

BBS Summer Meeting 2013

Kinlochewe 23-29 June 2013

The BBS summer meeting was spent in the Scottish highlands and islands. **Oliver Moore** reports on the first week of the summer meeting, held in Wester Ross

The purpose of the week was to generate species lists for some previously un-recorded tetrads within the Letterewe Estate, Wester Ross and thereby contribute to the preparation of a local flora. The popularity of this meeting meant that other locations could also be visited during the week and local nature reserves benefited from our recording activity.

Matthew Adamson, Jeff and Joyce Bates, Jenny Bennett, Jo Denyer, Tom Edwards, Sarah Emes, Kim Fackler, Dave Genney, Rory Hodd, Mark Lawley, Oliver Moore, Jurgen Nieuwkoop, Tom Ottley, Stan Phillips, Sharon Pilkington, Mark Pool, Clare Rickerby and Sharon Yardy stayed for the full week. David Bell, Tom Charman, Jonathan (Jonny) Hughes, Theo Loizou, Sara McBride, George Smith and Julie Smith attended part of the meeting. The meeting base was at the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) field station at Anancaun, southeast of Loch Maree, where there was laboratory space for microscopes and

accommodation for several people. More importantly, there was a decent drying-room available. Other participants hired self-catering accommodation, decided to camp near-by or stayed in a B&B, local hotel or bunkhouse in the Kinlochewe area.

△Above: View to Kinlochewe from Slioch showing the head of Loch Maree. **R Hodd**

▽Below: Faffing around car parks was kept to a minimum. Looking at the camera from left to right - Rory Hodd, Jo Denyer and David Bell. **G Smith**





△Above: Bryologists out-number bryophytes in this shot at Ruidh Dorcha. From left to right - Dave Genney, Clare Rickerby, Stan Phillips and Sara McBride. G Smith

SUNDAY 23 JUNE

The forecast was poor and lived down to expectations. Strong winds and continuous horizontal rain restricted us to a lowland day on the Letterewe Estate, towards the north-western end of Loch Maree. Parking at the allotted site at Kernsary (after a long drive in convoy down the rough access track) required us to cross a causeway, with the water well below the road at 10:00hrs. We had established our groups the previous evening and set off to record our tetrads. Oliver had managed to persuade Matthew, Tom Charman, Jo, Sarah and Rory to visit the Bad Bog towards Fionn Loch. Bad in this instance is the Gaelic for a spot or location. Bad Bog turned out to be reasonable wet heath but there was no shelter from the driving rain. *Cephalozia loitlesbergeri* was found in a hummock of moribund *Sphagnum* and *Marsupella funckii* (new for Letterewe) was collected from the track. By the time the group was ready to move on to the next tetrad a few of the party were already soaked to the skin. The decision to abort early was doubly wise since they met up with a

worried stalker who told them the causeway was already half a foot under water (at 13:30hrs) and they should get the cars across sooner rather than later.

Jeff and Joyce spent the day relatively sheltered in a small stand of western oak woodland close to Kernsary, recording *Bazzania tricrenata* among other species in their quadrats. When warned about the rapidly rising river, they initially decided to push on with their target quota of quadrats, such was their dedication.

David, Tom Edwards, Kim, Dave, Jonny, Sara, Jurgen, Stan, Clare and George strode out to record from the Ardlair woods. The foul weather caused them to focus their attention on the first bit of woodland they encountered, at Ruidh Dorcha. This proved to be a rather dull and heavily deer-grazed birch wood. However, Jonny and Stan collected *Leiocolea bantriensis* and *Oncophorus virens* (awaiting confirmation) growing by the edge of a miniscule burn. Jurgen later confirmed the presence of *Dichodontium flavescens* from the same locality. There had been no improvement in the weather and following a 30 minute con-flab in the pouring rain after

lunch, most of the group agreed it was time to quit and begin the long trudge back to the cars (arriving in time to drive across the causeway). Jurgen and George decided to stay on until their pre-arranged meeting time with their driver and headed in the opposite direction to the Ardlair policy woodland. Here they found *Glyphomitrium daviesii* growing on a thick side-branch of an old oak, *Orthotrichum rupestre* on a rock in the loch with *Ulotia hutchinsiae* and *Syntrichia laevipila* on an old sycamore.

