

BRISC EVENTS

AGM - by zoom Evening of

Wednesday 23rd November
2022

Two talks (tbc) and the AGM business
Look out for details to be confirmed
by email, facebook and website

SPRING CONFERENCE 2023

It is planned to hold a live conference in Spring 2023, all being safe and well. Much has yet to be decided including theme, location, excursions and whether to have a virtual link as well.

Please send the committee any ideas or special desires.



COPY DEADLINE : 28th JANUARY 2023

Articles, recording news, book reviews, stories of favourite places or species are all welcome. Please send copy in Word or Open Office format. Photos are welcomed but best as jpeg files. If the data is large send them via wetransfer or similar.

Please email to the editor: saraheno@riseup.net

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BRISC

BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND



www.brisc.org.uk
www.facebook.com/BriscScotland

Recorder News

Scottish Charity No SC024418ISSN 0966 - 1964

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Leadburn Community Woodland and Sabre Wasp

Joanie McNaughton

I have visited Leadburn Community Woodland ("Leadburn"), Peeblesshire (VC78) a number of times over the last ten years and have enjoyed watching it grow. So, firstly a bit about its history and how it has developed.

In the 1960s, when the Forestry Commission ("FC") owned the land at Leadburn, it comprised two blocks, mainly Lodgepole Pine *Pinus contorta* and Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis* and experimental plots used by FC's Northern Research Station. In 2007, SCIO charity Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland ("FLCW") acquired the first

block of 44 hectares which FC had cleared-felled in 2001. The Charity then purchased the second, experimental, block when it was put up for sale in 2019.

Groundworks for the restoration of the second area of raised bog were completed early in 2021, which included the installation of wooden dams, blocking ditches and compacting the surface. The Charity's objective is: "To manage community land and associated assets for the benefit of the Community and the public in general as an important part of the protection and sustainable development of Scotland's natural environment, where 'sustainable development' means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

There are two main paths utilising disused railway lines, and an expanding network of paths criss-crossing these main paths. The paths link many wildlife habitats. Some 8,000 trees were planted, some of them now up to 15m tall, including a mixture of native Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, Birch *Betula*, Rowan *Sorbus*, Aspen *Populus tremula* and Oak *Quercus*. Four permanent ponds were established where Odonata thrive.

Species I have seen include Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* and Black

Darter *Sympetrum danae* and Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* Dragonflies, and Azure *Coenagrion puella*, Emerald *Lestes sponsa*, Common Blue, *Polyommatus icarus*, Blue-tailed *Ischnura elegans* and Large Red *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* Damselflies.

17 hectares of raised bog was restored in 2009 and a further 3.8 hectares of raised bog restored in 2021 which is up to 6m deep. Part of the recently acquired raised bog area is species rich with typical bog vegetation such as *Sphagnum* moss, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*. This is a known site for a priority butterfly species, Large Heath *Coenonympha tullia* and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene*, both on the Scottish Biodiversity List and have UK BAP Status. Elephant Hawk-moth *Deilephila elpenor* and Red-necked Footman *Atolmis rubricollis* are two of the many moth species which occur here. I have recorded a number of hoverfly species, two in particular are *Sericomyia silentis*, a bog specialist, and *Xylota segnis*, seen prospecting for egg-laying sites amongst the roots of windblown conifers bordering the raised bog. The restoration area contrasts markedly with neighbouring peat extraction sites in Midlothian which are now devoid of any vegetation or wildlife, and their vast store of carbon is being released when the peat is extracted and sold for garden compost.

There are two ruined buildings on one of the railway paths which were built in the early 1940s as part of a network of Royal Naval Armament Depots. One of these buildings is used as a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* roost in winter. There are nesting Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* and several other summer migrant warblers including Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea* are a

constant sight and sound when walking over the heathland in the summer, and I saw several singing male Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*. Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and Great-spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* also nest in the woodland areas.

But the highlight and most exciting event for me took place this summer – finding Sabre Wasp *Rhyssa persuasoria* on each of four visits throughout July.

I had never heard of Sabre Wasps before, let alone seen one. I was looking at this pile of logs, wondering if it might be a suitable lunch stop spot for an upcoming Edinburgh Natural History Society (“ENHS”) field trip that I was to lead, when I saw movement, a long thin black and white insect with orange-red legs. I googled on my iPhone exactly that description, and Mr Google produced Sabre Wasp straight away, the largest Ichneumon wasp in Europe. I saw more movement and there was another, and finally a third slightly apart from the first two. With a bit more googling I realised



the first two were female and the third a male, seemingly watching over. Certainly he took no part in any of what followed, presumably he had done his bit! The two females, I realised later, were vying for the best grubs buried in the dead wood.



