

Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland

Scottish VCR Newsletter, summer 2015



Atlas 2020 Guidance for Vice-county Recorders

I hope your fieldwork is going well despite the indifferent weather this summer! We have at last put together guidance for Atlas 2020 for Vice-county Recorders. A bit late in year 15 of a 20 year project, however better late than never! It collates all the information and advice that we have already published in various editions of BSBI News so little is new, but it is useful to have it all set out in one place in logical order. It is available on the new [Atlas 2020 webpage](#) on the BSBI website. Take a look, and let me know if you have any queries.

Customised Recording Cards on the BSBI website

One or two folk have said they have had difficulty finding the VC customised cards on the BSBI website. If you bring up the [BSBI home page](#), left click with the cursor directly over the word "Resources", then scroll down to find the card for your vice-county. Cover sheets are available at the top of the lists of vice-counties. I print them back to back on light card (120 or 160gsm) which is more durable in damp and windy weather than ordinary paper. A handy tip for this summer! Going back to that BSBI website, similarly if you left click on any of the other headers, a home page for that heading will also open.

Referees

Please remember that BSBI Referees are there to help. Don't feel that you will be troubling them. Many complain that they don't get much material to look at. Whilst they will prefer nicely pressed material, many are happy to work with fresh material popped in an envelope with a first class stamp. This works perfectly well with grasses, sedges and other non-fleshy specimens. Also, please don't feel that you *must* try and identify material before you send it to them. Obviously if you do try to identify material first, this will help you with the learning process. Though you should at least note habit (whether tufted, tussocky or patch-forming, etc), habitat, associated species, etc. Include your email address for a quick response and then send to the referee (details of who and where to send your specimens are in the yearbook). Please do USE the referee service!

Atlas 2020 Recording: Charophytes

In particular, do look out for, collect and record Stoneworts, as they are rather neglected generally. Claudia Ferguson-Smyth, who is now helping Nick Stewart as Charophyte Referee, would be delighted if recorders would send her charophyte specimens. She is happy to receive wet specimens (in a plastic bag in a padded envelope, or in an ordinary envelope with bubble wrap, first class). She will deal with them immediately, and will double check identifications with Nick.

Specimen Request

Claudia is looking for possible specimens of *Callitriche platycarpa* (in fruit) and *Ranunculus pelatus*. If you chance upon them she would be very grateful if you might collect and send them to her. Her contact details are as follows: [Claudia Ferguson-Smyth](#)
The Gallery Flat, Broughton Place, Broughton, South Lanarkshire ML12 6HJ.

The BSBI Distribution DataBase (DDb)

A new DDb feature called “*my county*” will help identify gaps in Atlas 2020 coverage. This menu option should appear to the left of “*message board*” when Recorders login, along with “*my mapmate records*” – if you are a MapMate user. The “*my county*” option has three tabs: *Summary* which includes a year-by-year breakdown of recording since 2000, *Data validation* and *Atlas 2020 survey coverage*. This last tab displays colour-density maps of your vice-county showing the number of intensive tetrad surveys and another showing the number of taxa not refound since 2000. The underlying data can be seen by clicking links. It is absolutely fascinating - login and take a look!

Grid References in the Comments Field

After my piece in the Winter Newsletter about not putting grid references in the comments field I learnt that in certain specific circumstances the DDb will automatically extract a more detailed grid reference from the comments field and upgrade the monad or tetrad grid reference held in the gridref field. Specifically the Comments field must start with the grid reference and it must only contain one grid reference. So it does not solve the many other examples where more detailed grid ref(s) are buried in the text of a Comments field. At present this only works with British & Channel Isles grid references.

However the message remains the same. Recorders should always create separate entries for each precise gridref and never put grid references anywhere in the Comments field. There are no drawbacks in doing so either in MapMate or the DDb. MapMate can handle any number of occurrences of a site name with different grid references. This feature of the DDb should not be relied upon.

Why do some records go straight into the DDb?

