

NBN CONFERENCE - TWO DAYS!

19th and 20th November 2015

"From Global to Local - Building the NBN Partnership"

The conference will comprise keynote addresses, presentations, speed talks and a whole symposium on engagement "Beyond BioBlitz: public engagement in wildlife recording", which we are running in conjunction with Bristol Natural History Consortium.

The Conference has also moved away from London and will be held at the Lakeside Conference Centre, York, which will hopefully make it more accessible to Scottish partners of the NBN, so we hope you are able to join us! You can find the latest programme on the NBN website

<http://nbn.org.uk/News/Latest-news/2015-NBN-Conference-bookings-are-open!.aspx> and all of the booking information too. The early bird deadline for reduced tickets ends on 9th October.

UK Awards to celebrate biological recording and information sharing

In order to recognise outstanding contributions to biological recording and improved understanding of the natural world the NBN has established national awards, in partnership with the Biological Records Centre and the National Forum for Biological Recording. These awards will be presented annually to individuals, groups of people or organisations that are making a significant impact on biological recording in the UK.

Nominations for the Awards are now closed, but we look forward to inviting you all to the Awards ceremony which is being held during the two days of the NBN Conference, on the evening of Thursday 19th November.

More information can be found on the NBN website.

Did you know?

The NBN is currently building a database of all biological recording schemes and surveys in the UK. That database will include all surveys that take place in the UK and are open for participation by anyone.

For each recording scheme the database will include information about what species, group of species or habitat is the focus of the survey, what geographical area it covers, what time of year volunteers can participate and how to get involved.

The database will allow users to browse and filter all the surveys depending on their interest. The schemes and surveys have been collated from the existing NBN database, the Biological Records Centre, the Association of Local Environmental Record Centres (ALERC), the Biological Recording in Scotland and our own research.

Please contact us if you have a survey or scheme that has not yet been added to our collection (<http://nbn.org.uk/News/Latest-news/UK-biological-recording-scheme-database-establishment.aspx>). The NBN will share the complete biological recording schemes database via the new NBN website that will be launched in Nov 2015.

Data Licensing

There have been some important changes to licensing options for datasets available from the NBN Gateway.

The following four license options are now available:

- Open Government License
- Creative Commons Zero
- Creative Commons with Attribution
- Creative Commons, with Attribution, Non-commercial

More information at (<http://nbn.org.uk/News/Latest-news/Data-Licensing-on-the-NBN-Gateway.aspx>)



BRISC
BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND
BRISC is a charity registered in Scotland, No. SC024418

Issue No 99 - October 2015

ISSN 0966-1964

www.bris.org.uk

Recorder News

CONTENTS

The Habitat's Directive.....	1
Chair's column.....	4
Editor's column.....	6
What is Special About.....	6
Orkney WIAC report.....	8
SBIF report.....	9
Bursary Report.....	10
The BRISC Archive	11
Conference Notice.....	12
Book Review.....	13
NBN News.....	15

THE HABITATS DIRECTIVE AND YOU: HOW YOUR WILDLIFE RECORDING CAN HELP PROTECT SOME OF SCOTLAND'S HIGH PRIORITY SPECIES

By Claire McSorley

What is the EU's Habitats Directive?

The EU Habitats Directives is a very powerful tool for the protection of some of the most important species and habitats in Scotland, the UK, and Europe. The Directive underpins Scotland's Special Areas of Conservation¹; protected sites that safeguard some of our more rare or threatened species and habitats.

The Habitats Directive also states that measures should be taken to ensure that all listed habitats and species are maintained at, or restored to, favourable conservation status. Therefore, each listed species' range, population and habitat have to be sufficient for their survival. We have a duty to carry out surveillance of these species and habitats on our protected sites but also in the wider countryside to allow us to report.

Every six years, EU member states are required, under Article 17 (Article 17



Otter *Lutra lutra* © Lorne Gill SNH

reporting) of the Habitats Directive, to report to the EU on how well these species and habitats are doing. For those species occurring in Scotland, Scottish Natural

Heritage collates data and information on behalf of the UK by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Habitats Directive 2013 Article 17 reporting results

For the 2013 report, records from Scotland contributed to the UK submission to the EU on 40 terrestrial and 16 marine regularly occurring species. Of those 40 terrestrial species in Scotland, the UK overall conclusion assessment was: 47.5% were favourable e.g. Common pipistrelle; 30% were inadequate e.g. Marsh fritillary; 12.5% were bad e.g. Wildcat; and, 10% were unknown e.g. Green shield-moss. For the 16 marine species regularly found in Scotland, 50% were favourable e.g. Minke whale; 6% had a bad conclusion, e.g. Common seal; and 44% were unknown e.g. Killer whale; perhaps reflecting the difficulties in surveying and recording in the marine environment.