NBN Conference 2022

We are thrilled to be returning to a face-to-face event for this year’s NBN Conference, which will take place at the Natural History Museum, London, on 9 November. The theme is “Making data work for nature”.

We thought long and hard about the format and because so many attendees of our last two online events had missed an in-person conference, in particular, having the opportunity to network, we decided to revert to our standard format this year, albeit one day rather than two.

We have chosen London as the venue, as in keeping with moving the conference around the country each year, we were due to hold the event in the south. We understand that might make it difficult for our Scottish colleagues to attend, but we intend to use Facebook live to “stream” some of the presentations. Of course, it would be wonderful to see you there in person!

Information on the conference can be found on the NBN Trust website: <https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/nbn-conference-2/nbn-conference-2022/>

NBN Atlas – Fit for the Future Project

The NBN Trust’s Fit For The Future project (FFTF) will upgrade the NBN Atlas and re-align it with the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA). The new NBN Atlas will be easier to maintain and able to adapt to the NBN’s future needs. Improvements will enable the NBN Trust to manage increases in data volume and different types of data, e.g. from eDNA studies.

The project started in April 2022 and will run through until October 2023.

For regular updates on the project on the NBN Atlas FFTF project: <https://nbnatlas.org/about-nbn-atlas/fit-for-the-future-project/>

NBN Trust Strategy 2022-2027

The NBN Trust published its 2022 – 2027 strategy – “Making data work for nature” – in May 2022.

The new strategy takes us into the NBN Trust’s third decade and celebrates the fifth anniversary of the launch of the NBN Atlas, one of the world’s largest repositories of publicly available biodiversity data.

We have only a few years to bring about the changes that are needed to address the biodiversity crisis in the UK. The NBN Trust’s new strategy sets out our ambitions and our commitment to helping make this happen and we want to do it with you, our partners in the Network.

You can download the Strategy at: <https://nbn.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/strategy/>

iNaturalistUK User Group

The next meeting is on Thursday 22 September between 2 and 4 pm.

If you are interested in attending the meeting and are not already a member of the Group, please contact us: <https://nbn.org.uk/inaturalistuk/inaturalist-uk-user-group/>

Recorder 6 news

The latest news from the Recorder6 Steering Group was issued in July. You can read all the information on the NBN Trust website: <https://nbn.org.uk/news/recorder-6-news/>

In rural areas it is even harder, as human populations are more thinly spread and greater travel is necessary to meet. In one region I've been involved in, the same faces were committee members of the local amphibian and reptile group, bat group and badger group, further diluting the available time and effort available to each group. Good on them for keeping the flags flying though!

I have a sense that bat groups today are not as active as they were a decade or more ago (I hope I'm wrong) and that is very worrying. [The Bat Conservation Trust](http://www.facebook.com/Davidsbatblog/) are active in encouraging and supporting people to set up new groups and in running projects intended to raise awareness and encourage the creation and development of bat groups. Here in Scotland we have had a series of highly active [Scottish Bat Officers](http://davidbatblog.blogspot.com), funded by NatureScot, who have done some superb work.

So what's the answer? Bat groups are **essential** to successful conservation. If we don't have gangs of enthusiastic bat-fanatics manning stalls at events, leading bat walks and helping roost owners and if we don't ensure that the next generation of these members are being inspired and trained, who will take up the slack? The SNCOs don't even have proper funding for their core roles. The NGOs never recovered financially from the last recession and we may be heading for another.

It seems to me that the only way forward is for everyone who cares about bats to do what they can, to

contribute where they're able: even the smallest contribution of time and effort is nonetheless a contribution. Perhaps in this 21st century world, when our lives are increasingly time-squeezed, there needs to be bigger committees of people taking on smaller roles within a group?

Or perhaps someone in south-west England (where he now lives) could hunt down Stuart and clone him for us? Lots of him

www.facebook.com/Davidsbatblog/
<http://davidbatblog.blogspot.com>

FIELD STUDIES COUNCIL

FSC has centres from Devon to Argyll offering a huge range of wildlife and natural history courses. These cover almost all the larger taxa (i.e. not microscopic yet!) from arachnids, through fungi, botany, freshwater invertebrates, birds, trees, lichens, you name it. Always run by experts and well organised and resourced.