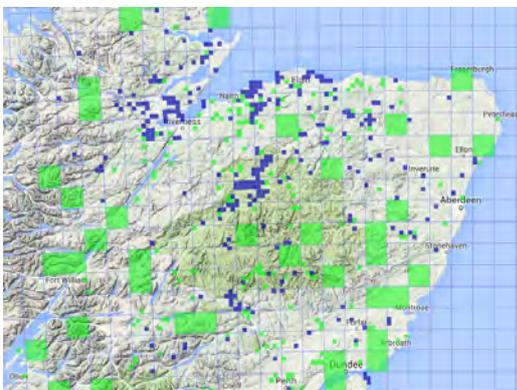
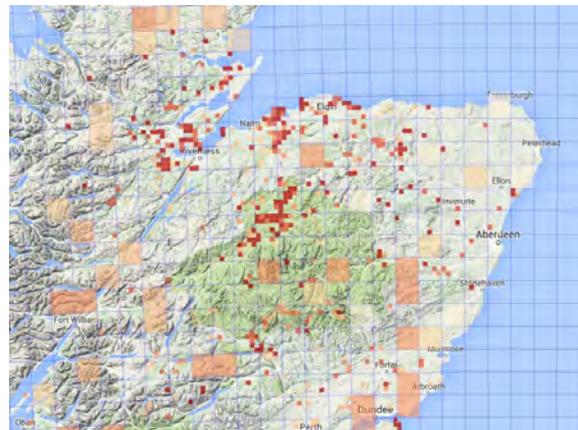
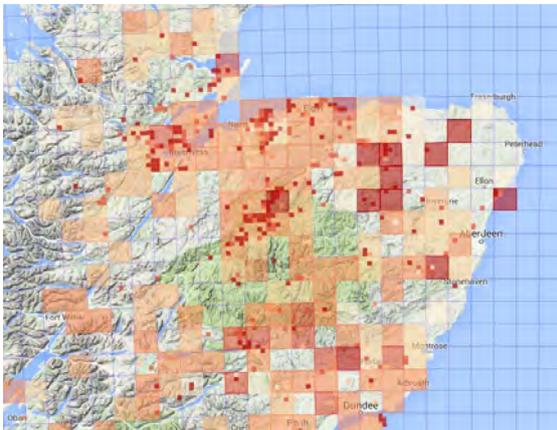
In an ideal world all new records would go *via Recorders* to the DDb. The Recorders would import and validate and then forward them (by MapMate for example) to the DDb. However this is an imperfect world we live in and not all Recorders can import and forward large record sets from third parties to the DDb. (A few VCRs don't even have computers and internet connections.) Those that do will often treat data very differently, or might delay and then forget.

From a contributors' point of view – it's difficult to divide datasets that cross multiple VC boundaries and disseminate to individual recorders and risk the data either reaching the DDb in different formats or even not at all. The compromise we've come up with is to send external datasets, particularly those with regional or national coverage and importance, directly to the DDB, and then mark the records unchecked. We hope that

with training and support, recorders will eventually be confident enough to validate these datasets. This is, after all, one of the most important roles of the Recorder.

Mapping species distributions using the DDb

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.



There are other options available, like using different colours and showing pre- and post 2000 distributions – like that to the left for *Pyrola media*. eg tetrad or monad maps. 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.

Keeping track of records being added to the DDb for your VC

You can keep track of what records are being added to the DDb for your VC. The 'Watch list' system that can automatically email you when records are added to the DDb doesn't appear to be working at the moment, but you can run queries yourself to do this. See the query screenshot below.

This query lists the number of newly added / created records since 1st January 2014 by Data Source and Dataset. If you remove the two "group by" clauses you get to view the actual records. Very few non-MapMate records have been added in 2014 and with a few copies of MapMate contributing vc88 records, it is easy to trace who owns them, and ask for periodic syncs that will keep you up to date.

Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland

Distribution Database > Search plant distribution in the UK and Ireland.

Tools New maps search search history workspace: BSBI public data set current

Search form Search templates

search for: Records (specimens or observations)

taxon: [taxon name]

grid reference: [grid square]

county/region: Mid Perthshire

date recorded: equals

checklist/attributes: [checklist]

bounded area: [area name] any area type include this area include intersections

creation or update stamp: from 2014 from created

group by: data set data source

more options

Current search-form filter
records where grouped by data set, data source and vice-county: VC88 and record created since 2014

display results email results download results save query reset search form help

results table download help

9 groups matched your query.

data set	data source	total freq
FES Open Habitat Survey 2006-2012	Forestry Enterprise Scotland	47
MapMateCentre:1ay	MapMate	7
MapMateCentre:2ay	MapMate	38
MapMateCentre:5tf	MapMate	3181
MapMateCentre:5tg	MapMate	4588

British Wildlife

As many of you will know, Ian Strachan writes the Scottish Plant Report on behalf of the BSBI which appears in British Wildlife every fourth issue (eight months). He is currently looking for material and would welcome any interesting botanical news items from Scotland. The kind of material he needs is the story behind the exciting recent discovery of *Mibora minima* (Early Sand-grass) in the Western Isles, for example. If you can contribute an interesting news item, then please get in touch with [Ian Strachan](#) now.

Recorders' Workshop: Atlas 2020 – the Final Five Years

It seems like a long time ago now, but its only three months since the Recorders' Workshop at Kindrogan. All the presentations and handouts are still available on the BSBI Scotland page [here](#). If you weren't able to attend or did attend but need a refresher then do please take a look. There is much useful material for VC Recorders about Atlas 2020, the BSBI DDb, MapMate, Memory Map and much else. A good wet day activity!

The BSBI /BSS Scottish Annual Meeting

The 2015 Scottish Annual Meeting will be held on **Saturday 7th November** at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Stick the date in your diary now! I look forward to seeing you there, meantime I hope you have an enjoyable field season!

Best Wishes,



Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer, June 2015 jim.mcintosh@bsbi.org