do you want to share your enthusiasm and knowledge with others?

Some current vacancies in the referee network include: hawkweeds (*Hieracium*), sea-lavenders (*Limonium*), glassworts (*Salicornia*), evening-primroses (*Oenothera*), bedstraws (*Galium*), mulleins (*Verbascum*) and hogweeds (*Heracleum*). So have a think.... could you be a referee? Get in touch with Jeremy (jeremyjison@gmail.com) if you want to know more.

IRISH OFFICER NEWS

Volunteers

Shane Brien, recent MSc graduate from UCC, has continued to be a trusty and hard-working volunteer throughout 2017. He has now digitised over 20,000 records – many of these are pre-2000 records from Co. Westmeath, and so necessitated some detective work (e.g. tying down locations, updating names, deciphering recorder initials, etc.). He has also been on-hand to digitise other blocks of records as they came in – e.g. from recording events. A huge thanks to you Shane!

There are a number of others who volunteer their time (aside of the VCRs – who are the core BSBI volunteers of course!), and they all deserve thanks for that. Phoebe O’Brien, Cathal O’Brien and Richard McMullen all contributed much in 2017, and there were others too – thanks to you all. The BSBI is powered by and driven by volunteer effort, and it is all both greatly appreciated and hugely necessary.

Social media

Social media has proven itself to be indispensable in how information is shared nowadays. We have been quite resourceful as well as successful here in Ireland in having our own Facebook and Twitter accounts (i.e. in addition to the main accounts on both platforms, which are run by Louise Marsh, BSBI’s Communications Officer). We now have about 1,600 followers on both platforms for the Irish accounts, and not only that, at least three of the Irish local groups have their own Facebook pages/groups (Ulster BSBI Botany Group; BSBI Plant Atlas Recorders Cork; BSBI Kerry). There are also countless individual BSBI members and enthusiasts with their own Twitter and Facebook accounts who interact on a daily basis, making the botanical social media community a vibrant, interesting and informative one. Thanks to you all!

To follow us on Facebook you must have a Facebook account, then search for @IrishSectionBSBI (or @BSBI2011 for the ‘main’ BSBI Facebook page). To keep in touch via Twitter, follow me, @murlong77, and/or the central BSBI account, @BSBIbotany.

