



Annual Report for 2003

Introduction. 2003 was another very busy year for BRISC, largely due to the hard work of Alan Cameron, our Development Officer. Alan's three-year post to help implement BRISC's Strategic Plan for 2001-04 was made possible by generous financial support from The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Scottish Natural Heritage and is now in its second year. The post is hosted by BTCV Scotland, and our office, based in BTCV's premises at Balallan House, Stirling, is now the hub of all our activities. A Management Team, which includes representatives from the BRISC committee, SNH and from BTCV, oversees the work of the Development Officer. This team met four times during 2003. A list of those serving on the management committee is attached.

This report summarises activities carried out during the year to address the action points identified in the Strategic Plan:

A National Plan for LRCs. The main thrust of BRISC's work during 2003 centered on the development of a National Plan for Local Records Centres. It has long been one of BRISC's top priorities to help set up a fully operational network of Local Records Centres covering Scotland, because we believe this would provide by far the most rational and effective system for delivering high quality information on wildlife to an agreed standard. This view is also promoted by the National Biodiversity Network, which sees LRCs providing the local aspect of the NBN, offering a one-stop focus for wildlife information at a local level, coordinating the efforts of the local recording community, and feeding into the local planning system, which in turn feeds into the national and international picture. Following an invitation in June from SNH, Alan drafted a 'National Plan for Local Records Centres in Scotland', which describes how to fill the gaps in the LRC network through further development of six existing LRCs and setting up six new LRCs (incorporating exiting activities where possible). The SNH Management Team will consider the BRISC Plan in early 2004 and will decide how SNH intends to support the establishment of a complete LRC network for Scotland.

Organised Events. BRISC was involved in setting up a seminar at Perth Museum on 17 January on the 'Integrated Habitat System', developed by Somerset Environmental Records Centre. This system helps data managers overcome the growing problem of integrating the Priority habitats as listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan with the vast range of different habitat codes and classification systems, which are generally in use. Bill Butcher came up from Somerset to tell people in Scotland about the system, which has subsequently been highly praised and is to be used by the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre for a major programme of survey work.

On 21 January 2003, BRISC convened a seminar at Perth Museum on 'Progress and Current Issues' arising from the work of the National Biodiversity Network. The purpose of the day was to look at practical aspects of the work of the NBN and to hear how other areas of the UK were progressing. The day was aimed at recorders, data managers and people involved in policy on data management. Thirty-two delegates attended the day and heard speakers from Scottish Natural Heritage, the NBN, Countryside Council for Wales, the national Biological Records Centre at Monkswood, and Somerset Environmental

Records Centre. A full report of the day was included in the April edition of 'Recorder News'.

The BRISC 2003 Annual Conference and AGM was held at the Burrell Collection, Glasgow on 22 February. About seventy delegates heard the seven speakers deliver excellent and varied talks on the theme 'Biodiversity: Trends and Change'. Reports of the talks were subsequently included in the April and July issues of 'Recorder News', as well as the minutes of the AGM.

On 22 October, BRISC and SNH jointly organised a day in Perth Station Hotel on 'the way forward for Local Records Centres in Scotland'. The objectives of the seminar included agreeing on the LRC services needed by SNH and starting to build a business case for supporting the national network. In addition to representation from LRCs and from SNH the seminar was attended by delegates from the Highland Biological Recording Group, SEPA, SWT, the NBN, Shetland Islands Council, the LBAP officers network, and the BRISC committee. Jon Mercer, from the Scottish Borders Biological Records Centre, presented a well-received talk on the work of an LRC. In response to views from delegates SNH and BRISC agreed to set up a group to oversee a 'National LRC Strategy'. The strategy will document the business case for LRCs and will provide the framework for organisations to develop their own work plans for engaging with LRCs. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) is driving much current work on biodiversity, including setting up systems for monitoring and reporting on biological outcomes of local and national actions. BRISC and SNH have now held discussions with the LBAP Working Group and it has been agreed that this group will set up a sub-group to develop the National LRC Strategy. The work on LRCs will therefore take place within the context of systems to meet the specific needs of the SBS.

On 13 December, BRISC contributed to a day at Battleby, organised by Butterfly Conservation, to explore the possibility of setting up a national recording scheme on macro moths. Four speakers addressed different aspects of the subject in the morning, while the afternoon was given over to a workshop, exploring ideas and problems raised by participants. BRISC will keep members informed as to when and how scheme will come into operation.