Jenny, Mark Lawley, Theo, Tom Ottley, Sharon Pilkington, Mark Pool and Sharon Yardy opted for a potentially varied local square. However, the rising river prevented access to some north-facing crags in their monad but they still managed to record 99 taxa from conifer plantation, track and bog. Their more notable finds included *Scapania nemorea* and *Sphagnum flexuosum* which were new records for Letterewe and *Marchantia polymorpha* subsp. *polymorpha* was a first for the vice county.

The group recording the local square had still not appeared an hour after the river warning and a search party had not found them either. Jo discovered she had somehow got Mark Pool's mobile number and miraculously his phone was with him, switched on, had signal, and could be heard above the weather, to receive word of the evacuation. Sharon Pilkington was the last driver across the causeway (now under a foot of fast-moving water) in a melodramatic start to the field meeting.

MONDAY 24 JUNE

The Slioch vicinity was the focus for the meeting today in weather much more conducive to bryology. Slioch looms large over Loch Maree and is made up of Torridonian sandstone sitting on top of Lewisian gneiss. The name Slioch



△Above: Tom Edwards and Jonny Hughes bryologising in Coire na Sleaghaich on Slioch. R Hodd

is believed to come from the Gaelic for spear. Matthew, Jo, Tom Edwards, Sarah, Dave, Rory, Jonny, Mark Lawley, and Stan headed for the summit area. They began recording on the steep, north-facing slopes of Sgùrr Dubh in Coire na Sleaghaich (corrie of the spear) where they found *Anastrophyllum donnianum*, *Herbertus hutchinsiae*, *Mastigophora woodsii*, *Plagiochila carringtonii* and *Scapania ornithopodioides* among more common species associated with the mixed hepatic mat. Stan made the best discovery of the week with only the second world locality for *Herbertus borealis*. This Scottish endemic liverwort had only previously been known from Beinn Eighe (Bell & Long, 2012). It grew as a cushion of 25 cm diameter and 20 cm depth, in an equal mixture with *Pleurozia purpurea*. A second cushion was believed to have been seen nearby. Identification was confirmed later that evening by the *Herbertus* referee (David Bell) but only after he had been plied with alcohol. Fortunately, his confirmation still held true the next morning. Mark Lawley added *Dicranum*

▷Top: *Herbertus borealis* at Beinn Eighe NNR.
S Pilkington

▷Middle: *Mastigophora woodsii*. J Denyer

▷Bottom: Bryologists at Theo's leap in Gleann Bianasdaill
From left to right - Jurgen Nieuwkoop, Theo Loizou,
Tom Ottley and Oliver Moore. G Smith

scottianum, *Ditrichum zonatum*, *Herzogiella striatella* and *Isopterygiopsis pulchella* to the growing list. Several folk were interested in getting the obligatory summit photograph in thick mist and diligently recorded *Bryum argenteum*, *Didymodon rigidulus* and *Schistidium apocarpum* from the trig point. Everyone returned happy with their day on the hill at about 21:30hrs.

Tom Charman, Theo, Oliver, Jurgen, Tom Ottley, Clare, George and Julie travelled in hope to some east-facing cliffs known as Creag an t-Searraich, standing proud of the wet heath vegetation. They recorded well over 100 species in this monad. Tom Ottley recorded *Calliergonella lindbergii* and *Scapania irrigua* – both additions to the Letterewe list. The crags were calcareous enough to support *Ditrichum gracile*, *Neckera crispa*, *Preissia quadrata* and *Schistidium strictum*. Tom Charman found *Grimmia torquata* and comparison was made with *Grimmia funalis*. Jurgen located *Gymnomitrion crenulatum* and *Gymnomitrion obtusum* for another show and tell. *Sphagnum strictum* was a nice find from the wet heath. Julie found a small stand of *Plagiochila carringtonii* and *Scapania ornithopodioides* in a remnant patch of oceanic heath.

David, Jenny, Kim, Sara, Sharon Pilkington, Mark Pool and Sharon Yardy clocked up 120 taxa in their ravine monad from the Cromadha na Bruaich area on the lower slopes of Slioch. *Straminergon stramineum*, *Nardia geoscyphus*, *Lepidozia cupressina* and *Scapania compacta* were new for Letterewe (although the last two had previously been recorded on the Loch





△Above: Bryologists pose at the summit of Ben Wyvis. From left to right Oliver Moore, Mark Lawley, Clare Rickerby, George Smith, Rory Hodd, Tom Charman, Tom Edwards, Matthew Adamson and Jurgen Nieuwkoop. J Denyer

Maree islands). On the moor above, Mark found several patches of *Sphagnum strictum*. At a derelict sheiling he unwisely announced ‘we’re not going to find anything new here’ after which some nice patches of *Hedwigia stellata*, *Douinia ovata* and *Glyphomitrium daviesii* were promptly discovered.