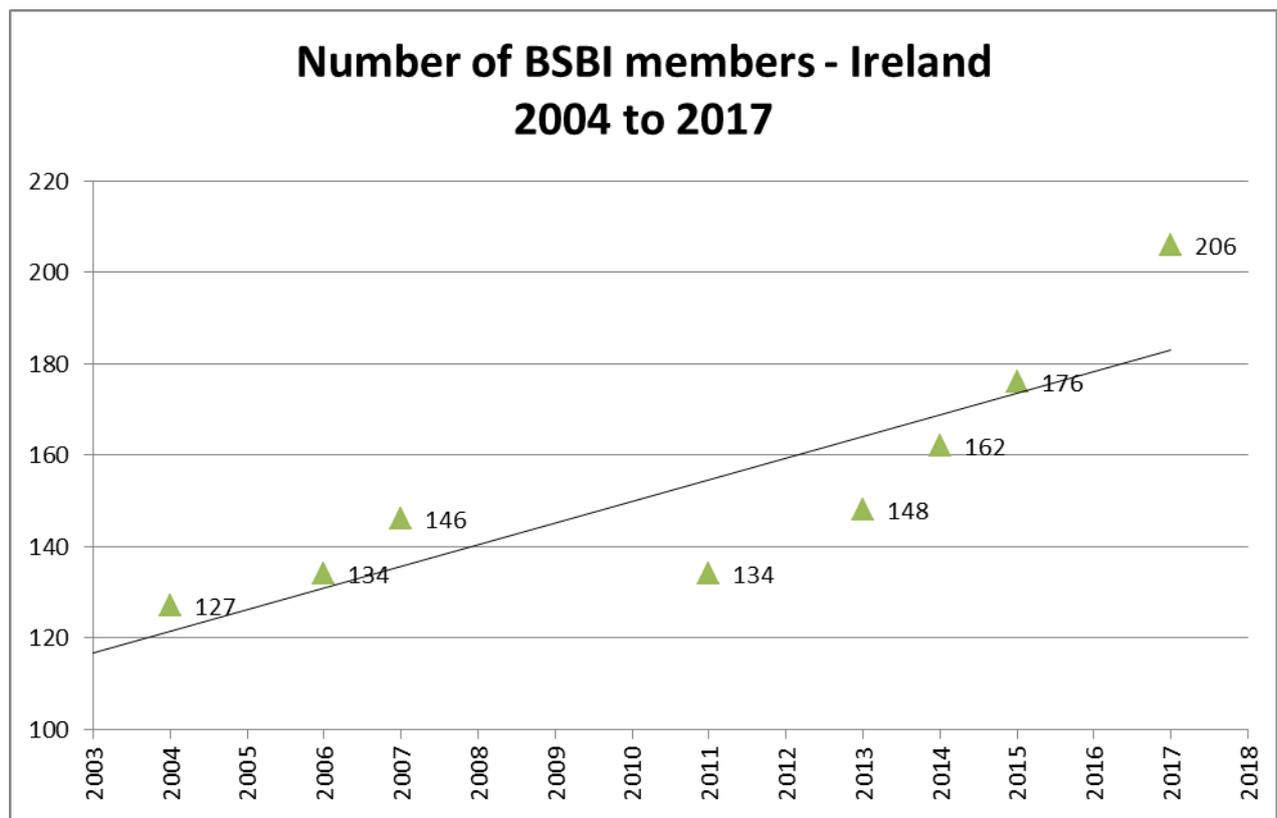
Irish BSBI Conference

The annual Irish BSBI Conference was again a great success in 2017, with good attendance numbers and a great line-up of talks. Visit the [conference webpage](#) to download or view the contributions, including the workshops and ID key to *Veronica* by Paul Green. The 2018 conference will take place on **Sat 24th March** in the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin, so put the date in the diary and don’t miss it! Further details coming soon.

Links to the conference webpage, as well as two blog posts relating to the 2017 event, are available on the Irish webpage: <http://bsbi.org/ireland> I encourage you to have a look at the second blog post in particular, where Louise pulls together some of the feedback from attendees – it's great to hear that people enjoyed it so much! (And thanks to Louise for the conference webpage and the blog posts – great work and support as usual.)

BSBI member numbers in Ireland

I haven't had a chance to have a detailed look at BSBI membership figures (e.g numbers for NI and RoI separately, numbers of new members, etc.), but what I have done is quickly plotted the current number (206) alongside the numbers from some previous years. The line shown is a linear trendline. It is nice to see that the graph is continuing to move upwards. As I stressed at my recent talk at the [BSBI AEM](#), our botanical network in Ireland is 'tiny but mighty'!



BSBI Annual Exhibition Meeting (AEM)

The BSBI AEM took place this year on Saturday 25th November in the Natural History Museum. It was a great round up of exhibits, quizzes, talks, suppliers and of course, the AGM. Talks and exhibits can be found on the [AEM webpage](#), and I highly recommend that you have a look. I gave a talk entitled 'Building and supporting Ireland's botanical network' in which I gave a run through all that's happening in Ireland, and how much progress we are making, both in terms of recruiting new botanists and also improving coverage for Atlas 2020. People were very impressed with what we achieve with so few botanists!

Funding

- Some of you will have heard that Phoebe O'Brien and BSBI applied for **Heritage Council** funding to run a botanical event for members of the public in Galway city this year. Congratulations to Phoebe for writing a good proposal, winning the funding and running a great botanical walk. Thanks too to Ciarán Bruton and Eugene Lambe for ably supporting

Phoebe on the day. Phoebe wrote a blog post about the event which you can read [here](#) and she also produced a leaflet based on the urban plants seen during the walk for dissemination in Galway, and indeed further afield. You can download the leaflet from the [Irish webpage](#).

- We were delighted to once again be successful in 2017 in winning funding from the Environmental Recorder's Group (**ERG**) in Northern Ireland, which is administered by CEDaR. This money will be used to support recording in NI, with a particular focus on events, supplies and support for the Ulster BSBI Botany Group in early 2018.
- The National Parks and Wildlife Service (**NPWS**) continues to support the BSBI in Ireland by funding the equivalent of over one day a week of Irish Officer time. For this we are very grateful, and it makes a big difference to the amount of events and actions that can be supported to take place in the Irish BSBI network.
- While not yet fully signed and sealed, it is highly likely that **NPWS** will also fund an education-focused project on Charophytes with BSBI in 2018. There are two two-day workshops scheduled in May (see field meetings [schedule](#) on BSBI website), both being taught jointly by two of the main Irish and British experts, Cilian Roden and Nick Stewart. Tuition will therefore be second-to-none! Bookings are not yet open, but VCRs will be notified immediately once details are available to allow first choice on booking places. If they are a group you struggle with or would like to improve on, then this will be your chance. The workshops will be in Co. Westmeath on 10+11th and 12+13th May.
- For the past few years we have received funding from the Wildflower Society to contribute towards the expenses of a fieldworker to carry out recording in some under-recorded areas. Paul Green has done the recording thus far. We are very grateful indeed to the Wildflower Society and to Paul Green himself – few could collect more or better records, and few would be more generous with their time, skill and effort. Thanks Paul.

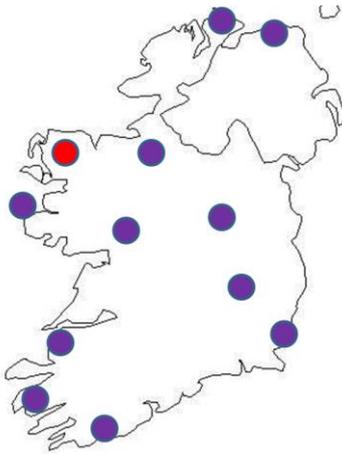
FIELD MEETINGS

The Irish Field Meetings Secretary, John Conaghan, presented a very useful round-up of field trips held in 2017 at the Autumn Meeting and AGM in September. He made a conservative estimate that over 13,000 plant records were collected at field trips in 2017. This number was significantly boosted by efforts in Kerry during the 5-day event (approx. 6,000 records) and around 2,500 records made at the 3-day Roscommon recording weekend. Well done to everyone who organised, took part or otherwise supported field meetings in 2017, and here's to another successful year in 2018 hopefully!

We had 23 field days in our 2017 programme, and that's not counting rough crew or local group days of course. We have no less than 34 planned for 2018! Eight of those are linked to multi-day workshops on tricky groups – four days on *Taraxacum* (jointly between Dublin Naturalists' Field Club and BSBI, contact Declan Doogue for information) and four on Charophytes (see earlier under 'funding'). Again, this 34 days does not include most rough crew outings, planned joint workshop(s) with the NBDC (National Biodiversity Data Centre), nor any local group trips. So it will be a busy year – and I hope you'll all make a big effort to support as many events as you can. Below is a summary, and details can be found on the [BSBI website](#). As usual, the Irish meetings will also be emailed around as a handy A4 flyer (early in 2018). Note also that our three new 'VCRs in training' are all involved in leading field meetings – so fair play to them!

Irish BSBI field meetings – core schedule – 2018 – summary:

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|----------------|--|
| - 5-8 May | - Taraxacum | - multiple VCs | - Declan Doogue |
| - 10-13 May | - Charophytes (2 wrkshps) | - Westmeath | - Maria Long (org); Cilian Roden, Nick Stewart (teach) |
| - 13 May | - Dunes and Viola | - Wexford | - Paul Green |
| - 19, 20 May | - Iveragh Peninsula | - South Kerry | - Rory Hodd |
| - 9 June | - Monivea/Woodlawn | - NE Galway | - Chris Peppiatt |
| - 15-17 June | - Inishowen | - East Donegal | - Oisín Duffy, Mairéad Crawford, John Conaghan |
| - 23, 24 June | - L. Melvin/Slieve Anieran | - Leitrim | - Eamon Gaughan, Aoife Delaney |
| - 7, 8 July | - Wolfhill, Killeshin | - Laois | - Fiona MacGowan, Mark McCorry |
| - 13-15 July | - Inishbofin | - West Galway | - John Conaghan |
| - 20-22 July | - Causeway Coast | - Antrim | - David McNeill |
| - 8-12 Aug | - Belmullet and/or Castlebar | - Mayo | - Maria Long, Eamonn Delaney, Gerry Sharkey, John Conaghan |
| - 1, 2 Sept | - Ballybunion | - North Kerry | - Rory Hodd |
| - 8, 9 Sept | - Timoleague, Inishannon | - W & Mid Cork | - Clare Heardman, John Wallace |



Our main recording event this year will be 4.5 days in Mayo in August. This will be jointly led and organised by Maria Long, new VCR in training for east Mayo Eamonn Delaney, long-standing VCR for both Mayo VCs Gerry Sharkey and also John Conaghan. We have yet to finalise details, but will be based out of Belmullet and/or Castlebar. We'll be undertaking an assessment of where needs most work early in 2018, and will make final decisions then. Wherever we decide to focus efforts, Mayo never disappoints, and it will be a fruitful and fun event I am sure. Keep your eyes and ears peeled for further details.

ROUGH CREW NEWS

Email Rory (rlhodd@gmail.com) to be added to the BSBI 'rough crew' email list to hear about trips – these are botanical outings where there's a bit of adventure. Usually climbing a mountain, crossing a bog or getting a boat is involved! There is no commitment necessary to join the email list – you'll just be kept in the loop. Here is some news from Rory from earlier in the year: "The rough crew had three successful and enjoyable outings during the Kerry recording event on the Dingle peninsula. The first outing explored Masatiompan, which is a northern outlier of Brandon high above the Atlantic, where a good range of montane species was found including *Persicaria vivipara* at one of its few Irish sites. A group tackled the magical Derrymore Glen in the Slieve Mish, finding much of interest, including abundant *Saxifraga rosacea*. The best was saved til last, when one of Ireland's best upland sites, below the summit of Brandon, was explored. An impressive list of montane specialists was made, including such rarities as *Alchemilla alpina*, *Saussurea alpina* and *Polystichum lonchitis*. A new altitude record for the gametophyte of *Trichomanes speciosum* was also made, at over 700m." There were further exciting rough crew trips in 2017 – two of which involved camping out, so were veritably 'rough'! You'll just have to join up to be involved in the action!



Admiring the montane specialist species *Carex bigelowii* on the summit of Masatiompan high above the Atlantic during the Kerry recording event. (Ph: Rory Hodd)



Gathered around *Salix herbacea* on the other side of the summit of Masatiompan. (Ph: Rory Hodd)

LOCAL GRUOPS

As you'll all be aware, there are now a number of BSBI local groups in Ireland, which is just fantastic. Each one operates a little differently, each with its own pace and its own character – and that's the beauty of local groups... they evolve to be what the participants want and need. Overall they tend to be great fun and the pace is usually more relaxed than typical recording events, meaning that there is ample time for learning and sharing, and socialising too. They provide an excellent vehicle for more and more people to become involved in botany. Below is a list of the main groups, along with contact details. Get in touch with your local group, or get in touch with me if you'd like to set one up, or to enquire if there are plans in your area (there are a few areas with plans...).