Publications. March saw the long awaited publication of 'Scottish Natural History Societies and Allied Groups: a Directory'. This companion volume to the 'Source Book for Biological Recording in Scotland' (1999) was generously grant-aided by SNH and the Russell Trust and contains 111 entries for societies and other organisations with an interest in recording the natural environment. Each entry carries contact details as well as listing the purpose of the group, year founded, numbers of members and annual subscription, activities and publications. The introduction also gives an overview of the long and impressive history of wildlife recording in Scotland. The publication comes in paperback (A4) and on CD, both for sale at £4 to members, £5 to everyone else (p+p extra).

Representation of the Scottish recording community's interests at the national level is a top priority for BRISC. To this end, BRISC attended meetings of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum's LBAP subgroup, Scottish Environment LINK, the National Biodiversity Network's LRC Steering Group and its Policy and Projects Advisory Committee (PoPAC), the National Federation for Biological Recording (NFBR) Council and annual conference, as well as a number of other meetings in Scotland. At Scottish Environment LINK's AGM in May, as chairperson of BRISC, I was elected as a trustee of LINK, following its change into a company limited by guarantee.

Consultation. BRISC spent a substantial amount of time preparing and feeding responses into several critical consultations during 2003, especially the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Bill and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. We also responded to a Scottish Executive consultation on invasive non-native species and actively supported a number of position statements prepared by Scottish Environment LINK. Our grateful thanks to members who helped and advised on BRISC's responses to these consultations.

Communication:

Four editions of 'Recorder News' were published and mailed out. The newsletter is a vehicle for keeping members informed about new initiatives and developments, and the issues carried among other things articles by various national societies and recording schemes to raise awareness of their work and to encourage participation by members in ongoing surveys.

Email forum. The LRC email forum experienced quite a lot of activities, mainly due to the Development Officer's efforts. A new Computer forum was also established but saw little activity. The existing recorders' email group saw very little activity.

The Website statistics show a fairly consistent pattern of 12-15 people visiting per day with 17-31 pages viewed over 2003. The peak months were July, August and September with a gradual fall off into December. The Website statistics show a fairly consistent pattern of 12-15 people visiting per day with 17-31 pages viewed over 2003. The peak months were July, August and September with a gradual fall off into December. The majority of people come straight to the site with the rest arriving from the major search engines, which have the site well up the results list. Especially the bumblebee pages were popular, recording most downloads. Further developments are in the pipeline.

Projects:

Wild about Wildlife: Recruiting new Recorders. Work progressed – albeit slowly – on the proposal to apply for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for an officer to organise and facilitate training events in species identification throughout Scotland. A subgroup comprising representatives from the BRISC committee and BTCV met twice during the year to work out details of the proposals and costings, and a meeting subsequently took place with the Heritage Lottery Fund in Edinburgh in November to discuss our draft proposals, which substantially influenced how the project will be taken forward. BTCV continues to express great interest in being closely involved in the project, and BRISC should benefit from

BTCV's experience in all matters from applying to the HLF, to organising events on the ground. It is hoped to make a full grant application in 2004.

Bumblebee survey: Around 200 bumblebee survey packs in total had been distributed by the end of the year, and everyone holding bumblebee records is urged to send these in to their Local Records Centre, or failing that to Anne-Marie Smout, who will act as a clearing house. The bumblebee pages on the website have been improved and expanded, and it will shortly be possible to record on line. A report on the survey and maps of species, including records going back to 1990, will be made available on the website. It should also be mentioned that survey for a local atlas for the Bumblebees of Highland is well underway, under the expert leadership of Murdo Macdonald. When completed it will be the first atlas in Scotland of this attractive group of insects. During the autumn, BRISC was consulted about a draft Action Plan for the Great Yellow Bumblebee *Bombus distinguendus* for the Outer Hebrides, and it was interesting to note that the plan also called for a Local Records Centre to be set up for these islands.

Membership and subscriptions. At the end of the year, the membership stood at 135, which was up on the previous year. Subscriptions provide BRISC's only steady income to meet costs of printing newsletters, paying for mailing and other administration costs, and expenses currently outstrip income. Subscriptions have stayed the same since 1998, and the case of increasing them will be discussed at the AGM in March 2004. A planned membership drive did not get off the ground in 2003, and it is hoped that more effort can be made in that direction in 2004. The list of members and collection of annual subscriptions is now managed from the Stirling Office. Due to personal circumstances, Lesley Brown wishes to stand down from the committee at the 2004 AGM. My grateful thanks to Lesley for all her time and effort in coping with the complex and demanding task of being membership secretary for three years.