Where does your recording come in?

To report on the status of these species, SNH and JNCC rely heavily on data held on the NBN Gateway². Article 17 gives us a framework to assess as accurately as possible the status of our most highly protected species. We need to know where these species are at a 10km square scale, what their population size is, and also assess the condition of their habitat. We also need to assess any pressures and threats on them, and any trends in range, abundance and habitat.

In order to collate the best data for reporting, SNH works closely with other organisations, including the other government agencies of Scotland and UK, National Schemes and Societies, Local Records Centres and recording groups. We work with groups to ensure that these data are submitted to the NBN so they are available for use not just by us, but by all interested parties.

What species in Scotland are listed on the Habitats Directive?

The species listed on the Annexes of the Habitats Directive are an eclectic bunch ranging from the tiny *Vertigo* snails that require a microscope to identify, to the more easily identified such as the common frog. Table 1 (pg 3) holds a list of Habitats Directive native species found regularly in Scotland (not vagrants).



Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

How can you contribute to the 2019 Habitats Directive Article 17 report?

Recorders could make a valuable contribution by keeping an eye out for those species listed in Table 1. This table lists the terrestrial and marine species listed on the Annexes of the Directive that are within their native range in Scotland. For a variety of reasons, many species are under-recorded, including common frogs, Sphagnum sp., and Green shield-moss to name a few.

Often our more common species are under-recorded because we see them so often we do not think to record them.

continued page 4



NBN NEWS SEPTEMBER 2015

Atlas of Living Scotland – new biodiversity data infrastructure for Scotland www.als.scot

The Atlas of Living Scotland, which launched this month in beta form, is a new online biodiversity database built to educate, to inform and to promote Scotland's remarkable natural world. The Atlas stores data and information, including photographs, on all 25,000+ species in Scotland including the white-tailed eagle, the primrose and the basking shark as well as habitat data including woodlands, wetlands and dunes. This initiative would not be possible were it not for the work of the vast array of organisations that observe, record and document species and habitats in Scotland, most of which is done by volunteers and citizen scientists.

Contributors to the Atlas include national and regional biological recording schemes and societies, government and non-government organisations, research and educational institutions, Local Environmental Records Centres, museums and botanic gardens and community groups.

The Atlas brings together biological data, merges them with other environmental data such as spatial layers for soil, climate and habitats and allows online analysis and interrogation. The Atlas was created by the Atlas of Living Australia team at Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in Australia using the open source code and biodiversity data infrastructure that they developed over the

last five years. The user interface was created by a team in Scotland in conjunction with a user group of people across the country.

The project is a partnership between the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage and the National Biodiversity Network. Significant funding support for this work came from the European Commission LIFE+ funding programme which is supporting SEPA to deliver a range of partnership initiatives in Scotland to provide a trusted gateway to data and information about the environment and involve Scotland's citizens in discussion, monitoring and action to protect and improve the environment. The Atlas has been created as a daughter website to Scotland's Environment Web.

More than 40 organisations attended the Atlas Stakeholder Partnership meeting in July to learn more about the initiative and discuss their needs. As a result, the beta version of the Atlas was launched on the 3rd September 2015 and is now ready for testing and feedback.

The National Biodiversity Network's new five-year strategy focuses on the collection and sharing of biological data to educate and inform. This Atlas biodiversity data infrastructure is a major step forwards towards implementing that strategy in Scotland.

If you would like to contribute to the Atlas as a Data Partner or would like more information about the site, please contact us at: info@als.scot.

If you want to join the User Testing Group please contact us at support@nbn.org.uk To give feedback on the site please visit www.als.scot and email the team at: info@als.scot

oceanic bryophytes and the changing vegetation of our uplands and peatlands are also documented.

Derek Radcliffe was multi-faceted in his interests and expertise and this book reflects those many areas of his life and career. Each chapter includes something about the man himself and whether this is mentioned almost only in passing amongst a more technical account, or is the focus of a short memoir, Derek's humanity, warmth and generosity of friendship comes through consistently.

Inevitably with 28 authors covering a range of aspects of Derek Ratcliffe's work as well as reminiscences of time spent with him in the field, the tone, style, length and content varies and there is a degree of repetition.