- Clare - contact VCR Stephen Ward (sdward@eircom.net) to be added to email list
- Cork (3x VCs) - contact VCR Edwina Cole (edwinacole@eircom.net) to be added to email list
- Down - contact VCR Graham Day (gvd@cherrycottage.myzen.co.uk) or visit Graham's [County Down webpage](#) for more info
- Dublin, Louth - contact Colm Clarke/Kate-Marie O'Connor (dublinbsbi@gmail.com) to be added to email list
- Kerry – contact Jessica Hamilton (Jhbsbikerry@gmail.com) to be added to email list
- Ulster – contact Maria Long (maria.long@bsbi.org) to be added to email list
- And finally... .. Galway (all three VCs) - contact Maria Long (maria.long@bsbi.org) if interested... we hope to set up a group here soon!

Local groups and blog posts

For an idea of what local groups get up to have a look at some of the blogs by the amazing Jessica Hamilton, student at Tralee IT and BSBI enthusiast. Go to the BSBI News and Views page: <http://bsbipublicity.blogspot.ie/> If you look at the right hand column and scroll down to the search box, and type in Jessica Hamilton, you'll see that four blog posts by Jessica from 2017 will appear in the main part of the page. I think you'll find them impressive – comprehensive, informative, good photos, etc. I'm using Jessica as an example here, but there are lots of examples of great outings and great write-ups... go explore!

And while I've just mentioned the excellent 'BSBI News and Views' it reminds me to once again strongly encourage you to not only check in on these posts, but to *follow* them. This means that you'll get an email every time there is a new post (on average I'd say maybe two a week). Here's how to follow:

- visit the page: <http://bsbipublicity.blogspot.ie/>
- scroll down to very near the bottom of the column on the right hand side to the box called 'Follow by Email' and enter your email address
- a pop up window will appear – though sometimes hidden at first, and just follow the instructions.

Go do it now... you won't regret it! It really is one of the best ways to stay informed about happenings in BSBI, as well as other relevant bits and pieces.

Getting and keeping enthusiasts involved

And the final note regarding local groups relates to an email that Stephen Ward, joint VCR for Clare, sent out to those on his list during the year. He has a gang of willing and able enthusiasts, but as he lives in the UK, it can be tricky to provide focus and guidance from afar. He decided to list the squares he'd most like work done in, as well as the number of 'missing' species (though any of quite a few measures could be used here to impart similar information). Maybe other VCRs would like to do similar – either via a local group, an email list, or simply to a few reliable botanists whom they know would be keen? It really does help to provide a focus and a target to helpers. See what you think (reproduced with Stephen's permission):....

Dear Fellow Botanists

One question you often ask me is: *"Are there areas from which you would like me to record plants?"* My knowledge of Clare has not been sufficiently detailed to refer you to specific areas. However, recently I was introduced to the BSBI's big (positively enormous) database; from that it is evident which hectads (10x10 km squares) in Clare are as yet under-recorded compared with 1999 (i.e. at the time when recording for the New Atlas which was to have been published in 2000, but which due to the sheer volume of data to be processed was not published until 2002).

We still have part of 2017 in which to record + 2018 and 2019. I am planning to spend September recording + as much time as I can allocate of the next 2 years - the 'bit is between my teeth'; you will be

most welcome when available to accompany me. But armed with the lists below, you will yourself be equipped to look for those species as yet unrecorded this time round.

If you do, please print yourself some of the Clare BSBI sheets to record your identifications and hand them to me at a suitable rendezvous during September. I attach the templates for the 2 sides below.

The hectads where long lists of species have yet to be refound are:

R06 Creegh-Cooraclare - 66 species
M11 Black Head - 160 species
Q74 Rehy Hill - 217 species
Q85 Kilkee to Cross - 91 species
Q95 Kilrush to Poulnasharry Bay - 63 species
R07 Milltown Malbay - 202 species
R08 Liscannor to Lehinch - 82 species
R09 Ballynalackan to Cliffs of Moher - 162 species
R16 Cill Mhicill / Kilmihil - 150 species
R17 Sliabh Callain & Loch Dulocha - 106 species
R28 Corrofin & Inagh - 219 species
R37 Inis / Ennis - 158 species
R38 Croisín / Crusheen - 185 species
R67 Killaloe, Sliabh Bearnach, L Derg - 150 species
R68 Scarriff - 150 species
R78 Mountshannon & Whitegate - 132 species

You may find the sheer enormity of what still has to be done such that you need to go into a darkened room with a packet of frozen peas on your forehead - but be not daunted - I am told that we (the Royal 'we') in Clare are doing well.

The easiest approach will be to select an area near you and record from there. I look forward to hearing from you / meeting up.

