

Figure 4. Current known British distribution of *Amblystegium radicale*. Circles indicate records from swamps, fens or peat cuttings; triangles indicate records from cereal stubble fields.

inundated by brackish water. It is a European Temperate species (Hill & Preston, 1998), so it might be expected further east in England or in Ireland, although its floristic element does show something of a south-western bias in Britain (Hill & Preston, 1998, p. 161). The reed-fens of

England are more likely to have been visited by bryologists in the past as they are known to hold other interesting *Amblystegium* species and other fen plants. It is still quite likely that *A. radicale* awaits discovery in other parts of the country, notably the extensive reed-fens of Anglesey and the Conwy Valley in north Wales. In the light of the recent records, it seems best to regard *A. radicale* as Data Deficient until we have a better idea of its British range and habitat requirements.

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Bust of Richard Spruce unveiled in Ecuador

On 4 March 2006 a bust of Richard Spruce (1817-1893), the British botanist and explorer of South America, was unveiled at Río Verde near Baños, central Ecuador (see Figure 1). The work

of art, fashioned by the Ecuadorian sculptor Edguin Barrera and generously supported internationally by various institutions, organisations (including the BBS) and individual

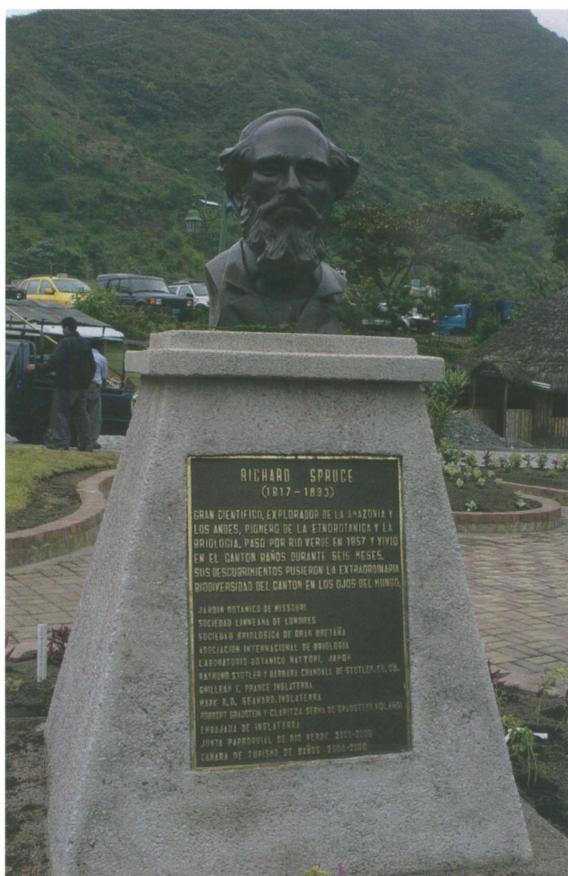


Figure 1. Bust of Richard Spruce at Río Verde, Ecuador. Photo: Rob Gradstein.

donors, honours the pioneering work of this great botanist on the rich Amazonian and Andean floras.

The celebration, organized by the Chamber of Tourism of the town of Baños, was attended by a large crowd, including the Vice-Mayor and other leading personalities of the region, the British Vice-Consul, and the heads of all the major herbaria of Ecuador. Speeches were given by the Vice-Mayor as well as Dr Plutarcho Naranjo, former Minister of Health of Ecuador, and Dr Robbert Gradstein, member of the organising committee. The programme also featured singing (anthems of Ecuador and Baños) and a toast by co-organiser Patricia

Guevara of Baños. The unveiling was undertaken by Sophie Deeks, British Vice-Consul, and Mrs Isabel Paredes, chairperson of the Río Verde community.

Following a splendid lunch in hotel Miramelinda, Río Verde at the invitation of its owners Patricia Guevara and Manuel Chauvin, the participants spent the afternoon on leisure walks to some of the localities visited by Spruce, including the Río Verde waterfall and the Río Topo valley. It was at the latter site that Spruce experienced great difficulties when trying to cross the swollen waters of the river, and almost lost his precious collections. Local botanist and orchid specialist Lou Jost showed some of the plant species collected by Spruce along this spectacularly beautiful river. A highlight was finding the rare liverwort *Myriocolea irrorata* Spruce, known only from the River Topo and long considered extinct. Spruce was particularly attracted to this species, which he considered 'perhaps the most interesting bryophyte that I have ever found ... and the only agreeable souvenir I have preserved of this river' (Spruce 1908, *Notes of a botanist on the Amazon and the Andes*, vol. 2, p. 167).

The inauguration of the bust of Richard Spruce in Río Verde should help keep the memory of this great explorer of the Amazon and the Andes alive in Ecuador. It should also help in promoting awareness of the rich biodiversity of the upper Pastaza and Topo Valleys, which are currently threatened by plans to build three hydroelectric projects. Efforts are being made by the tourist and nature conservation agencies of Baños to counteract these destructive activities and ensure conservation of the area. It is hoped that such endeavours to conserve the magnificent rain forest and watercourses of the valleys, first explored by Richard Spruce, will prove successful.

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