Two chapters stand out for me in particular. Des Thompson writes engagingly and revealingly about Derek's approach to field ornithology set in the context of his own childhood and Ratcliffe's role as a mentor and friend. The following chapter is a brief reminiscence by the late Dick Balharry, possibly one of the last writings of another much missed great of Scottish natural history and land use ecology.

The book also included reproductions of some of Derek Ratcliffe's most interesting papers and articles and this works well providing an opportunity for the man himself to speak. The reprint of Personal observations on some local birds (1947) from the Carlisle Grammar School Magazine penned by a 16 year old Derek is a gem.

In Richard Lindsay's chapter, a letter to Derek Ratcliffe, he regrets that in all the time they worked together on peatland conservation he never spent a day in the field with him.

My time in the field with Derek was brief, just two days looking for peregrines and rare plants in the Tweedsmuir Hills but I feel

immensely privileged to have known him. The copy of the Peregrine Falcon he inscribed for me on the bonnet of an NCC vehicle in a Moffat car park is amongst my most prized possessions.

Whether you are interested in birds, flowering plants or bryophytes this is a book to dip into on winter's evenings and become inspired to spend even longer days in the field next summer.

The publisher, Ian Langford, has made a very generous offer to members of BRISC. You can obtain a £30.00 HB copy for £25.00, or a £23.00 PB copy for £20.00. Both post free in UK and at 600 pages, colour throughout, more than a bit of a bargain!

He says "I am keen on getting it out there, read and very important messages learnt and equally important mistakes not made again!"

Please contact Sarah Eno (BRISC editor) by email at saraheno@riseup.net

Table 1

Common name Amphibians &	Scientific name Reptiles	Common name Mammals	Scientific name
Common frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	Wildcat *	<i>Felis silvestris</i>
Natterjack toad *	<i>Bufo calamita</i>	Mountain hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>
Great crested newt*	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	Otter *	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
		Pine marten	<i>Martes martes</i>
		Polecat	<i>Mustela putorius</i>
Plants		All microchiropteran found in Scotland*	
Green shield-moss	<i>Buxbaumia viridis</i>	Fish	
subgenus of lichens	<i>Cladonia subgenus Cladina</i>	Allis shad	<i>Alosa alosa</i>
Slender green feather-moss	<i>Hamatocaulis vernicosus</i>	Twaite shad	<i>Alosa fallax</i>
Large white-moss	<i>Leucobryum glaucum</i>	Sea lamprey	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>
Petalwort	<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>	Brook lamprey	<i>Lampetra planeri</i>
Bog-mosses	<i>Sphagnum sp.</i>	River lamprey	<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>
Clubmosses	<i>Lycopodium sp.</i>	Powan (whitefish)	<i>Coregonus lavaretus</i>
Slender naiad	<i>Najas flexilis</i>	Vendace	<i>Coregonus albula</i>
Killarney fern	<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>	Marine species	
Marsh saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>	Maerl	<i>Phymatolithon calcareum</i>
		Maerl	<i>Lithothamnion coralloides</i>
Invertebrates		All cetacean found in Scottish waters*	
Medicinal leech	<i>Hirudo medicinalis</i>	Leatherback turtle*	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>
Narrow-mouthed whorl snail	<i>Vertigo angustior</i>	Grey seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>
Round-mouthed whorl snail	<i>Vertigo genesii</i>	Common seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>
Geyer's whorl snail	<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>		
Freshwater pearl mussel	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>		
Marsh fritillary butterfly	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>		

Footnotes

1. <http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-areas/international-designations/natura-sites>
2. <https://data.nbn.org.uk/>
3. <http://www.brisec.org.uk/Sources.php>
4. <http://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/>
5. <http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/our-changing-environment/>

We also need to monitor incidental capture and kill of Annex IV animals (* in Table 1), so if you find a dead individual please take a record of it, noting how it you think it may have died and submit in the usual way.

Please send in any records of the Habitats Directive species to:

- the relevant scheme or society, or
- your local records centre or recording group³, or in the absence of these,
- iRecord⁴

If possible, please get involved in the National Schemes and Societies (NSS) sampling surveys as these can give us robust data for trends e.g. bats, butterflies, plants. It would be great to see Scotland trends for more species and so your involvement in the NSSs may contribute to this⁵.

Your records will contribute to the UK's submission to the EU on the state of some of Scotland's most protected and iconic species. Your data are invaluable in contributing to the biological community's knowledge about these high priority species, which we can use together for the most appropriate protection and management.

Thank you for recording them!



CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN AUTUMN 2015

I am glad to report that Summer did arrive in the north in August and early September. A good barometer of a fine summer is how

many caterpillars are on my brassicas. Don't worry the Kale had fleece over it and the Parsnips had bolted so were sacrificed to the Lepidoptera.

The much heralded arrival of lots of Painted Ladies hasn't happened here, although I did see one in Wester Ross at the beginning of September. My five highlights of the summer were seeing 45 Black-throated Divers in Gruinard Bay all moulting from their breeding plumage, finding a fungi called the Herald of Winter, watching a immature Golden Eagle "hunt" two Red Deer Calves, seeing a female Northern Emerald Dragonfly egg-laying for the first time and another first was seeing a Bee Beetle (yes, it is a beetle that looks like a hoverfly). Not such a bad summer after all!

However, the meeting and conference season has begun and there are plenty scheduled for the next couple of months.

At a recent BRISC Committee meeting topics for discussion were the BRISC/NBN/SBIF Memorandum of Agreement about how we will work together in the future. This is a very positive development particularly as the Atlas of Living Scotland web portal is close to getting finished. This will hopefully bring the available biodiversity data to the attention of more people.

Our Treasurer and Membership Secretary Duncan Davidson is standing down, Andy Wakelin has kindly agreed to take over the



Selkirk Hill: damp heather - moor grass

EVENTS (A SELECTION!)

Many Scottish organisations are having Conferences this autumn and if you are a member and haven't heard when/where then contact them! They usually also welcome newcomers and its a great way to learn and meet.

NeSBREC Fungal Forays:

<http://www.nesbrec.org.uk/>

Sat Oct 4th 10.30-3.30 Craigievar Castle (National Trust for Scotland). Near Alford.

Foray Leader: Toni Watt

Fri Oct 10th - Sun Oct 12th Joint Scottish recording group foray in the Angus area. Further information nearer the time. Contact: Liz Holden

Sat Oct 18th 10.30 – 3.30pm Joint GFG and Highland Group Foray to Culbin Forest, near Forres. Foray Leader: Liz Holden

Contact details are on the website.

TWIC

Autumn conference will be in November. For information watch -

http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/recording_conferences.php

COPY DEADLINE

**for the January 2016 issue is
December 15th**

All articles preferably in electronic format. Illustrations welcomed preferably as separate jpegs.

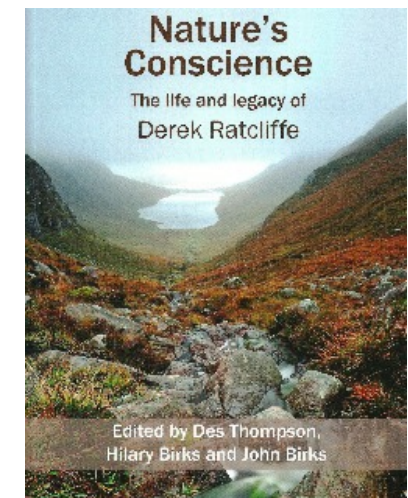
Please send to the editor - Sarah Eno, Edenhope, Yarrowford, Selkirk, TD7 5JY. Email: saraheno@riseup.net

BOOK REVIEW

Nature's Conscience: The Life and Legacy of Derek Ratcliffe.
Thompson, Birks and Birks: Editors
(2015). Langford Press
ISBN 978-1-904078-59-3

Robin Payne

This collection of thirty essays on the life and work Derek Ratcliffe 1929 2005, one of Britain's foremost field biologists and nature conservationists runs to 570 pages. As well as being a fitting tribute to Derek's achievements and legacy the work also sets out some of the most important chapters in nature conservation in Britain over the last 70 years.



Many insights into the work for which Derek Ratcliffe is best known, his monograph on the peregrine falcon, his lead authorship of the landmark publication A Nature Conservation Review and his ground-breaking work on the link between the decline of birds of prey and pesticide residues are set out here. Perhaps less well known, but equally important, is his role in developing our

BRISC ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Sat 31st Oct – Sun 1st Nov

'Mind the Data Gaps - Are Regional Data Hubs the Way Forward?'

Cairngorms National Park - The Grant Arms Hotel, Granttown on Spey

PROGRAMME

Saturday

0900-1200 – Walk in Anagach Woods, Granttown-on-Spey

1130 – Taxi pick up from Aviemore (1119 train arrival from Glasgow/ Edinburgh. 1122 from Inverness)

1200-1300 – Lunch

1300-1330 – BRISC AGM

1330-1400 – Welcome and a talk on, "Biodiversity Data Management in Scotland, the Quest for Complete Coverage: A Historical Perspective" - Jonathan Willet

1400-1430 – Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Resources Centre and Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre - Mark Pollitt and Richard Sutcliffe
1430-1500 – The Wildlife Information Centre - Graeme Wilson, Manager.