All good wishes, Stephen

ATLAS 2020

Dataflow – records for Atlas 2020

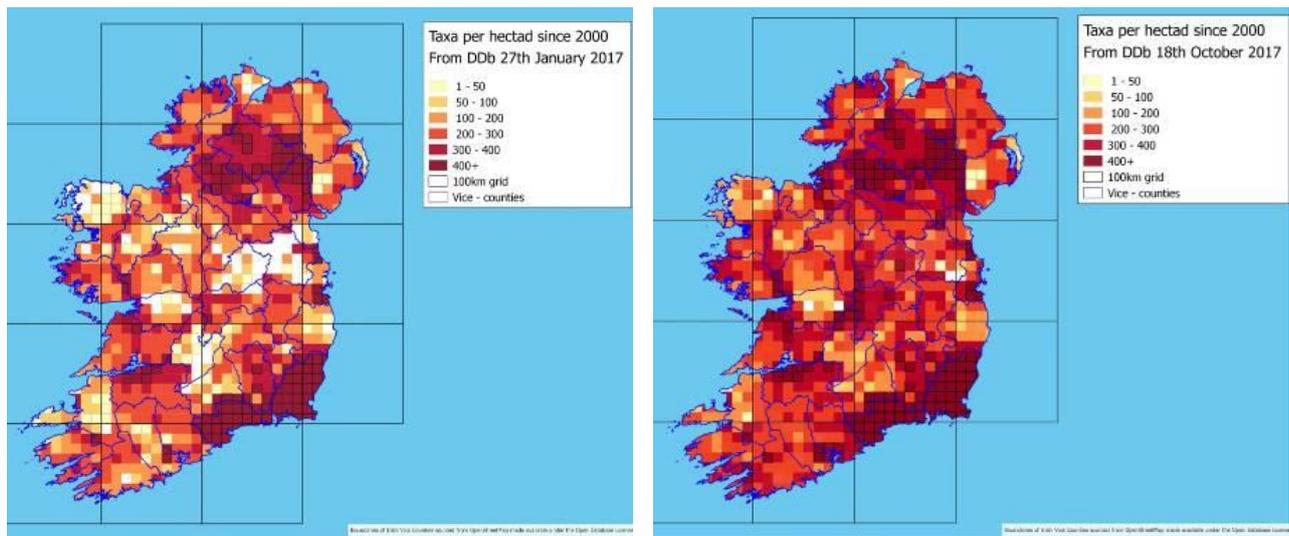
This year over 180,000 records were uploaded by Irish VCRs to the DDb. That is a great figure, and well done and sincere thanks to all VCRs. We are really making progress! However there are still significant gaps, and some VCs from which data is not flowing. Please come and talk to me or any member of CFI if this applies to you, and we'll work out a way to help.

Validation

Around half of the Irish VCRs attended the very enjoyable and productive 'Irish VCR Day' on 21st October 2017, half of which was given over to a workshop on how validation works on the DDb. I have sent around a full set of documents by email to all VCRs from the day (which may have been an over-whelming amount of information to receive in one go!), so will only touch on the subject here. I will point everyone to the handy two-page document on validation which can be downloaded on the BSBI [Atlas 2020 page](#) (this page is a mine of information by the way), and I will also say – don't stress about validation! It's a task that needs to be done... but actual recording and data entry and upload are more important, and validation can be done quickly and effectively on the DDb using the tools already set up there. Get in touch if you are struggling with this or worried about it at all.

Progress maps

The maps shown below were presented by Robert Northridge at the Irish VCR Day in October. They illustrate very well how successful Robert's idea of targeting squares with less than 200 taxa (post-2000; as shown on the DDb) has been. At the start of 2017 over 400 of Ireland's 1,008 squares were in need of attention. That number is now down to somewhere between 100 and 140! A huge part of the thanks for this goes to Robert himself – both for devising such an effective way for us to see our biggest gaps, but also for doing a large amount of travelling and recording himself (and usually with Hannah too – so big thanks to Hannah also). But that's not to forget... you the VCRs. Thanks to you for running with this, and for stepping up to get recording done where it is needed most. Great job, and thanks for your efforts. We'll continue to use this and other measures to help best spread our efforts in 2018 and 2019. I am confident that our tiny but mighty botanical network will be able to hold its head high in terms of coverage and recorder effort across the island.



Maps produced by Andy Amphlett – thanks to Andy for excellent maps as always.

Aim for 66%

Just a note by way of follow-on to the above. If you are happy enough that you have most/all your hectads over the 200 taxa mark and are wondering about another useful measure, how about **aiming to have all hectads at 66% or over of total species ever recorded in that square?** How much of a challenge this is will depend on past recording effort, the hectad in question, and a number of other factors – but either way, it is a good measure to aim for. And it is probably the next most sensible target to aim for in the quest for adequate coverage for Atlas 2020 across the board in Ireland. The DDb is well set-up to help you assess progress in your VC in this way – click on 'My County' and choose the 'Atlas 2020 survey coverage' tab. Then set up the parameters as you would like them (see also note by John Faulkner in the Irish BSBI VCR Newsletter #7, Dec 2016), and the DDb will do the rest. How about you give it a go over Christmas?

Targeting certain groups of species

It is often useful to have targets – how about keeping a special eye out for [Red List](#) taxa, or alien plants listed on EU Directives? The latter list includes species such as: *Gunnera tinctoria*, *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*, *Lagarosiphon major*, *Ludwigia grandiflora*, *Lysichiton americanus*, *Myriophyllum aquaticum*). There are also others, but these are not or scarcely recorded from Ireland: *Alternanthera philoxeroides*, *Asclepias syriaca*, *Baccharis halimifolia*, *Cabomba caroliniana*, *Eichhornia crassipes*, *Heracleum persicum*, *Heracleum sosnowskyi*, *Ludwigia*

peplodes, *Microstegium vimineum*, *Myriophyllum heterophyllum*, *Parthenium hysterophorus*, *Pennisetum setaceum*, *Persicaria perfoliata*, *Pueraria lobata*.