The Committee, which directs and oversees BRISC's activities, met four times during the year, and my personal thanks to everyone for their valuable contribution, without which BRISC could not operate. Regrettably no replacement was found for Mark Simmons, our treasurer, but the committee saw a number of changes in its membership during the year. Ann McKillop, Julie Bett and Bob Saville stood down at the 2003 AGM, and David Beaumont resigned half-way through the year, due to pressure of work. On behalf of BRISC, I would like to thank them all individually for their time, their commitment to BRISC and good council. It is much appreciated. In their place we have some new faces. Craig Macadam (National Mayfly Recorder) was elected at the 2003 AGM, and we have co-opted Gill Calder (SWT), as well as Jenny Storey, Ecologist, and Jonathan Willet, Biodiversity Officer, both North Lanarkshire Council, who will be sharing their time on the committee. They are all welcome. A list of current committee members is attached.

Anne-Marie Smout, Chair of BRISC
7 January 2004

BRISC COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND THEIR ROLES AS OF JANUARY 2004

Anne-Marie Smout, Chair elected since 1998
c/o Chesterhill, Shore Road, Anstruther, Fife, KY10 3DZ
Tel. 01333 310 330 – fax 01333 311 193;
email AMSmout@aol.com

Also Newsletter editor; shares with AC representation on NBN LRC Steering Group, Council for National Federation for Biological Recording, and (with AC & BB) different aspects of Scottish Environment LINK

Alan Cameron, BRISC Development Officer co-opted 2002
BRISC c/o BTCV, Balallan House, Allan Park, Stirling, FK8 2QG
Tel/fax 01786 474061; mobile 07764 655695;
email brisc@btcv.org.uk

Also Secretariat and Memberships; shares with AMS representation on NBN LRC Steering Group, Council for National Federation for Biological Recording, the Biodiversity Challenge Task Force of Scottish Environment LINK, and (with PK) represents BRISC on Scottish Biodiversity Forum's LBAP subgroup

Mark Simmons, Treasurer elected since 1998
c/o Perth Museum, 78 George Street, Perth, PH1 5LB
Tel. 01738 632488 – fax 01738 443 505; email
mjsimmons@pkc.gov.uk (Mark Simmons)

Andy Wakelin, Website Manager co-opted
August 2000
32 Tailyour Cresc, Montrose, Angus DD10 9BL,
email andy.wakelin@which.net

Brian Boag co-opted then elected since 2002
Scottish Crop Research Institute, Invergowrie, Dundee, DD2 5DA
Tel. 01382 562731, Fax 01382 562426,
email bboag@scri.sari.ac.uk

Represents BRISC (Agricultural Task Force) on Scottish Environment LINK

Lesley Brown elected since 1998
3 Abbey Craig Court, Alloa Road, Stirling FK9 5LQ
Tel. 01786 445166
email lesley@brown1420.freeserve.co.uk

Gill Calder co-opted Spring 2003
SWT, Cramond House, Kirk Cramond, Cramond Glebe Road, Edinburgh EH4 6NS
Tel. 0131 312 4707 (direct line);
email gcalder@swt.org.uk

Geoff Johnson co-opted July 2002
SNH Environmental Data Unit
Battleby, Redgorton, Perth PH1 3EW
Tel. 01738 444177;
email geoff.johnson@snh.gov.uk

Paul Kirkland elected since 2001
Butterfly Conservation (Scotland), Balallan House, Allan Park, STIRLING, FK8 2QG
Tel/fax 01786 447753,
email pkirkland@butterfly-conservation.org

Represents BRISC (with AC) on Scottish Biodiversity Forum's LBAP subgroup Serves on the Management Team for the Development Officer

Craig Macadam elected 2003
109 Johnston Avenue, Stenhousemuir, Larbert, FK5 4JY
Tel. 07786 631369
email craig.macadam@bradan-aquasurveys.co.uk

Jon Mercer elected 2001
Scottish Borders BRC, Harestanes Visitor Centre, Ancrum, Jedburgh TD8 6UQ
Tel 01835 830306;
email j Mercer@scotborders.gov.uk

Jenny Storie/ Jonathan Willet Co-opted summer 2003
Conservation and Greening Unit, North Lanarkshire Council, Palacerigg House,
Palacerigg Road, Cumbernauld G67 3HU
Tel. 01236 780636;
email storeyj@northlan.gov.uk and
willetj@northlan.gov.uk

JW represents BRISC on the Scottish Squirrel Group

MANAGEMENT TEAM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S POST

Anne-Marie Smout – BRISC (Chair)
David Jamieson – BTCV
Geoff Johnson – SNH
Lesley Brown – BRISC
Mark Simmons – BRISC
Paul Kirkland – BRISC

BRISC Office details:

Alan Cameron
Development Officer
c/o BTCV, Balallan House
24 Allan Park, Stirling FK8 2QG
Tel/fax 01786 474061
email brisc@btcv.org.uk