



Scottish Officer's Report for 2020

Atlas 2020

Scottish recorders, including me, continued to plug Atlas gaps well into the final months of 2019, which resulted in a huge backlog of records to digitise and upload by New Year - the Atlas deadline. A massive validation task then continued well into the spring. Despite this Herculean effort by recorders, some areas and habitats were still rather under-recorded in Scotland. So, we continued work, first started in 2019, to prepare large national datasets for uploading to the BSBI Database. In 2019 we uploaded major datasets from Scottish Wildlife Trust, National Trust for Scotland and SEPA. In early 2020 we uploaded 60,000 Coastal NVC records collected by Tom Dargie and major datasets from South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre records, North-East of Scotland Biological Recording Centre and The Wildlife Information Centre. Thank you to all those Local Record Centres and Andy Amphlett & Jeff Waddell and, of course, Tom Humphrey, our Database Officer.

In a major project, 4,750 very detailed records (including 750 negative records) of Nationally Rare or Scarce target species were painstakingly extracted from 103 NatureScot Site Condition Monitoring reports with the help of a contractor, Clare Rickerby. In addition, 18,600 records of species associated with those target species were extracted and also uploaded to the BSBI Database. The dataset includes records for 34 vice-counties, and both the target and associated species records make an invaluable contribution to Atlas 2020, especially in remote and mountainous areas such as the Cairngorms and the north-west Highlands.

The final total number of Scottish records in the BSBI Database for 2019 is an amazing all-time record of 388,000. Interestingly, with the addition of so many third-party datasets, the totals in each of the previous five years also exceed 300,000. Well done everyone who was involved in gathering, digitising and validating all those Atlas 2020 records in Scotland!

Recorder Network Support

- The recording community support newsletter was produced and published monthly with the help of colleagues. It was renamed [Recorder eNewsletter](#) in November to distinguish it from the new newsletter for members & supporters (BSBI eNewsletter). We also published a Christmas Newsletter for Scottish Recorders.
- Thank you to everyone who contributed a [VC Annual Report for 2019](#). They were gathered in spring 2020, collated and published in the Scottish Newsletter and on the Scotland BSBI webpage, where they made for some fascinating reading.
- The Committee for Scotland and Records & Research Committee appointed a new County Recorder (Michael Jeeves) to the previously vacant vice-county of Wigtownshire and I had a

successful remote training and induction session with him. We also set up a new [Wigtownshire](#) county page on the BSBI website.

- I've had a surprising number of requests for help with MapMate - on a variety of topics – mainly related to moving MapMate to a new computer, syncs not getting through and on correcting records.
- Several County Recorders have used their lockdown time to variously produce or update [Rare Plant Registers](#) and Checklists, and I have commented on drafts and uploaded the finalised versions to the website.

Conferences, Workshops & Field Meetings

Thanks to BSBI volunteers across Scotland, we had a great programme of events planned for 2020:

- Two Recording Conferences planned for early April in Edinburgh & Strathpeffer
- Two beginners' training workshops on sedges and two on grasses
- An introductory Plant Families workshop
- A long weekend Annual Summer Meeting based in Melrose
- Three field meetings for beginners and folk who had never been on a BSBI meeting before.

We had even begun taking bookings but all the events had to be cancelled and refunded which was very disheartening. Hopefully we will be able to hold these events in future, so all the effort put into planning and preparation has not been entirely in vain.

More positively, the Scottish Officer co-hosted three Zoom training events that the BSBI in Ireland held – an Introduction to Sedge ID, a Vegetative Grass ID and a Botanical Recording for Beginners event. They attracted large audiences – in some cases over 200 participants – and were all recorded and made available on the [BSBI's YouTube channel](#) where they continue to attract many views.

Scottish Botanists' Conference

We successfully held the first ever online [Scottish Botanists' Conference](#) – with 350 folk registered and up to 250 participating at any point in the ambitious two-day programme. It was a great technological challenge for everyone concerned – organisers, speakers and audience! Prof Peter Hollingsworth gave an excellent keynote talk on 350 years of botany by RBGE. After the morning talks, we held four one-hour long beginners' training webinars. All the exhibits, talks and webinars remain available to view on the dedicated website (and the talks and webinars are on our [YouTube channel](#)). Several have been viewed over 1,000 times (e.g. Matt Parratt's *Introduction to Conifer ID*).

Scottish Newsletter

Angus Hannah produced another great BSBI Scottish Newsletter in 2020, thanks to all contributors. For the first time ever, it was published online only as lockdown disrupted printing and distribution. You can see it and all back issues on the [Scottish Newsletter](#) page. Angus would welcome any articles of interest to Scottish botanists – so please drop him a line if you would like to contribute.

Thanks

Thank you to all the speakers, facilitators and volunteers who battled gremlins to make the new online Scottish Botanists' Conference format such a success. More widely, thanks are due to all the BSBI recorders, members, volunteers and supporters who contributed so magnificently to the BSBI's work in 2020. In particular, we are very grateful to NatureScot (SNH) and RBGE who continue to support the BSBI in Scotland.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer