

Scottish Officer Report for 2013-14

Supporting Scottish Recorders

During last year's field season I enjoyed time in the field with Recorders from Argyll, Westernness, Easternness, Banff, Moray, Stirling, West Perthshire, Mid-Perthshire, Selkirk & Roxburgh, South Aberdeenshire, Angus and Orkney. More recently I've held very useful one-to-one support meetings with six Recorders – often spending much time looking at their MapMate set-ups.

We now have 2013 Annual Reports covering 39 of the 41 Scottish Vice-counties - thank you! It has been a great pleasure reading and responding to them. The great diversity of botanical endeavour by Scottish BSBI Recorders is truly amazing, and the voluntary effort contributed is, to be quite frank, humbling. The accompanying questionnaire explored what help was required by Recorders to achieve full coverage for Atlas 2020. I'll summarise the responses in the next BSBI News but suffice to say the responses will direct my Recorder support work over the next few years.

Vascular Plant Site Condition Monitoring

Five SSSIs were surveyed by the BSBI volunteers and the Scottish Officer in Scotland in 2013. These were Cove, Dalcroy Promontory, Sands of Forvie, Selkirk Racecourse and Spey Bay. It was particularly pleasing to see the Pillwort (*Pilulifera globulifera*) thriving at Dalcroy after several years of poor population counts. Morven & Mullachdubh was also planned but has been deferred because of an outbreak of *Phyophora* affecting its Juniper population. The Scottish Officer also helped SNH Area staff find and identify populations of Marsh Saxifrage (*Saxifraga hirculus*) at Craigengar SSSI.

We have agreed a similar programme of survey work in 2014. I will lead on Arthur's Seat Volcano, whilst Martin Robinson will lead on Craighall and Milton Wood, Ian Strachan will survey Glen Strathfarrar and David Hawker will help Alan Silverside undertake a baseline survey of Derskelpin Moss in Wigtonshire – all with the help of fieldwork volunteers. Most sites have been previously surveyed in previous SCM cycles, but Derskelpin Moss (another Pillwort site) wasn't and so should be particularly interesting – and challenging!

The work is important for the BSBI and for securing the SNH grant which helps fund the BSBI Scottish Officer Project (and which is due to run out in November 2014). It was gratifying to hear SNH say recently that they regard BSBI reports as the Rolls Royce of SCM reports. Thanks are due indeed to the many volunteers involved.

Threatened Plant Project (TPP)

Mopping up work continued in a number of vice-counties in Scotland in 2013, after the 'official' final year in 2012. In total, 41 TPP forms were completed for BSBI selected populations (and several for other populations) in five vice-counties by recorders and volunteers. Eric & Aileen Meek and Peter Wortham deserve special thanks for their significant contributions. Digitisation work has been completed and the original forms are being scanned and archived in the RBGE Library Archive.

Rare Plant Registers

Five Scottish RPRs were variously published or updated in 2013: Cairngorm National Park, East Ross, East Perthshire, Mid & North Ebeudes – all of which are available on the BSBI website. The Scottish Officer has just seen an excellent draft RPR for Midlothian, which will be published very shortly.

Chris Metherell continues to help Scottish Recorders develop and publish their RPRs under contract. Currently he is working with Chris Miles in Dumfries-shire and Dave Lang in Ayrshire.

BSBI MapMate support

During 2013, Martin Rand completed his excellent BSBI MapMate Handbook and more recently Martin Harvey made it available on the BSBI MapMate Support website along with several new training videos. I recommend all BSBI MapMate users take a close look: <http://mapmate.bsbi.org.uk/> Martin Harvey also successfully resolved two Scottish Recorders' long-standing intractable MapMate problems under the same contract. I mention these projects here as they have been kindly supported by SNH, through the grant.

Memory Map

We have supplied five new recorders in Stirling, Angus, Easternness and Dunbarton with electronic 1:25,000 OS maps of their vice-counties in Memory Map form. Vice-county (and in some cases SSSI) boundaries were also supplied. It is a tremendously useful piece of software, as it allows users to search for place names or grid references, print maps and plot tracks and data points.