Courses may be for beginners, intermediate or advanced. Many this year were run virtually but others are in the field and laboratory. Many BRISC bursary recipients have benefited from FSC courses.

So win a BRISC Bursary (Jan 2023) and get ready for some learning.

<https://www.field-studies-council.org/>



Photo 2 pair of Sabre Wasp *Rhyssa persuasoria*

Sabre Wasps are easy to identify; the striking pattern of small white spots along the entire length of the thin, black body, long orange-red legs and large size (10–40 mm). But the female of the species is the most spectacular, her whole body measures approx 40-50mm with an ovipositor more than double that length. If you look closely you may also see the Sabre Wasp has transverse ridges on the top of the thorax, at the front, which they use to



Photo 3 Sabre Wasp *Rhyssa persuasoria* antennae tapping

brace themselves as they emerge from the wooden burrow in which they have pupated. They are commonly seen around log piles and particularly in pine forests where their host species, Wood Wasps *Siricidae* and Longhorn Beetles *Cerambycidae*, have buried their larvae in the dead wood. In the three sites where I found them they were using Lodgepole Pine.

The female taps on the wood with her antennae to detect movement and scent emanating from the buried larvae's wooden tunnels. She then uses her long egg-laying 'tail' to drill a probe hole. She may drill a few probe holes before deciding on a suitable position, and then drills as deep as she can. But how do these Sabre Wasps manage to



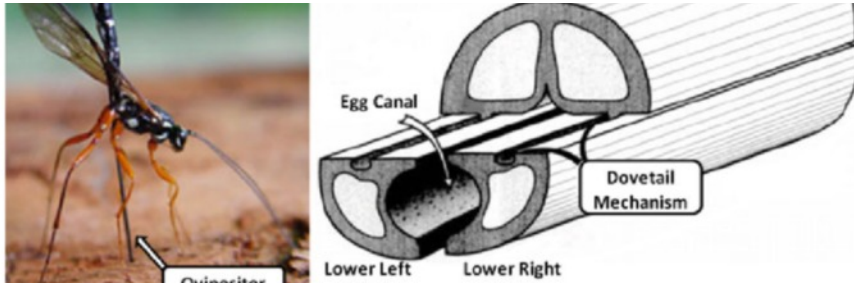
Photo 4a Sabre Wasp *Rhyssa persuasoria* with-drawing ovipositor

drill through dead wood? Scientists have learned that the probe's outer skin or cuticle contains Zinc and/or Manganese metals. These metals make the drill strong and prevents it from wearing down during the drilling

process. The probe consists of two parallel segments, visible in my photo (photo 4a) with the strengthened drill held aloft while the finer ovipositor penetrates the drilled tunnel to reach the host grub. See diagram below

feeds on nectar or honeydew. The flight period is July/August.

On my last visit, my ENHS field trip, the Sabre Wasp had become the target species. So you can guess my relief,



Courtesy of Boris Hrasovec, Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb, Croatia.
Diagrammatic representation of the oblique view of a transversely cut ovipositor

After 30-60 minutes, if successful, she will breach the tunnel wall, sting and paralyse the larva and lay an egg on its body. The Sabre Wasp grub begins to eat the host alive, starting with the muscle tissue first, and the vital organs last. This keeps the host alive for as long as possible and therefore ensures the food supply is fresh. After this macabre process, the Sabre Wasp grub pupates. Once the adult emerges it

after not finding it on the original pile of logs where I had thought to have lunch, at finding it on at another log pile, where we did actually have lunch, all the while watching four females, possibly five, prospecting with their antennae for wood wasp grubs, finding and then drilling holes and ovipositing. What a thrill!

Biodiversity being threatened.....

Save Coul Links <https://www.buglife.org.uk/campaigns/save-coul-links/>

"In June 2022, a Proposal of Application Notice for an 18-hole golf course on the protected dunes of Coul Links was submitted to The Highland Council. This comes just two years after the Scottish Government turned down a previous application because of the damage it would have caused to nationally and internationally protected sites for nature."

An alliance of many conservation groups continues to fight the application.

What does the future hold for bat groups?

David Dodds (April 2022)

Like many licensed bat-workers, my journey commenced with membership of a local bat group. I was lucky enough to also get involved with a couple of research projects, which expanded my opportunities, but many of my earliest experiences with bats were gained by helping Lothians Bat Group with things like bat box checks, roost counts and hibernation surveys.

Bat groups have long been at the heart of bat conservation: local groups of like-minded people, coming together to devote time to monitoring and conserving bats, to encouraging the public to understand and care about them and of course, to training new bat-workers and giving them opportunities to work towards their own licenses.