1500-1515 – Break

1515-1545 – Highlands and Islands Recorders Groups and Local Record Centres. Speakers TBC

1545-1615 – North East of Scotland Biological Records Centre - Glenn Roberts, Co-ordinator.

1615-1630 – Raffle/ Break

1630-1745 – Discussion

1810 – Taxis depart for Aviemore (1928 train departure to Glasgow/ Edinburgh/ Inverness)

1900 – Conference Dinner

Sunday

0900-1230 – Visit to Abernethy Forest. Departing from the Grant Arms Hotel

1300 – Drop off at Aviemore Station (1323 Train to Glasgow/ Edinburgh, 1346 to Inverness)

1300-1400 – Lunch (venue TBC once numbers known)

1400-1630 – Visit to Rothiemurchus Pinewood.

1700 – Drop off in Aviemore (1710 departure to Glasgow/ Edinburgh/ Inverness)

1730 – Return to the Grant Arms Hotel.

BRISC Contacts:

Chairman – Jonathan Willet, 7 Muirden Road, Maryburgh, IV7 8EJ

Email chairman@brisc.org.uk

Secretary – Louisa Maddison, South Lanarkshire Council, Calderglen Country Park, East Kilbride, G75 0QZ, Email secretary@brisc.org.uk

Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Duncan Davidson, 140 Pitcorthie Drive, Dunfermline KY11 8BJ. Email Duncan@dwwd.freeserve.co.uk

Editor - Sarah Eno, Edenhope, Yarrowfod, Selkirk TD7 5JY. tel 01750 76398

Email saraheno@riseup.net

role of Membership Secretary. At the coming AGM we will be looking for new committee members, if you are at all interested please do speak to one for the committee at the forthcoming conference. BRISC needs an active Committee to keep on going.

Talking of the conference, the information about it will have been circulated to you and I hope that you will be able to attend. The topic for discussion is, "Are Regional Data Hubs the Way Forward?". (Pg 12 for Programme). BRISC has no fixed position on this and we wish to hear from our members and those others attending the conference what they think about this. The current coverage of Scotland by local recording groups or local record centres is the best that it has ever been, but it is still incomplete and often relying on a single dedicated individual. For example we are keen to find out, from the conference's discussion and debate, if there are possible economies of scale in certain data management functions that can help maintain or even expand the network of local recorder liaison posts? There will be commonalities between areas as well as differences, so no one-size-fits-all solution will be possible. However we do need to have some kind of agreed data hub model covering all of Scotland that we can start to discuss with national organisations. I am looking forward to the conference so I hope you are able to come.

At the SBIF meeting last week there was a discussion on the use of biodiversity data (it was decided at the meeting to call it biodiversity rather than biological as it fitted in better with the NBN) and to how it should be used. It was an interesting discussion with differing views. It helped crystallise my thoughts on this subject. My personal view (and that of many others) is that biodiversity data collected by volunteers and paid staff submitted to a recording scheme/group/ data hub should be made publicly available and

easily accessible at full resolution as long as the data is not sensitive.

However, beyond this we should also look to have the data collected used as widely as possible, to make sure that decisions affecting the natural environment are informed by what biodiversity has been found in that area. It is shocking at how few decisions are made using the available biodiversity data.

How many Councils screen planning applications using this data? Does SGIRPID (the Agriculture and Rural Development Department) consider available biodiversity data when assessing applications from farmers or formulating policy? Is the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy based on the available biodiversity data going beyond its use in indicators? Is it used to determine if protected sites are still the best examples of a particular species assemblage, seeing as there is usually 15+ years of new data for those species collected since the site's designation?

I feel strongly that if I am recording biodiversity data and it is publicly available then it is incumbent on authorities responsible for development and land management to use that to ensure their actions don't impact unacceptably on the species that I and the thousands of other volunteer recorders, record. There is the Biodiversity Duty from the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, which states, "It is the duty of every public body and office-holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions." If you asked all public bodies if they use existing, available biodiversity data to inform decisions and policy the answers would be pretty depressing. For me collecting biodiversity data is an end in itself (as I enjoy doing it) but if I am making it publicly available through sending

to an intermediate organisation and thence to the NBN. I am wanting it to be used as much as is possible, to the benefit of our biodiversity as a whole.