TUESDAY 25 JUNE

Matthew, Tom Charman, Jo, Tom Edwards, Rory, Mark Lawley, Oliver, Jurgen, Clare, George and Sharon Yardy headed for Coire nan Con below the main summit of Ben Wyvis National Nature Reserve (NNR) in Easter Ross. The group passed trees festooned with *Antitrichia curtipendula* above the lower section of the Allt a’ Bhealaich Mhòir on their walk up An Cabar. They admired the luxuriant *Racomitrium lanuginosum* heath east of Glas Leathad Mòr which contrasted with the damaged vegetation they had seen whilst walking along the summit plateau. In order to facilitate recovery of this summit vegetation, Scottish Natural Heritage have been urging hill walkers to stick to one path as they are experimenting with *R. lanuginosum* transplants.

Lunch was declared soon after they had dropped into the coire and Mark had found *Lophozia*

opacifolia. The cloud at last began to lift revealing the splendid scenery before us. Fortunately, the photograph at the summit had been taken before there was any hint of decent visibility. Taking care not to damage the scattered patches of snow-bed vegetation and montane flushes in their tetrad, the group went on to record some characteristic species. Clare spotted a few shoots of *Sphagnum lindbergii* beneath Oliver’s feet who had just been describing the typical habitat for those wishing to find this moss. More impressive lawns of *S. lindbergii* were soon found further down the montane flush. Jurgen located a few small thalli of *Moerckia blyttii* and Rory successfully sought out *Conostomum tetragonum*. Tom Edwards, Oliver and Clare were able to compare

▽Below: *Diplophyllum taxifolium* from Coire nan Con.
J Denyer





△Above: Mark Lawley at Coire nan Con. J Nieuwkoop. △Top right: Tom Ottley, Oliver Moore and Jo Denyer exploring the slopes above Loch a' Choire Ghrànda. R Hodd. △Bottom right: Rory Hodd shows Tom Edwards a few tricks he could introduce to the river dance. J Denyer

Scapania paludosa, *S. uliginosa* and *S. undulata* from the flush. Mark found *Philonotis seriata* in similar habitat and *Harpanthus flotovianus* in flushed ground nearby. George, Rory and Jo found *Pohlia elongata* on a rock ledge. Jo also found some *Diplophyllum taxifolium* in similar habitat. *Anthelia juratzkana*, *Gymnomitrium concinnum*, *G. corallioides*, *Kiaeria blyttii*, *K. falcata* and *K. starkei* were also added to the list. Mark and Jurgen collected *K. glacialis* which was

needed as a de-bracketer for VC106.

Stan and Dave had decided to have a day on the microscopes back at base and used the opportunity to consolidate their identification skills. David, Kim and Julie were unsuccessful in their quest for *Metzgeria leptoneura* within the Beinn Eighe NNR owing to rather vague grid references. Tom Ottley and Theo explored the northern slopes of Ruadh-stac Beag where they got their fix of northern Atlantic liverworts. They also found *Plagiothecium platyphyllum* and *Harpanthus flotovianus* during their excursion. Jeff and Joyce visited the woodland near the well-recorded Talladale ravine in Wester Ross. Needless to say their quadrats were species rich and included several with an Atlantic distribution. Jenny, Sarah, Sharon Pilkington and Mark Pool bryologised around the Coille na Glas-Leitre mountain trail at Beinn Eighe. *Sphagnum angustifolium* and *Distichium capillaceum* were interesting finds in this predominantly acidic terrain over quartzite.

