

With a number of notable exceptions, most bryophyte recording is done in people's spare time. This is not only true of those whose work is unconnected to bryophytes, but also of those who work in ecology and conservation. For the latter group, there are two major drivers of unwillingness to record in work time, or to submit records collected during work.

1. The current need for all data to have an owner. Records made in work time may or may not be the property of the recorder, his/her employers, consultants sub-contracting the recorder, or a combination of these. The situation is complex, and recording for its own sake may sometimes be forgotten.

2. The fact that records can be sold for consultancy-scale fees. In the past, records were contributed freely to almost anyone who wanted them, but now they are often bought from records centres. Why should a recorder give their data to a records centre, only for it to be sold on to a third party?

Recently, one of my few subcontracted surveys included a clause from the consultants employing me that stipulated that any records I made could not be passed on to the BBS or BRC for 6 years, and this is not unique.

As Nick Hodgetts and David Holyoak have demonstrated with their hundreds of vice-county vouchers and thousands of more general records collected during *Red Data Book* work in Ireland, it is perfectly possible to record some species whilst carrying out contracted survey work. Indeed, I routinely jot down bryophyte lists during NVC survey work for CCW (Countryside Council for Wales) and pass the records on to the BBS and BRC. These lists are the incomplete results of what I happen to see, but help fill in gaps. In fact, anyone who visits my survey sites could make similar lists and make them available.

Some consultancy work takes people to previously unrecorded sites where excellent records can be made. Diane Dobson has just submitted records of *Schistidium agassizii* from 17 Scottish rivers, doubling the number of British localities where it is known. These records were made during contracted survey for SEPA, organized by Openspace Ecology, who were willing for these records to be submitted to the BBS. If consultancies and the organizations contracting them took a more enlightened view, they could have their names associated with excellence in recording.

A further issue with contractor secrecy is that claims of very significant rarities are often never verified. I recently went out of my way to check a site where a liverwort was supposed to be growing many hundreds of miles from other stations, but only found a common lookalike. The unwillingness of some ecologists to engage with the recording system means these potentially exciting and conservation-worthy plants may never be verified and protected, or alternatively money may be ploughed into protecting something unworthy. The recent BAP revision has seen research funding cut from some species and assigned to others, so significant money rides on the accuracy of our lists and databases.

An alternative reason for withholding records, a perceived threat from collectors, is equally harmful. In 2006, David Holyoak found *Bruchia vogesiaca* new to Britain in Cornwall and published reasonable location details, but chose to protect the plant by only making the record visible at the 1-km square level. Few, if any bryologists would now go specifically to Cornwall to collect *Bruchia* for their herbarium, but even if they did they would have to search a large area and would be unlikely to find or damage the original colony. This informative but cautious approach contrasts with other well-known finds from England and Wales in recent years that have never been sent in, apparently out of fear that the rarities involved will be targeted and collected. Most of these examples are known to the conservation agencies, which affords them some protection, but publicizing the location of a colony of a rare moss might actually protect it by removing the need for people to collect a specimen of an unfamiliar plant for checking. At the very least, it should be possible to submit a record at the 10-km square level, perhaps with a district name, so that other recorders can appreciate that species *X* is no longer restricted to south-east England, for example, and indeed might be lurking unsearched for in their patch.

In conclusion, it seems that the current state of record ownership, coupled with secrecy over records made during work carried out under contract, may be harming the very species that are meant to be protected. Surely it would be relatively straightforward for all professional bryophyte surveyors and ecologists to submit their records to the vice-county recorders and the BBS.

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