EDITOR'S COLUMN

I and others, have had a good number of days recording in the dry but cool summer in the Scottish Borders. Small Skippers, first recorded near Hawick about 12 years ago have become

widespread; several Northern Brown Argus colonies are in good shape and some good populations of Scotch Argus were located in the west. Another recorder has found a new colony of Herb Paris, the second site in the Borders and first since Victorian times.

I have also been more assiduous about recording locally and visiting some potential Local Biodiversity Sites to improve their records. This included going out a few days ago with Rod Corner (VCs 79 & 80 recorder) and checking the small but good Linglie Hill Moss and Field Gentian happily widespread along a west-facing sheep-grazed slope. However even more beautiful, was a solid haze of Devil's-bit Scabious buzzing with insects and peacock butterflies.

There is a lot going on indoors from now. Further information about BRISC and some other events is on page 13.

Please note Conference Programme details on Page 12. The booking form is available on BRISC website

<http://www.brisc.org.uk/Conferences.php>

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT SELKIRK HILL IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS?

Sarah Eno

Selkirk Hill (NT 484284) is an area of open land about 56 hectares and facing north-west onto the town. It is managed "for the peoples of Selkirk" through the Scottish Borders Council under the firm eye of the Common Good and Hill Management Group who employ a part-time local warden.

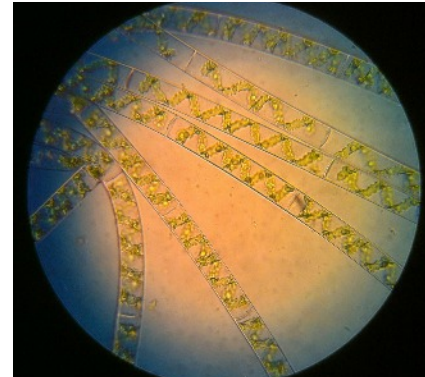
The Hill area consists of severely folded Silurian shales and greywackes which were quarried for its good building and road stone. The topography comprises series of shelves, slopes and hollows with podsoles, podsollic brown earths, and locally flushed dry skeletal or gley soils. Overall, the highly varied conditions give rise to an extremely diverse and intimate mosaic of habitats which have developed since the 40's.

A map produced in 1992 identified 103 habitat compartments including species-rich grassland, marsh, scrub, open water (the Skating Pond), rough mesotrophic grassland, several springs and limey seepages, rock outcrops, woodland and most valued of all, the mid-altitude heather-blaeberry heath. This is a rare habitat in the Borders and much effort has been expended over the years to maintain and expand the heath on the Hill.

The most dramatic change to the Hill has been the gradual cessation of all year round grazing. The then and now photos above give an idea of this change! This is a mixed blessing as the heath areas are turning into woodland and the areas of floristically rich grasslands are getting a little too rank. Grazing does occur in the last 3 months of the year although if there are too many sheep, complaints about the state of the paths then appear!

classification; learning how to identify the major algal groups.

Using keys, we recorded 120 different Genera, including 13 which had not been previously recorded in the area.



Spirogyra

I am now looking to invest in my own equipment so that I can continue to delve into this hidden world and hope to use my new found skills to survey Glasgow's freshwater habitats; advising on their management, while also contributing to local records where recording has previously been limited. As a recent graduate I hope this experience will give me a competitive edge when seeking employment. I could not have attended this course without the help of GNHS/BRISC and, thus, I am extremely grateful.

APPEAL TO READERS FROM THE CHAIR

The BRISC Archive?

As you may know BRISC is 40 years old this year. I am not sure when it was formed that those involved would have thought that it would have lasted so long. However, many dedicated individuals have kept BRISC going and its voice has continued to be heard in the highest corridors of power.

The BRISC archive however, is scattered all over the country and I suspect some still exists in lofts and cupboards. Biological recorders are nothing if not hoarders!

Over the Summer I have been pulling together the archive and we still don't have a complete set of minutes or documents. So I would like to ask members if they have any BRISC material that they would wish to donate to BRISC archive, so we can have as complete a record as possible of all that has happened over the last 40 years.

If you know of anyone who was on the Committee in the past who may still have some papers, then please do ask them if they would be willing to donate them to a central archive. This will be publicly accessible.

We can arrange for any material to be dropped off in Perth, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Stirling, Glasgow, Dumfries, Galashiels or Inverness. Or you can post it to me. If you could deposit or post to me any material within the next two months then I would be very grateful. I am seeking to catalogue and deposit the archive material by the end of the year.

