

Scottish Officer Report for 2017

Atlas 2020 Recording

Scottish Recorders had a very busy year recording for Atlas 2020. Despite the poor weather, over 258,000 records were collected in 2017 – and digitised and uploaded to the BSBI Database. This is only the second time that we have gathered more than a quarter of a million records in a single year.

Two recording weeks plugged gaps in under-recorded areas and made major contributions to that amazing total. Angus Hannah organised a very successful week in Cowal, during which some 4,850 records were collected by him, Carl Farmer, Gordon Rothero and BSBI members. Another recording week in Torridon, organised by the West Ross Recorder, Duncan Donald and me, with 14 BSBI members resulted in 4,400 records.



Ben Damph Lodge, base for our Recording week in Torridon (left) and Coire na Poite, Beinn Bhan, Applecross in one of the areas we recorded (right).

We are planning three recording weeks per year in the final two years of Atlas 2020. As well as recording, a huge amount of mutual learning goes on during these recording weeks. No amount of money could possibly pay for commercial courses that provide the same amount of training (and fun). So, look out for the adverts and please respond. We need all the help we can get in these final, critical years of Atlas 2020!

At long last we got the Rough Crew idea off the ground in Scotland. A small group of intrepid botanists joined some equally intrepid lepidopterists and had an excellent weekend in a very remote (but deluxe) bothy in Glen Affric thanks to Adam Fraser & Trees for Life. 2,500 plant records were collected over the long weekend including a new hectad record for *Dryas octopetala* (Mountain Avens), a new population of *Melampyrum sylvaticum* (Small Cow-wheat) and the re-discovery of *Phleum alpinum* (Alpine Cat's-tail) after 56 years. (Illustrated below.)

We will organise more Rough Crew events in 2018.



Dryas octopetala (Mountain Avens), *Melampyrum sylvaticum* (Small Cow-wheat) and *Phleum alpinum* (Alpine Cat's-tail), Glen Affric, 2017

Ian Green collected an astonishing 22,000 records in his vice-county (Moray), which must be a record, while Andy Amphlett collected 11,000 records in his neighbouring vice-county of Easternness. Both Stephen Bungard and Angus Hannah also made significant contributions to neighbouring vice-counties. If Recorders who feel they are on top of Atlas coverage in their own Counties would like to help neighbours, please do get in touch with them (or me). Several members also made outstanding Atlas contributions. For example, Audrey & Bob Turner collected over 5,000 records in Moray, Easternness and nearby counties. Many recorders would warmly welcome such contributions from BSBI members and if you are able to help please offer to do so.

Grateful thanks are due to all Recorders and members involved in these initiatives.

Recorder Network Support

Twenty-six recorders participated in a very successful residential weekend Recording Workshop at Kindrogan FSC. Progress with Atlas 2020, data validation, MapMate and making our data public were all on the [programme](#). All the presentations are still available on the [Scottish Conferences](#) webpage.



Recorders Conference, March 2017 at Kindrogan Field Studies Centre

Every New Year we ask for Annual Reports for the previous year from Recorders. I respond to each one individually and the reports are collated and published in the Scottish Newsletter and on the [BSBI Scotland](#) page. Take a look - it is fascinating to read about the great diversity of botanical endeavour across Scotland.

The Scottish Officer continues to produce the monthly [BSBI eNews](#) – which is targeted at everyone in the BSBI recording community. It is a move away from a one-to-one support to a more efficient one-to-many approach – and many of the topics raised in the *eNews* are in response to individual queries.

The Recorder vacancy that resulted after Jackie Muscott retired in West Lothian was advertised and filled by Jay Mackinnon, who is currently getting to grips with the role. There was no response to the vacancy advert for Berwickshire. However, Michael Braithwaite, the retired recorder, did much work to catalogue and archive his County paperwork during the year, leaving just five small boxes of paperwork and files which I collected and will store at RBGE until a successor is found. If you are interested in being the recorder for a small, very well recorded and documented county in the south of Scotland – please let me know.