OTHER PROJECT UPDATES

New Year Plant Hunt (NYPH)

Such is the pace of academic publishing, that readers of Irish Naturalists' Journal (INJ) had the pleasure of reading about the NYPH 2015 in this year's edition of INJ! But while late, the coverage is welcome nonetheless. The plant hunt last year was a huge success again – it is growing exponentially year on year, and we have no reason to suspect that the next one (Dec 30th 2017 to Jan 2nd 2018) will be any different. So get involved if you feel like it – it's great fun, and lovely to meet up with botanical friends in mid-winter. All info here: <http://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>

Irish Species Project (ISP)

The Irish Officer and a team of volunteers wrote up a detailed account of the findings of the ISP, which can be found in Irish Botanical News, No. 27, March 2017 (download from the [Irish webpage](#)). This is well worth a read if you haven't had the opportunity yet. It is hoped to have a shorter follow-up discussion piece in BSBI News early in 2018.

RECORDERS' TALES

Joint Meeting of BSBI with An Taisce and BirdWatch Ireland

Donegal, 1st July 2017

Report by Ralph Sheppard



“Thanks to extensive advertising by Noel Foley of An Taisce, fifteen stalwarts turned up at Keadew, near Burtonport to find out what machair is. We were guided around this complex area by Tony Gallagher of BirdWatch.

There was nothing like an upstanding dune to signal the presence of machair, but the heavy rain forced us to look down – and there it was, in all its glory. Flowers everywhere! Nothing wildly exciting, but a revelation to most of the participants. Patches of machair were interrupted by salt marsh, dry heath, wet grassland, hay meadow and sandy foredunes, allowing many strange juxtapositions. A small colony of *Platanthera bifolia* (Lesser Butterfly Orchid) was in peak condition, as was *Coeloglossum viride* (Frog Orchid), which was present in some abundance. Even areas where turf had been removed were full of colonising species, including dense patches of *Centaureum erythraea* (Common Centaury) which unfortunately

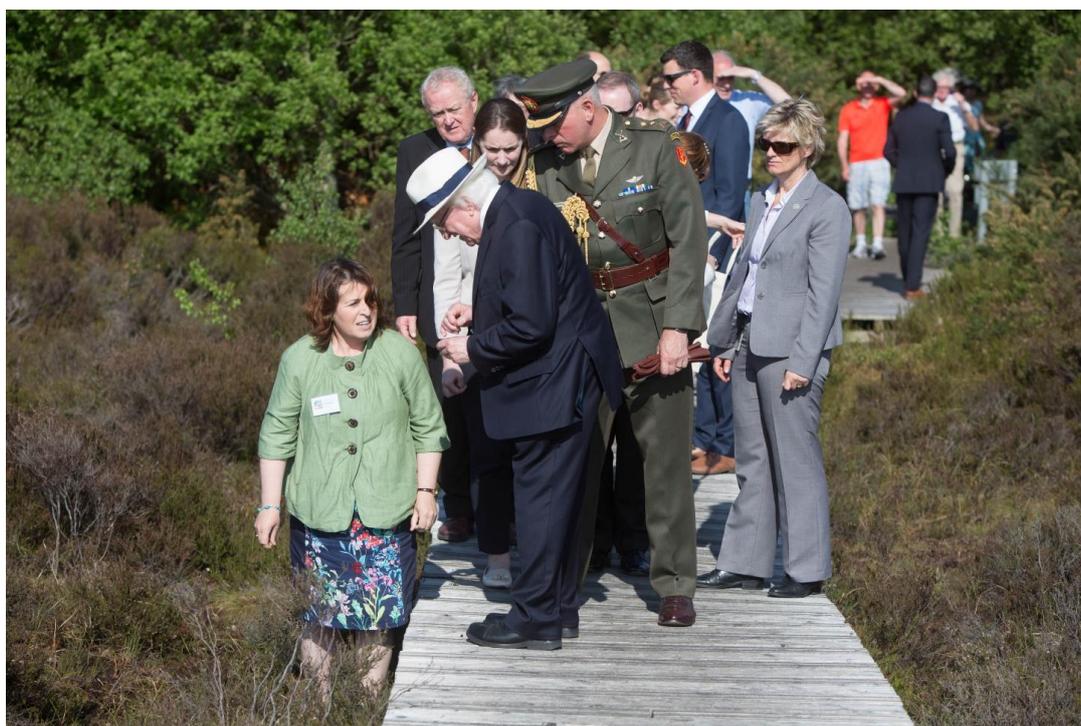
were not open. The highlight was probably finding the two local specialities, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii hebridensis* (Hebridean Spotted-orchid) confined in Ireland to this area, and *Pimpinella saxifraga* (Burnet Saxifrage) which is common further south, but rare in the north-western counties.

The rain stopped before lunch and we all had a blow-dry – demonstrating why machair likes NW Donegal.”