Please contact me - Jonathon Willet,
Email chairman@brisc.org.uk

development please consider joining the user testing group – contact details and other information about the Atlas can be found on the NBN's Latest News web pages. Progress can be followed on www.als.scot or via Twitter @AoLScot.

SBIF Co-ordinator,
c/o The Wildlife Information Centre,
Caretaker's Cottage, Vogrie Country Park,
Gorebridge, Midlothian, EH23 4NU
Tel: 01875 825968
Email: coordinator@sbif.org.uk
Web: www.sbif.org.uk
Twitter: @SB_Info_Forum

BURSARY REPORT

Freshwater Algae

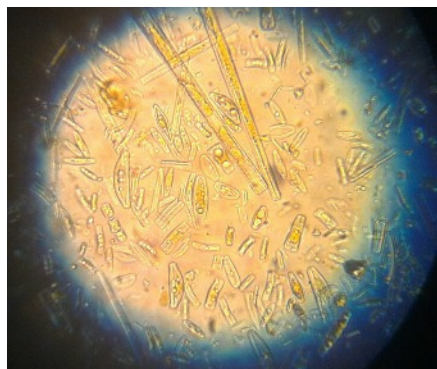
Stephen Porch, BSc (Hons), Grad CIEEM.

While volunteering with Glasgow's Countryside Ranger Service I was involved in sampling blue-green algae from freshwater bodies throughout the city. This presented a potentially invaluable opportunity to learn about these fascinating life-forms; something of which I had no prior experience; however, it became apparent that there was a skill shortage in this field.

Blue-green algal blooms occur when there is an enrichment of nutrients (usually nitrogen and phosphorus) from run-off or point source pollutants entering the ecosystem. Thriving under these conditions, alga species experience increased growth and decomposition rates, de-oxygenating the water while releasing harmful toxins. These can have devastating effects (often fatal) on aquatic organisms and those which feed upon them.

Contaminated water can also be extremely harmful to humans causing irritation of the

skin and lungs, neurological disorders and failure of vital organs. Each year, numerous samples are taken from Glasgow's ponds and sent to SEPA for analysis to ascertain whether concentrations of blue-green algae are present at a level deemed harmful to human activities; a method which, although robust, costs valuable time and money for those involved. As a good environmental indicator, and the basis of the food web, it surprises me how under-represented this group are. The NBN Gateway reveals only four records of alga groups across Glasgow; recorded at a resolution too coarse to be of value.



Sample of mixed algae under microscope

In the hope of addressing this issue I attended a week long residential course with the Field Studies Council at Kindrogan, Perthshire; part-funded by the 2015 BRISC/GNHS bursary.

The course was led by algae specialists Eileen Cox and Elliot Shubert from the Natural History Museum, London.

Together, with individuals from England, South-Africa and Singapore, I partook in a series of field trips, laboratory work and lectures which provided an overview of algal morphology, structure, reproduction and

Vascular plants total is 230 with some local rarities. Sixty-five species of birds and 17 waxcaps have also been recorded.

Chris Badenoch, a local ecologist then working with the NCCS, commented in 1980 that the Hill compared very favourably with any similar habitat in the Borders. Over 230 vascular plant species have been recorded with many widespread and common but including some locally uncommon or scarce species like Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, Fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, Moonwort *Botrychum lunaria*, Field Gentian *Gentianella campestris* have been recorded but not all of them recently. Rock Rose *Helianthemum nummularia* still hangs on and Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea* is common in short turf near the Shelter and picnic area. In addition 16 species of waxcap were recorded between 1998- 2000, data I was unaware of.

Whilst the flora has not been updated recently, the lepidoptera have. Moth nights in 2003 recorded 35 not including Fox Moth and Emperor Moth, Elephant Hawk Moth previously recorded. The butterfly species include all the expected ones for the Borders but also breeding Six Spot Burnet Moth, Northern Brown Argus hanging on where Rock Rose is not overwhelmed, and Small Skipper first recorded in the Borders about 12 years ago, was pretty common this summer in a Juncus flush.

The most special thing to me about the Hill is the range of biodiversity within such a small area. Turn a corner and a completely different habitat and floral composition faces you or exit a woodland tunnel and a cloud of Peacock butterflies will lift off a vivid purple patch of Devil's-bit Scabious. The Hill is much loved and visited by Orienteers, distance walkers (Borders Abbeys Way goes through), Scouts, Guides and Primary Schools for picnics, BBQs and games. Horse-riding of course is popular and there is some

mountain biking. The High school has carried out various projects over the years as the Hill is very handy for environmental studies and in 1997 students planted an arboretum of native species.