Success for bat groups has always been a hit or miss affair. Like most voluntary groups, it all depends on having enough people who want to put in as well as to take out; on people with organisation and leadership skills and most of all, on people who can spare some of that precious commodity, **time**. Groups need committees of people, able to work together to arrange events, drive the group forward and inspire others to take part.

When I was first actively involved Lothians Bat Group had the benefit of Dr. Stuart Smith, who ran the group as

a sort of benign dictator. Stuart was a great combination of encouraging mentor and organisational demon, so much so that everyone was happy with the status quo and things went swimmingly, until Stuart retired and moved away. Happily, the group is still active, unlike in some areas, where groups have folded. Like so many voluntary groups we have a committee of **very busy people**. We all have lots of other commitments: family, children, work etc and inevitably the bat group has to take its turn. I suspect we all feel slightly guilty for not doing more, but there are only so many hours in the day.



Many of us who hold bat licenses also work in conservation and consultancy and, let's be honest, you have to be phenomenally keen to spend five days a week working with bats and still be willing to go out and do voluntary bat work. Many of us do it, but when I think back to how much more voluntary bat-work I did before I worked in the field it's quite thought-provoking.

Home and Away

wildlife movements and migrations



Saturday 19 November 2022

Nicolson Square Edinburgh EH8 9BX

Ticket: £12.50 (+£1.56 booking)
Student ticket: £8.00 (+£1.21 booking)

For a programme and to book, please visit

www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk

TWIC is a company registered in Scotland (No SC234339) & a registered Scottish Charity SC034113. This project is supported by NatureScot



Editor's column

You, I hope, will have noticed that there has been a years' interval between newsletters. This is due to a number of personal

reasons and also COVID impacts meant that I lost one of my best recruiting grounds – chat and persuasion at conferences.

The second issue is that we have no Chair's column. This is because currently BRISC has no official Chair, something which cannot continue indefinitely. There is more about this in the discussion of the future of BRISC discussed on pages 9-11. Please take time to read and respond, as we need your feedback to decide which route to take in future.

So this issue's main article, is thanks to Joanie McNaughton a frequent visitor to Leadburn Community Woodland, lying 12 miles south of Edinburgh. It is a place that has garnered much recording since 2007 when an area of fairly desolate bog in the South Esk valley was bought from the Forestry Scotland. More information can be found at <https://leadburnwood.com/>

I feel it's a cheat but I asked David Dodds for one of his old blogs. He is such an entertaining writer and this article captures well the frustrating rise and fall in groups. The Borders Badger Group for example, rose in the early 2000s, fell away and it is now back again. It always takes a few dedicated and enthusiastic people to get and keep something going. Another good example is the East of Scotland Butterfly activities who can be followed on their Facebook page This is such a feast of excitement, whether it is people who are new to identifying and recording or old hands going further and finding more records of their favourite obsessions. This

led me to wondering, and asking Chris Stamp of Purple Hairstreak fame, what role social (and other) media has played in developing knowledge and commitment to recording these species that historically have had low coverage. He thinks it important. I hope he will write on this for the next issue.

Wasps must be on my mind because I noticed Highland Biological Recording Group is compiling a Wasp Atlas. There are eight species of wasp recorded in Highland but they are particularly interested in the Saxon Wasp (*Dolichovespula saxonica*) which has been spreading northwards since 1987 when first recorded in Surrey. I confess I am very ignorant of wasps, thinking only of the yellow and black striped varieties - the Common Wasp (*Vespa vulgaris*) the Hornet (*Vespa crabro*) and the Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina*) - a serious pest in Asturias (where I am) but not yet in UK I think. Some considerable googling later I learn of course that 'wasp' covers a huge diversity in this Hymenopteran group. It also includes many solitary species (Euminae). Plenty of information at: Bees, Wasps and Ants (BWARS) <https://www.bwars.com/>

Naturespot

<https://www.naturespot.org.uk/>

Obviously the relaxation in COVID rules has meant the take up of bursaries has been affected but two articles from students are included. BRISC has plenty of money for Bursaries so do encourage anyone interested to look early next year. In fact offering BRISC newsletters especially to likely students attending conferences may be useful. Contact me if you want back issues (after mid-November however).