Botanizing with the President! – Fiona MacGowan

“A beautiful sunny Thursday in May saw a career highlight for me when I was called upon to give a quick botanical tour of my local eco-jewel Abbeyleix Bog to our President, Michael D. Higgins. He was visiting Co. Laois to launch the Strategic Plan of the new national organisation, the Community Wetlands Forum, of which many great botanical sites (including Girley Bog, Cabragh Wetlands, Scohaboy Bog and Abbeyleix Bog) are members. The Forum provides support, sharing resources and knowledge amongst the members with biodiversity, conservation and community at its core. He gave a terrific speech to the large crowd of locals and wetlanders from farther afield stressing the importance of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity to a fully functioning society. We gave him a present of a beautiful Tina Claffey photograph of *Drosera rotundifolia* entitled ‘Sun Goddess’. Then we headed down the bog road to step out onto the high bog boardwalk where he exclaimed at the beautiful bobbing heads of *Eriophorum vaginatum*. A couple of the Presidential folk were soon down on the bog and had a bunch picked to bring home to the Áras – a request from Sabina! I was in my good shoes to meet the President but it didn’t stop me from hopping off the boardwalk in order to show him the sticky wonders of *D. rotundifolia* up close. I managed this but then it nearly ended in mortification as my heels got stuck in the peat (I know, I know ‘You can take the woman out of the bog but you can’t take etc!!.....) but immediately the two hands of both the President and his Aide de Camp were out to assist me and my blushes were spared. A lovely human touch to end a magical afternoon!”

[Note from ML - Paddy Woodworth wrote an article on this on Sat 24th June in The Irish Times, and you can view photos and video by following this [link](#).]



NEWS FROM OTHER GROUPS & ORGANISATIONS

Botanical news from the NBDC (National Biodiversity Data Centre) – by Úna FitzPatrick

“We were delighted to collaborate again with the BSBI on the ‘spring flowering plants’ project in 2017. Aimed very much at encouraging beginners to start recording plants, it is very successful in mobilising additional data. Data for the full 12 month period will be made available to the BSBI in January 2018. We are seeing significant increases in the amount of online plant data being submitted to the Data Centre. So far this year, we have received over

15,000 records from more than 500 different recorders. The future challenge lies in supporting these recorders so that they can ultimately be encouraged to join the BSBI. This is something we are very keen to liaise with the BSBI on going forward.

We have also launched a very small pilot project this year on rare plants. From my own experience and from engaging with our recorders, when you find a rare plant on your patch you often develop an affection and protectiveness for it. To try and tap into that and collect data to aid plant conservation, we have launched a small pilot scheme. Where recorders have recently submitted a casual record of a rare plant, we've asked whether they might adopt that population and visit it once a year and simply count the number of individuals present. We have set up an online data capture tool to manage the information. So far, data has been submitted on about 20 populations. We have not targeted any very rare and protected species, nor any that are difficult to identify. This year is really just testing the water to assess recorder interest and whether such a scheme would be worthwhile. We would be delighted to collaborate with BSBI on the initiative going forward if it was of interest.

We have also been doing further field testing of a sedge and rush identification guide that we have developed. It'll be in a similar format to the grass guide published in 2015. Pending funding, we hope it will be designed and made available early next year. We are also testing a fern guide that we hope will be published as part of our swatch series at some stage in 2018.

The Data Centre manages the National Vegetation Database on behalf of the NPWS. A number of years we converted that vegetation data into individual species records and these are included in one of the vascular plant databases held in the Data Centre (300,000+ records). The original data sharing agreement that we had with those providers was that the data would not be made available to third parties. Publically funded surveys were always open access, but there is a significant amount of data beyond this. In most significant news, I have been working with those providers over the last few months and we now have a new data sharing agreement in place that means the entire dataset can be made available to the BSBI. We hope that this will make an important contribution to the next Atlas. We hope to provide this data to the BSBI before the end of August.

Visit the [Data Centre website](#) for more info on the above, and much more besides."

[Note from ML – these notes were written by Úna for the summer edition of this newsletter, which never was, so some information is out-of-date, but at no fault of Úna.]

Related note (by ML) – Spring Flowers Project

The NBDC and BSBI have jointly run the **Spring Flowers Project** in 2016 and 2017, and we are pleased to say that it will run again in 2018. Thanks to all involved – to NBDC for hosting it, to Phoebe for designing the species profile pages, and to all those who sent in records. Úna at NBDC recently produced a lovely newsletter about the project which can also be accessed [here](#). In case anyone's forgotten, the project focuses on 14 spring-flowering species and asks people to record them online, with photographs if possible to aid verification. In 2017, 2,708 records were received, sent in by 385 people, from all 32 counties. That's great recording!

