

Plants in Vice-County 104: A Review of July –December 2017

Skye Botany Group met three times, visiting Tusdale (west of Eynort), Loch Dunvegan and Loch Duagrigh. The Wild Flower Society visited Skye and made a number of useful records.

Monthly articles on matters of local botanical interest continued to be written for Am Bratach, the Raasay Community Newsletter. An article co-authored with Seth Gibson on the discovery of *Mitella ovalis* on Skye appeared in BSBI News. It subsequently emerged that there was a previous record for this plant in the British Isles (though not in Scotland) but it had not got into the BSBI database.

Specimens of *Subularia aquatica* (Awlwort) were collected for the University of Toulouse.

Over 13,000 records were made in VC104 in 2017 including 226 new hectad records, although a few of these are the result of subspecies recording e.g. *Huperzia selago subsp. selago* where *Huperzia selago* was already recorded. Many thanks to all who have contributed this year

Thirty years ago Viv Halcrow completed “A Preliminary Survey of Native Woodland on the Isles of Skye and Raasay” for the Nature Conservancy Council. All records that could be assigned to a 10km square or better have now been digitised, resulting in several new hectad records and rather a lot of new tetrad records. Given the relative paucity of tetrad or better records from before 2000, this has been a real boon.

Agrimonia in VC104 continues to cause confusion, with different botanists assigning the same population to either *A. eupatoria* or *A. procera*. Final resolution will have to wait until next season.

Skye

New to VC104 – all garden escapes/throw-outs or planted:

- *Berberis buxifolia* (Box-leaved Barberry) near Portree
- *Brachyglottis x jubar* (Shrub Ragwort) at Broadford
- *Iris spuria* (Blue Iris) at Keistle
- *Lobelia erinus* (Garden Lobelia) at Uig
- *Schizostylis coccinea* (Kaffir Lily), now apparently renamed *Hesperantha coccinea*, near Tormore

Plus records from the first half of the year not include in the January to June report:

- *Laburnum x watereri* (*L. alpinum x anagyroides*) at Uig, resulting in a need to check other *Laburnum* records
- *Pelargonium x hybridum* at Uig
- *Sedum spectabile* (Butterfly Stonecrop) near Camus Croise
- *Mahonia aquifolium* (Oregon-grape) at Uig

New to Skye:

- *Lythrum portula* (Water-purslane) near Flodigarry

General:

Erica vagans (Cornish Heath) was found beside a forest track at Kinloch. There is only one previous record for Skye and that is vague both in date and location (1987-1999, NG44).

Two new sites were found for *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort) which is rare on Skye.

Use of a grapnel in Loch Duagrigh produced a large quantity of *Nitella translucens* (Translucent Stonewort), a charophyte with few records in the vice-county. Maybe greater use of the grapnel would significantly increase the known distribution.

Anaphalis margaritacea (Pearly Everlasting) has escaped from a garden in Tarskavig. There are only two earlier records for this in VC104, one of which was within Lyndale House grounds.

Juncus ranarius (Frog Rush) was spotted during the WFS visit on muddy roadside edges. This is the first time it has turned up in this habitat in VC104. Further roadside sites were subsequently found.

Isay

A visit to Isay in Loch Bay was a follow-up to a 2008 trip. *Carex distans* (Distant Sedge) was a first record for NG25, as was *Castanea sativa* (Sweet Chestnut) – four rather stunted, planted specimens which were missed previously.

Several quite large areas of *Matricaria discoidea* (Pineappleweed) were found. These were not there in 2008. They mostly also contained *Cerastium glomeratum* (Sticky Mouse-ear) and *Gnaphalium uliginosum* (Marsh Cudweed). On Skye, these are all typically found in field entrances, waste ground, etc. It seems likely that Greylag Geese are the cause of these new habitats, probably by a combination of bringing in the seed, fertilisation and grazing. These three species were all new to Isay.

Raasay

A visit to Fladday to refresh records from pre-2000 resulted in the addition of two taxa to the list for NG55: *Salix repens* var. *argentea* (the silvery variety of Creeping Willow) and *Triglochin maritima* (Sea Arrowgrass).

Small Isles

David McCosh determined some *Hieracium* specimens collected on Muck in June. *H. argenteum* (Silvery Hawkweed), *H. deganwyense* (Deganwy Hawkweed) and *H. subrubicundum* (Large-leaved Hawkweed) are new to Muck, with *H. deganwyense* being new to VC104.

Nick Stewart sent over 800 records from three days on Rum, adding *Alchemilla filicaulis* subsp. *vestita* (Common Lady's mantle), *Rosa canina* (Dog-rose) and *Hieracium latobrigorum* (Yellow-styled Hawkweed) to NG30. The only previous record for this hawkweed on Rum was by W. A. Clark in 1938 and appears to have been arbitrarily assigned to NM39. Perhaps it should have been NG30...?

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December 2017