Training



Plant Family Workshop, Irvine, Faith Anstey, 2017

Our training programme for complete beginners continued in Scotland in 2017 with two one-day Plant Family Workshops; one at Irvine and the other in Glasgow. A total of 36 beginners participated and really enjoyed the events. Two follow-up field days were arranged for past and present Plant Family students. An innovation this year was a new grasses workshop that aimed to help those with a basic knowledge of field botany but who had yet to get to grips with grasses. Places were snapped up quickly such is the interest in these more difficult groups.

Thanks are due to Faith Anstey, the main organiser, all the volunteers who helped and to our partners this year – Plantlife Scotland, Eglinton Country Park, Historic Environment Scotland and Glasgow Museums.

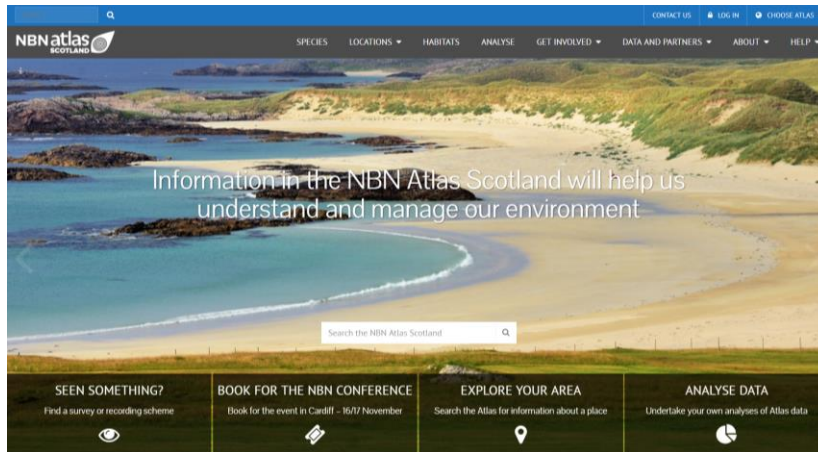
Scottish Annual Meeting

150 members participated in the 2017 Scottish Annual Meeting – probably making it the biggest meeting of botanists in Scotland – ever. And according to an analysis of feedback forms, it was also the most enjoyable. We had a great mix of exhibits, short talks and mini-workshops. One of the main complaints was that we had too much in the programme and that the day wasn't long enough - though others said that it was too long!

Feedback was particularly positive about the mini-workshops, with remarks such as “very useful, enjoyable and educational” and “packed with information and enthusiasm”. In 2017 there was a choice of two out of seven workshops: Introductions to ferns, willow, pondweeds, conifers, identifying trees in winter, a session in the herbarium looking at difficult species pairs and a discussion session on Post Atlas projects. If you missed it, all the exhibition abstracts and presentations are still available on the [Scottish Annual Meeting webpage](#).

BSBI Data on the NBN Atlas Scotland

During the year, five million Scottish BSBI records were made publicly available on the NBN Atlas Scotland, at full resolution complete with recorder and site names. The data includes one million records that had been digitised as part of the SNH funded Scottish Computerisation Project.



It is freely available for non-commercial use and there is provision to protect sensitive species and populations. This is a great step forward in making our data freely available to conservationists, researchers, land managers - and botanists. In early 2018, we will replace that dataset with an updated version.

Site Condition Monitoring

BSBI volunteers have undertaken about one third of SNH's entire vascular plant site condition monitoring programme since its inception. The volunteers have enjoyed the challenge of re-finding old records of rare plant populations and making detailed ecological records of them. The records collected are of some of our rarest species and make a valuable contribution to the BSBI dataset.

For the first time in 13 years no work was done on Site Condition Monitoring in 2017 and just one site has been identified for BSBI volunteers' help in 2018 (Pentland Skerries). SNH are currently pausing their Site Condition Monitoring programme to review and plan ahead.

Thanks

We are very grateful to SNH who support the BSBI in Scotland and to RBGE who provide office facilities. Thanks is due to all the BSBI Recorders, members and volunteers who contributed so magnificently to the BSBI's work in 2017. I look forward to seeing you in 2018!



Royal
Botanic Garden
Edinburgh



Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer, March 2018