▽Below: Bryologists descend An Cabar with views across to The Fannaichs. R Hodd

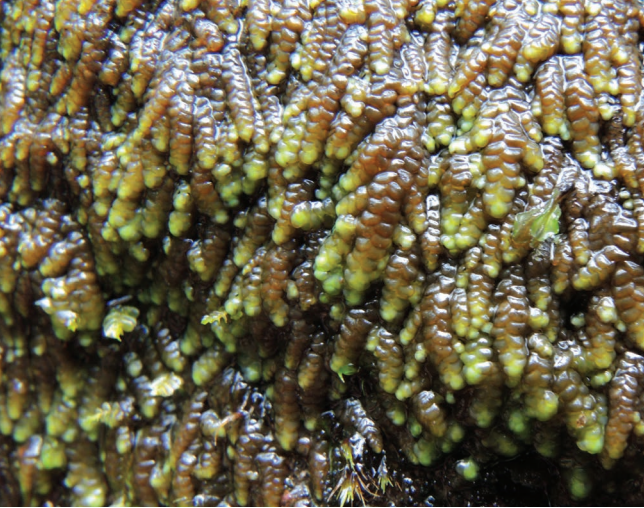




WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE



Matthew, Jenny, Jo, Tom Edwards, Rory, Mark Lawley, Oliver, Jurgén, Tom Ottley, Stan, Mark Pool and Clare set out for the lower crags of Coire Grànda (which actually means gloomy corrie). The montane lochans, crags and snow bed communities to the north had been well recorded on previous BBS meetings to Beinn Dearg but the east facing crags above Loch a' Choire Ghrànda had been neglected. After the long walk-in from Torran Dubh, a suitable place for lunch was located to get out of the wind and Rory found himself sitting on a hepatic mat assemblage. This included *Anastrophyllum donnianum* and a scrappy *Scapania ornithopodioides* with quite long marginal teeth whose identity was confirmed by smell (Oliver convinced the group that this liverwort had the smell of freshly peeled world cup football-album stickers – not known for *S. nimbosa*). Rory went on to locate *Herbertus hutchinsiae* and *H. stramineus*. Stan and Clare found *Mastigophora woodsii* and Jo noticed scattered shoots of *Paraleptodontium recurvifolium* in steep, flushed ground after a tricky step in a montane gully. *Calypogeia azurea*, *Dicranoweisia crispula* and *Dicranodontium asperulum* were also added to the list. Matthew and Mark Lawley had split off before lunch to record from the western side of Loch a' Choire Ghrànda. They contributed with records that included *Pohlia ludwigii*, *Pterigynandrum filiforme* and *Racomitrium macounii* ssp. *alpinum*. Mark also collected *Andreaea megistospora* (a new



◁Clockwise from bottom left: *Campylopus subporodictyon* with *Hyocomium armoricum* at Beinn Eighe NNR.
 O Moore. *Saccogyna viticulosa*. S Pilkington.
Paraleptodontium recurvifolium. J Denyer. *Schistidium trichodon* at Rassal SSSI. J Denyer. *Radula aquilegia*.
 J Denyer

vice-county record for Easter Ross). Jenny, Oliver and Jurgen enjoyed the beautiful evening as they slowly returned to the vehicles via the western edge of Loch Coire Làir. They blamed their late return on a fruitless hunt for *Odontoschisma elongatum* but Jurgen later discovered he had actually collected some shoots of this liverwort.

David, Kim, Julie and Sharon Yardy went to the Corrieshalloch Gorge NNR on another quest for *Metzgeria leptoneura*. This time they met with success and after carefully negotiating their way into and down the ravine, they were able to exit by a conveniently placed rope next to their target liverwort. Jeff and Joyce focussed their attention on the Scots Pine woodland at Beinn Eighe. Sharon Pilkington chose to have a microscope/rest day and George also decided to catch up with his specimens. Meanwhile, Dave spent the afternoon recording from a short stretch of the Allt Chnàimhean ravine, across the river from the field station. *Aphanolejeunea microscopica*, *Colura calyptrifolia* and *Drepanolejeunea hamatifolia* were among the many species he recorded.

THURSDAY 27 JUNE

A small party of bryologists headed to record from Inverewe Garden and Estate owned by the National Trust for Scotland. Sarah, Oliver and Jurgen dutifully recorded from the uninspiring conifer plantation at Sròn Dubh (Gaelic for dark or black hillside was very apt) which had been specifically requested for survey. They managed to get 92 species on the card. The

richest habitat was the forestry track where *Archidium alternifolium*, *Bryum rubens*, *Pohlia annotina*, *P. bulbifera*, *P. wahlenbergii*, *Ceratodon purpureus* and *Campylopus subulatus* were among those listed. *Barbula unguiculata*, *Didymodon insulanus*, *Dicranella varia*, *Dicranella staphylina* and *Didymodon fallax* occurred where there was slight base enrichment of the track. After lunch, the group searched the gardens in vain for *Daltonia splachnoides*. However, they managed to find *Colura calyptrifolia*, *Lejeunea patens*, *Microlejeunea ulicina* and *Frullania tamarisici* growing together on very young twigs of an exotic tree by the Pond Garden. Jurgen also recorded *Cololejeunea minutissima* from the vicinity.

