
December 2016 – for Vice-County Recorders in Wales

Happy Christmas everyone – I hope you are all well, and here are some snippets of news and (hopefully) useful information and ideas.

New Year Plant Hunt 2017

The New Year Plant Hunt was a great success in 2016 and it seems set to continue. If you are interested in taking part between 1st-4th January 2017 – for full details see <http://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>. If you are planning a hunt – especially in North Wales – please let me know! Depending upon the weather forecast, I hope to get out – provisionally on Wednesday 4th January, and my current suggestion is around Llanddulas, meeting at 10.30 at the beach car park SH906786. There is a New Year Plant Hunt App available for iPhone or Android phone, so even if you are not usually a “mobile” recorder this might be a good chance to try it out! If you are interested, please email me to show your interest.

Atlas 2020 coverage and dataflow to the DDB

There are (as I write) 76,000 records from 2016 on the DDB. The number of “Smarties” (unique taxa-hectad combinations) has increased from 145,000 in July to 150,000 now – I think that shows the quality of records coming in, with 5,000 new hectad-species. And of course that ignores the other aspect of the quality – over 12,000 of these records are recorded with at least a six figure grid reference, 150 records for species listed on Section 42, 400 for species with threat categories in the Welsh Red List. I think this is all good news – it’s wonderful for the Atlas coordinators to be able to see the data coming in so rapidly, and coverage improving, but also that there is so much detail and records of important species included within the huge number of records. The “My County” page on the DDB helps you to identify areas where coverage is less complete – all vice-county recorders should have access to this, but you could also ask for access for anyone who is making a significant contribution to recording in your county, to enable them to identify under-recorded areas. For those of you who appreciate coverage maps, please see the third page of this newsletter for a couple of examples. *Petasites fragrans* is inspired by an Irish project and the work of Maria Long, the Irish Officer.

Atlas 2020 – verification

I think more recorders are now becoming aware that the process of collating and checking records for Atlas 2020 will be completely different to Atlas 2000. We hope that county recorders and referees (especially in the case of critical species) will take a huge role in checking data on the DDB. We do now have guidance available on verifying records online – and we want it to be quite clear that we do not expect all records to be verified, but we do hope to check all records that appear unusual in various ways – taxa that are recorded only once in a county, even in a hectad, and those listed in Red Data Lists, for example. The “My County” page on the DDB helps identify some of these records. I hope to run two workshops on this in 2017: one will be at Coed y Brenin on Saturday 4th March, and the other in South Wales (tbc – Wed 15th March?)

iRecord

Many of you may have heard of iRecord. Developed by the Biological Records Centre (BRC). This is a tool which we may well be using more in the future. However, it is already being used for various projects including the National Plants Monitoring Scheme (NPMS) and the New Year Plant Hunt, to allow anyone to submit records. As a vice-county recorder, you can register on iRecord, and by emailing iRecord@ceh.ac.uk you can be granted the rights to verify records submitted by others in your county. This is basically an excellent way to increase coverage in your county without fieldwork – Tom Humphrey is working on the protocol to upload these records to the DDB at which point we will be contacting you to find out how you would like them displayed. For more information see <http://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/sites/default/files/guides/verifiers.pdf>

Recorders' workshops/ training

The Recorders' Conference in September in Shrewsbury was enjoyed by all, with very popular identification workshops including those by John Poland, Chris Metherell and Mark Duffell. There were also some stimulating talks... several VCRs approached me afterwards to ask about QGIS, as described by Rich Burkmar of the Field Studies Council's Tomorrow's Biodiversity (TomBio) project. I did think of the possibility of organising a QGIS training day for VCRs – I haven't advanced these plans, but if multiple people continue to express an interest I would be happy to lead such a day.

The Dryopteris weekend in October was fully booked many months in advance and all those who attended seemed to enjoy it.

Annual Exhibition Meeting

The Annual Exhibition Meeting was held at CEH in Wallingford at the end of November. It was good to see at least half a dozen Welsh members or recorders. It was a great day, with plenty of exhibitions and talks, many of which are or will be available to view online at <http://bsbi.org/annual-exhibition-meeting>. I was asked to start the talks with a short slot on Rare Plant Registers – largely focussed on Wales, of course. The venue at Wallingford was great, with plenty of space, tea and cake including homemade scones, and I think the main regret was not having enough time to talk to everyone or appreciate the full range of exhibits.

Rare Plant Monitoring

Thank-you to everyone who sent me TPP forms for rare plants in Wales this year. We had a very satisfactory total to report to NRW in October. More are always welcome, no matter how late, and I hope to be in touch early next year with ideas for species/ sites to target.