NOTE: BRISC AGM - November 23rd

BRISC Bursaries for natural history courses

Louisa Maddison

Along with the Glasgow Natural History Society, BRISC has been offering bursaries for many years now, to encourage people across Scotland to learn new skills to aid biological recording. The past two years have been challenging for us all, and this includes the usual delivery of our bursaries. This year we were pleased running again and have awarded bursaries for courses on subjects including bees, beetles, mammals and birds. Some of these courses were attended digitally which we were pleased to be able to support as well as in person field courses.



A successful 2020 BRISC bursary recipient learning about bryophytes in Preston Montfort Field Studies Centre

We are going to make some changes to how the bursaries are offered, and from this year BRISC will be providing up to £400 for each bursary some of

which can be used for travel costs. Though field courses do run in Scotland there is a wider range of courses across the UK and we are keen to support those who wish to attend further afield. We look forward to continue working with GNHS and hope to be able to help other groups by awarding bursaries on their behalf. We will also have a course sponsored by the Inverness Botany Group this year.



In good company on field recording - Juniper Craigs, Peebleshire, © TWIC

!!!!!! PLEASE NOTE !!!!!

The application form will be out soon, with a closing date of 31 January 2023.

Keep an eye out for announcements on our social media pages and via email and please send it on to anyone you know who would like to attend a field course and learn something new.

Wind up BRISC and transfer its assets to another suitable body.

This process is outlined in the constitution. "If upon winding up or dissolution (except in the case of a reconstruction or amalgamation) of BRISC there remains, after the satisfaction of all BRISC debts and liabilities, any property or moneys, the same shall not be paid to or distributed among the members of BRISC but shall be given to or transferred to a charitable body or bodies having similar objectives, to be determined by the members at or before the time of dissolution, or in default thereof by a competent Court of Law; and if and so far as effect cannot be given to the aforesaid provision, then to some charitable object."

Option 3

Give BRISC a three-year probationary period to see if the current situation changes; if not then defer to option 2.

The Committee Decision

Option 1 has been, to an extent, going on for a few years and not yielding any results.

Option 2 cedes control of BRISCs' assets to a body not made up of the BRISC membership, The Committee felt this was not acceptable due to the size of BRISCs' assets.

The Committee feels that Option 3 is the best course of action and are willing to commit their time of that period. It would also allow the Committee to reduce BRISCs' assets, ensuring they are spent on activities that the

membership directly approve of such as continuing to facilitate the award of Bursaries and to increase their value BRISC needs to try and ensure the SBIF recommendations are delivered or at least begun. Additional funding beyond the £5000 already committed may be required. As BRISC started the SBIF process with its very existence, we as the Committee feel duty bound to try and see it through for as long as we can.

By the end of this three-year period (2025) BRISC will be 50 years old and it would be an appropriate time to write its history and wind the organisation up... or for it to become rejuvenated or to take on a new form that represents the current biological recording community in Scotland

Your views

Before any final decisions are made, we would like to hear the thoughts of our membership. Taking on board any feedback we receive, this proposal can be considered fully at the AGM and be voted on. If you would like to respond to this proposal, we welcome your views. You can email info@brisc.org.uk indicating your preferred option and detailing and reasoning or additional views you have. Please do so by Friday 11 November 2022.

BRISC Committee. August 2022.

minimum. A call for new Committee members has not yielded any new faces and so this situation is likely to continue.

This issue has caused reflection of what BRISC's role is in a biological data recording landscape and community that is so very different (in some ways!) from the last amendment to the constitution in 2000. There are a multiplicity of organisations taking forward biological recording schemes for multiple species groups, online species recording is the norm, the availability of identification information online is enormous, and the profile of biological recording is high. So that side to BRISC's work has become largely redundant.

Likewise, Recorder News served a niche that is now filled with many tax-specific publications, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find new content; there may not be need to produce it in its current form.

What hasn't changed since the formation of BRISC in 1975 is the lack of "...integrated local and national structures for collecting, analysing and sharing biological data to inform decision making processes to benefit biodiversity." Which formed the bases of the Petition (PE1229) to Scottish Government in 2008. The creation of SBIF and the production of its recommendations has created an incredibly strong case for delivering the aspirations contained in the petition text, but still it hasn't been delivered. No organisation, apart from BRISC, is completely focussed on

trying to make this happen. Therefore, our role is pivotal.

Along with the Glasgow Natural History Society we also provide bursaries that have been given to tens of individuals that have allowed them to increase their knowledge of various species and groups and hopefully to record them. These days such bursaries are like hen's teeth and so are vitally important in upskilling current or future biological recorders.