Jeff and Joyce maintained the focus on their quadrats. Their notable find from coastal cliff habitats included *Weissia perssonii* (required as a de-bracketer for VC105). Meanwhile, Matthew, Jenny, Sharon Pilkington, Mark Pool and Sharon Yardy made for the coastal headland where they found an interesting bog. Here they recorded 15 species of *Sphagnum* including *S. fuscum*, *S. magellanicum*, *S. molle* and *S. strictum*. The group collected *Cephalozia macrostachya* var. *macrostachya* from the mire and Sharon Pilkington found *Jamesoniella autumnalis* growing on dead wood below old *Calluna vulgaris* on a shaded vertical bank at the edge of the bog.

Jo and Rory spent the afternoon on microscopes following a spot of plant-twitching in the morning, with Mark Lawley, to see *Herbertus borealis* and *Campylopus subporodictyon* at Beinn Eighe NNR. Tom Ottley took himself off to see

the delights of Talladale while Tom Edwards, Dave, Stan, Clare and Julie sought out notable species such as *Leptoscyphus cuneifolius* and *Radula aquilegia*, within the Allt na h-Airighe ravine.

Later that evening, Dave needed little persuasion to become party-animal at an informal leaving-do for a member of the SNH staff at a nearby cottage. Stan was going to attend (to provide moral support for Dave) but one glimpse through the window of the cottage made him realise that his air-guitar playing skills were no match for his colleague.

FRIDAY 28 JUNE

The remaining contestants headed to Rassal Ashwood NNR to record from the upper section of the Allt Mòr ravine. The weather was initially poor so no one was keen to get out of a warm car into the rain. Fortunately, this soon cleared and a good day of recording was had by all. Beyond the woodland there were limestone outcrops, calcareous grassland, wet heath, old copper pits, base-rich flushes and wooded ravines through siliceous and calcareous rock. Jo and Rory recorded *Orthothecium rufescens*, *Porella platyphylla* and *Scapania aequiloba* from the limestone outcrops above Rassal wood. Jurgen found *Bryoerythrophyllum ferruginascens*, *Bryum archangelicum* and *Scapania cuspiduligera* from the vicinity of the copper pits. Tom Ottley added *Cephalozia pleniceps* growing amid *Sphagnum contortum*. *Splachnum ampullaceum* was also seen in this area.

Over 200 taxa were recorded from the NG8543 ravine monad alone. The electronic recording card was unable to cope with this huge species tally, and in attempting to solve the problem Oliver unlocked the header worksheet and mucked it up. The result was complete chaos

with utterly ruined data to transfer, producing snorts of amusement from Mark Hill. The records had to be copied electronically to a fresh card. This was the first time > 200 species had been recorded on a single card. Rory thought he had grabbed a new vice county record from the Allt Mòr ravine area with his find of *Schistidium trichodon* only to discover it had been found by Nick Hodgetts a few weeks earlier further downstream. *Radula aquilegia*, *Aphanolejeunea microscopica*, *Drepanolejeunea hamatifolia*, *Harpalejeunea molleri* and *Cololejeunea calcarea* were locally frequent within the various arms of the ravine. Jurgen found *Plagiobryum zieri* and Tom Ottley collected *Schistidium robustum*, *Weissia perssonii* and *Solenostoma confertissimum*. Most of the group also got to see a few distinctive cushions of *Catoscopium nigrum* on a flushed slope near the confluence of two burns.

We thank the staff and volunteers at the Kinlochewe SNH office for allowing us to make use of the field station at Anancaun. I also wish to thank all of the participants for their recording effort during the week and especially for braving the inclement conditions on the first day. I am grateful to Dave Genney, Mark Hill, Stan Phillips and Sharon Pilkington for providing a few details that assisted me with the writing up of this report and to all those who have kindly contributed photographs and comments on an earlier draft.

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References

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