Well worth a visit although in writing this I have become acutely aware of the age of many of the species records for Selkirk Hill!



Above: Selkirk Hill in the 40's. Back of the loch is the Hill - not a tree to be seen but the Shelter is visible.

Below: The Hill now - open water smaller and the Hill behind smothered in woodland!



A longer version of the article is available on the website.



ORKNEY WILDLIFE AND INFORMATION RECORDS CENTRE

Sydney Gauld

Record importing

Our database now contains over 300,000 records; entering this number of records onto the database has been achieved with the able assistance of volunteers coming into the OWIARC and working on the raw data to make it into a suitable format to import into Recorder 6. As well as sorting records data, much of the information assimilated by the work that the late Dr E.R. Bullard MBE during her study on *Primula scotica* has been catalogued. This catalogue is now available on the OWIARC website.

Web site

We are currently working on a website that will spatially display the records held by the OWIARC. By selecting any species from a drop down list you will be able to view a map which illustrates the spatial distribution of records that have been submitted for that species. Once this webpage is up and running, a webpage to allow records to be submitted on line will also be set up.

Courses

Two courses have been run so far this year, and one is set for September.

The first course was 'Small Water Creatures' lead by Mark Young. Participants all met up at the Ring of Brodgar car park, Stenness first thing on the morning of Saturday 16th

May. After some instruction on how to collect specimens, the course attendees were let loose on Harray Loch. After a set time the group moved on to Happy Valley, Stenness to collect from a burn environment. All the specimens were taken to the Orkney Library and Archive where a room had been set up with microscopes to allow identification. At the end of the day, all specimens were transported back to the locations from where they were collected, and released.



Participants in the 'lab'

The second course on Hoverfly identification was held over two days and was more or less totally desk based.

The course was led by Roger Morris & Stuart Ball, and is one that Roger and Stuart have been delivering throughout the country. The course revolves around keying out Hoverflies and course participants were supplied with dead specimens. Small excursions were made to a neighbouring area of woodland to find further specimens to key out.

A third course on Spider identification was held in September led by Edward Milner. A short introduction to spiders was followed by identifying spiders in woodland, moorland and coastal habitats.

The OWIARC also assisted in a Bumblebee course run on the island of Stronsay on 15th August. During this course participants were

introduced to the bumblebee species they could expect to see on Stronsay, as well as a number of wild flowering species they should encourage to grow around their houses to attract and support bumblebees in their area.

Public involvement

In conjunction with setting up the two new webpages OWIARC has purchased three electronic tablets, with the aim of installing the RADOS app. It is then envisaged that these tablets would be made available to schools and other interested parties for short term loan for biological recording projects.

The Orkney Library and Archive,
44 Junction Road,
Kirkwall,
Orkney,
KW15 1AG

tel 01856 873166

<http://www.orkneylibrary.org.uk/OBRC/>

BRISC PROJECTS

UPDATE FROM THE SCOTTISH BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION FORUM (SBIF)

Christine Johnston

National Data Flow Pathway (NDFP) and the regional picture

Following on from the workshop discussions about the National Data Flow Pathway (NDFP) at our Conference in April, which were reported on in the last edition of Recorder News, we have been working on the next stages. All the workshop outputs and comments have been collated, and based on them some minor updates have been made to the diagram. Both the comments and the updated NDFP (v3) are available for download

from our Spring Conference web page. Following discussion by the SBIF Steering Group, and in collaboration with BRISC and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Trust, we are currently preparing to distribute the NDFP to all organisations that handle biodiversity data seeking its adoption as a measure of successful data handling in Scotland. It was clear from the workshops at the SBIF Conference that regional support for recording and data management across Scotland is considered important, so the decision by BRISC to focus its Conference on the regional picture is very welcome. The outputs from the BRISC Conference will form an important part of the discussion as to the way forward with delivery of the NDFP.

Case study booklet distribution

Our case study publication *Making the Most of Biodiversity Data* has been distributed to all MSPs as a way of highlighting some of the work that the Forum has been carrying out since it was established following the original petition to the Scottish Parliament. Printed copies of the booklet are still available and can be ordered by email from the Co-ordinator. The booklet is free and is intended for use as an advocacy document by any organisation handling biodiversity data, and promotes the value of collecting data. Just a reminder that a pdf of the booklet can be downloaded from SBIF Publications web page.

Atlas of Living Scotland user testing group

And finally, the development of the *Atlas of Living Scotland* is moving ahead very quickly and the beta version is now live. If you would like to contribute to its