Website

I now have an account to edit the website, so I should easily be able to make any changes or updates you may require to your county webpages. Please have a check to see if they are up to date; some of you may wish to upload reports of 2016 activity or (over the coming months) programmes for local meetings in 2017. Did you have a great find in your county this year, or a well-attended meeting? We could change the photograph on the county webpage to a recent one.

Finally

This newsletter is being sent to all Welsh Vice-County Recorders by email and hard copy. It will also be available on the [Welsh webpage](#). I'd be really pleased to have any feedback on the newsletter.

I'm always happy to have a chat on the phone, but if you would like me to visit you to discuss anything over the next few months do let me know by phone or email.

Polly Spencer-Vellacott, BSBI Welsh Officer

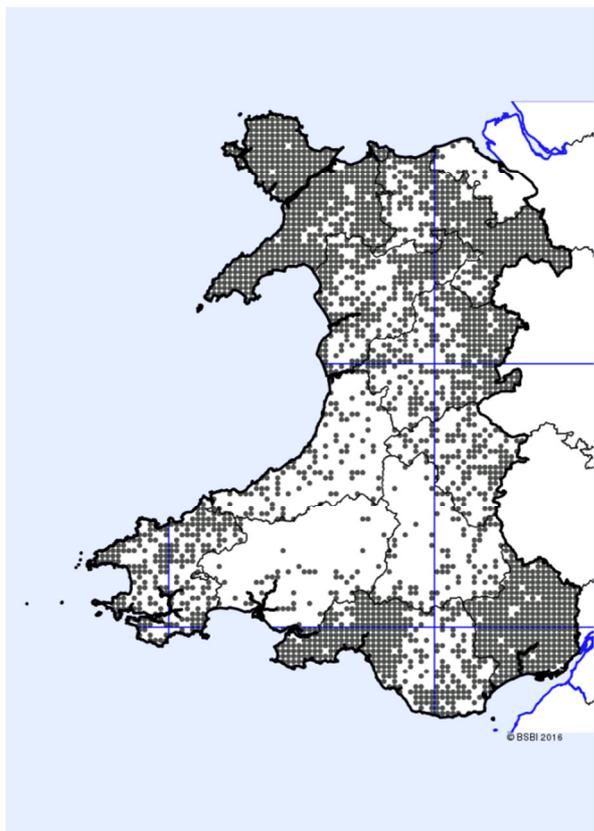


Figure 1. Tetrad coverage of *Urtica dioica* (Common Nettle) in Wales since 2000. This does give a good indication of areas which are lacking records **on the DDB** (though many of these areas are much better covered than this would indicate). BSBI DB December 2016.

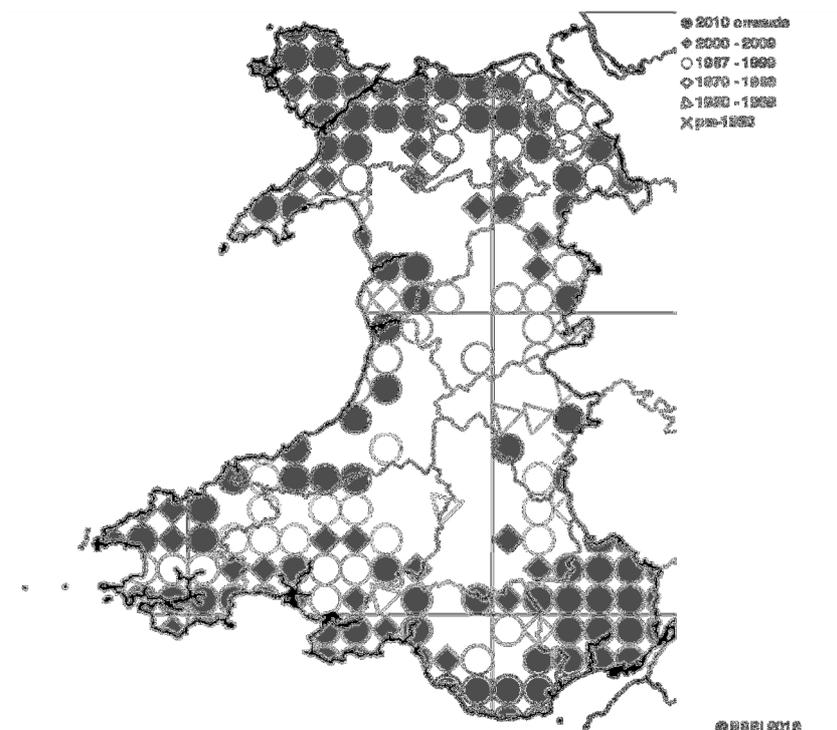


Figure 2. Coverage of *Petasites fragrans* in Wales in 10k squares by date class. Can you refind it in a missing 10k square? BSBI DB December 2016.