Data

Various projects relating to the digitisation, validation and supply of data to BSBI Recorders and ultimately the BSBI Distributional Database were undertaken during the year. Perhaps, most notably, 50,000 1km records relating to Lanarkshire were digitised under an SNH-funded contract by Angus Hannah.

Training & Education in 2013

In April, I organised and lead a workshop at RBGE for leaders of field meetings – particularly educational ones. Ten folk participated enthusiastically and helped me draft a comprehensive guidance note, which has been used to update official BSBI guidance on field meetings.

A group of enthusiastic BSBI volunteers working to the Scottish Committee organised and lead two very successful Plant Families Identification Workshops – one in Glasgow and one in Edinburgh. The thirty one participants were invited to a series of short day or evening follow-up field meetings over the summer to put their new found skills into practice.

In 2013 I variously ran three beginners' field meetings (in addition to two run by members) and organised two more advanced workshops on Dandelions & Lowland Willows.

Full reports for these meetings can be read in the 2014 Yearbook.

Training & Education in 2014

A great range of training field meetings is on offer this year including:

- 3 Plant Families Workshops for beginners (thanks to BSBI volunteers)
- 2 Field meetings aimed at beginners lead by the Scottish Officer
- 3 "Introduction to" days (to Sedges, Grasses & Ferns) lead by the Scottish Officer
- 2 Field meetings aimed at improvers (thanks to BSBI volunteers)
- A more advanced weekend meeting on grass id lead by Arthur Copping, the referee.

Full details are in the Yearbook and can be viewed online: www.bsbiscotland.org.uk Book up now!

Scottish Recording Week

Angus Hannah organised a most enjoyable Scottish Recording Week in June 2013 on Islay. Twelve BSBI members – six recorders and six ordinary members helped Malcolm Ogilvie record his extensive vice-county for Atlas 2020. Between us we collected 6,200 records across Islay and good coverage was achieved in 36 of its 180 tetrads. Again a full report can be read in the 2014 Yearbook.

So many folk tried to book on this year's Scottish Recording Week at Glen Shiel Lodge, Wester Ross at the end of June we have had to mark it as "fully booked" on the website and organise another to satisfy demand! Angus Hannah has kindly organised second recording week to run concurrently on the Isle of Arran – details are available on the BSBI website.

This has given me the idea that we should organise two separate Scottish Recording Weeks every year – from now until the last year of Atlas 2020 fieldwork. These weeks are great for helping improve recording coverage in remote areas of Scotland.

Scottish Birdfair

The BSBI made a rare appearance in public in May - sandwiched between the Orkney Brewery and the Partnership against Wildlife Crime stands at Scottish Birdfair at Hopetoun House, near Edinburgh. We organised a simple wildflower ID quiz using ten spring flowering species and some 50 people participated – with 30 actually entering the competition by completing a form. Another public outing is planned at this year's Scottish Birdfair (10 & 11th May 2014). Drop in and see us!

Supporting the Scottish Committee

The Scottish Officer continues to support and report to the Scottish Committee. Much organisational help is provided with the Scottish Annual Meeting and, notably in 2014, the arrangements for the BSBI Annual Summer Meeting in Birnam.

Networking by the Scottish Officer

Here's a selection of highlights from my diary over the past twelve months:

- Participated in Tayside Recorder's Day at Perth Museum in April.
- Attended the State of Nature Report Launch at the Museum of Scotland in May.
- Helped train 16 NTS Rangers with Wildflower ID training on Mull & Iona in June.
- Met up with Forest Enterprise Ecologist, Jeff Waddell, for a day in the field in August.
- Met up with Deborah Long, Plantlife to discuss matters of mutual interest in August.
- Participated in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Conference in RBGE in September.
- Reported in person to Records Committee, in London in October.
- Met with Plant Link Scotland in Battleby in November.
- Attended Scottish Environmental Links' Festive reception in Edinburgh in December.
- Participated in the BSBI Atlas 2020 Planning Meet at the NHM, London in January.

To conclude; another productive and enjoyable year for the BSBI in Scotland, thanks to the many recorders, members and partners who contribute to the society's work, and to SNH and RBGE for their continuing support of the BSBI Scottish Officer Project.

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer, Mar 2014