***Petasites* project**

"I am a PhD student, and a member of the team working on an EPA project on the Prevention, Control and Eradication of Invasive Alien Species. I am currently researching invasive species, and have a particular interest in Winter heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*). This project is being led

by the Institute of Technology, Sligo, in conjunction with Queens University, Belfast. We think that *P. fragrans* is under-recorded in Ireland, and last year we began the Winter Heliotrope Challenge (with the help of the National Biodiversity Data Centre) in an attempt to improve the accuracy of the data we have on this plant. It was a very successful piece of citizen science, and resulted in 33 recorders, and 188 new records in 18 counties. We're back again this year because we think we can improve on that. The webpage for the Winter Heliotrope Challenge 2018 has gone live, and the link is here: <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/record-biodiversity/surveys/winter-heliotrope-challenge/>

Getting the first record up there can be a little bit tricky, but after that it's very straightforward. We are looking for as many records as possible, and every record is another entry for the prizes on offer. I am particularly keen to get records for the following counties, in which *Petasites* hasn't yet been recorded on our database (I don't for a minute believe that it is actually absent from all these counties): **Leitrim, Roscommon, Cavan, Monaghan, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Antrim, Down, Armagh, Offaly**. Any sightings in these counties would be very welcome. I am also very keen to get evidence of **pollinator activity** on the flowers of *Petasites*. Forage for bees during winter is often used as a defence of it, but I have yet to see any insects on the flowers.”

Eithne Davis, Sligo IT

A couple of short messages from Matthew Jebb, Director of the National Botanic Gardens:

- If any vice-county recorder finds an alien species new to the country, it would be great to have a specimen sent to the herbarium at the Gardens.
- Matthew would also like to remind VCRs that archives from VCs can be stored at NBG, should that be useful.

OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF

- The 10th international conference on invasive species will be held in Dún Laoghaire in September 2018. Visit: <http://www.neobiota2018.org> for more information.
- The Irish Uplands Forum were in touch recently to let us know about a small grants scheme that they have launched. They hope to encourage research on Irish uplands (defined as areas above 150m), and the grant is aimed mostly at students (particularly MSc students), but not entirely so. Further information on their website: www.irishuplandsforum.org
- Want to catch up on some relevant reading, or know of someone who would value these? ... I've had an offer of a neat set of BSBI publications from David and Mary Willis in Sligo. They are boxed (approx 1ft x 1ft box), and include BSBI News and Watsonia, mostly dating from 1980s and 1990s. They are free to a good home, and can be dropped to Sligo or Dublin for convenience. Contact maria.long@bsbi.org for details.
- I've mentioned this before, but this year I realised that a number of VCRs hadn't yet checked it out. Peter Foss and other have put together a really impressive map showing many thousands of wetlands across Ireland. Some have a great level of detail, but others very little – but the information might help you pin-point some survey locations. Access the website here: <http://www.wetlandssurveysireland.com/wetlands/map-of-irish-wetlands--/index.html>

VC webpages

The image below shows the map that appears on the front page of the BSBI website. VCs in green have their own webpages – some held ‘within’ the BSBI site, and some external. How about getting your VC up there? Even just minimal information can make an adequate page, and I’d argue, an adequate page is infinitely better than none! It makes a real difference to new-comers if they can see something local, and therefore potentially more relevant to them, no matter how simple the content. See below a short list of what I think would be needed to make up a simple page, and remember – BSBI will do it for you if you provide the info! Get in touch with me (maria.long@bsbi.org) or Louise (louise.marsh@bsbi.org) if you want to get up and running.

County web pages



Basic content for a VC webpage:

1. VCR name, contact details (as much or as little as you’d like to provide here; and my contact details could be given if you’d prefer)
2. Photo or two – plant(s)/landscape (I can help with this if you feel you don’t have suitable photos)
3. Sentence about the VC in general. Can be as simple or detailed as you wish.
4. Sentence about recent recording in the VC – optional. Could be a nice find, could be a request for help with recording, etc.

Apps and websites you might like to try:

- Buds ahoy!: <http://robymilling.blogspot.ie/2016/03/go-buddy-go-go-go.html>
- Excellent article on the importance of herbaria: <https://biokic.asu.edu/blog/are-herbaria-still-relevant-21st-century>
- You might like to explore the EPA’s recently launched mobile-friendly app which brings together much of their GIS information. More here: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>
- I recently spotted mention of an app for help with identifying grasses. I haven’t tried it out, and there is a small charge – but if you are curious, you can download it from the Google Play Store by clicking this [link](#).
- Another app you might like to try: [Picture This](#). It claims to be able to help you identify 1,000s of plants from just a photo. This is free to download, so it might be fun to give it a try. I am seriously sceptical!
- And a few more sources to investigate if you are keen:
 - <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/downloads/apps/>
 - <http://www.ceh.ac.uk/citizen-science-apps>
 - <http://bsbi.org/identification>

- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/tools-and-accessories/the-best-apps-to-identify-unknown-plants-and-flowers/>

FINAL WORDS

This newsletter will go out to all VCRs by email also, and as usual, it will be available on the [Irish webpage](#) soon. Please, if you have any feedback at all do send it on.

I always offer – but VCRs are shy to take me up on it! Drop in to me at the Botanic Gardens (check that I'll be in though, as I work part-time!). I'd be delighted to chat and catch up, and discuss anything at all to do with botanical recording (and indeed, other things too!). I am also keen and happy to visit VCRs at your home or nearby, and that may suit you better. Either way... keep in touch, and I hope you have a really lovely Christmas, and a productive and happy 2018.

Maria Long, BSBI Irish Officer

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