BRISCs' assets currently total over £14,000. With £5000 earmarked for the SBIF Better Biodiversity Data Project, we retain £9000 for bursaries and further project support. BRISCs' running costs are very low and we have been operating at a small profit of late.

Future Scenarios

At our last Committee Meeting in April we discussed various potential scenarios, taking into consideration the above. We thought it wise to consider what the future may hold for BRISC so that our members can consider how we wish to move forward.

Option 1

Carry on in the current way and hope that a new chair and committee members can be found.

Option 2.

Carry on in the current way and hope that a new chair and committee members can be found.

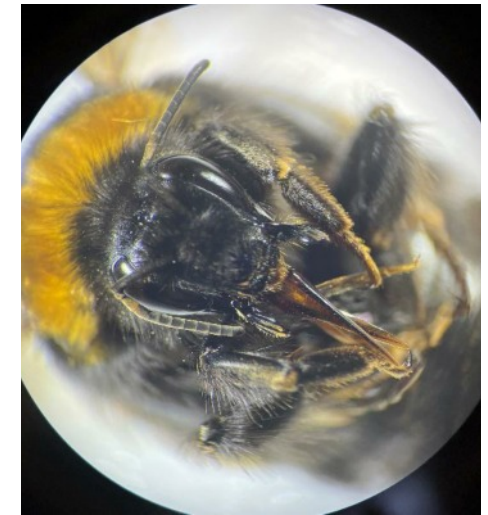
BURSARY REPORTS

Surveying Terrestrial Invertebrates

Alex Bauman

This past May I attended a Field Studies Council course on Surveying Terrestrial Invertebrates for Biological Recording with the help of a bursary from the Glasgow Natural History Society and BRISC. I've always been interested in nature, and over the past several years have grown a particular fondness for insects. I've reared caterpillars, pinned dragonflies and beetles, admired the exoskeleton of a cicada clinging to a tree. On hikes my eyes are often to the ground, on the lookout for any tiny critters about. As an ecology and conservation MSc student at the University of Aberdeen, I've learned a great deal about the functioning, monitoring, and protection of ecosystems, but this course, led by entomologist Pete Boardman, was a unique deep dive into terrestrial invertebrates specifically. Over four days we learned about the importance of biodiversity and recording, the ethics of collecting, and how to manage habitats to benefit invertebrates. On field trips into the beautiful Shropshire countryside, we took part in sweep netting, constructed pitfall traps, examined the contents of a moth trap – a true treasure trove. Interesting specimens were collected and brought back to the classroom where we learned how to properly pin, label, and record our finds. We examined our specimens under a microscope, which revealed incredible details

missed with the naked eye. The furry face of a bumblebee, the wing venation of a hoverfly, nearly everything looks magical when you can look so closely.



Buff tailed bumblebee,
Bombus terrestris.

Just a few short weeks after returning from FSC Preston Montford, I was off to a farm in Aberdeenshire where a classmate and I spent twelve days setting up pitfalls and pan traps to measure insect biodiversity for our MSc dissertations. While emptying the contents of a pan trap one of our last field days, I recognized a familiar face -- *Scathophaga stercoraria*, the yellow dung fly. This was one of the species I'd gotten up close and personal with as I identified and pinned a specimen during the FSC course, now part of the beginnings of a personal insect collection. Ahead of me was the daunting task of attempting to identify a great

number of specimens, which I've only just begun, but recognising this particular species was comforting and encouraging, and I felt incredibly grateful for the experience I'd gained during the course. I have so much more to learn in my journey into entomology, but Surveying Terrestrial Invertebrates has been a crucial stepping stone that has helped me to become more knowledgeable, confident, and appreciative of these fascinating creatures.

Discovering Beetles

Michelle Stamp

Earlier this year I attended the Discovering beetles online course run by Chris Foster and Dan Asaw. I am fascinated by beetles but they are such a large family that it can be difficult to know where to start with them. I already use pitfall traps to find Carrion beetles which are quite large, charismatic beetles (in my opinion) and quite easy to identify. The smaller ones are however can be a bit more difficult.

On the course we were introduced to the basic details that can lead you to the species, such as antennal type and leg anatomy and from there we progressed to the ecological roles of beetles as predators, herbivores, decomposers and recyclers, and pollinators.

One of my particular favourite pieces of homework was to take a photograph in my garden and then annotate it with all

the habitats that different groups of beetles may be found.

Our final assignment was to use a specified collection method to find beetles and to write a short paragraph about each one that we found. Unfortunately we didn't have a very warm spring and beetles were not exactly pouring out of their expected habitats, I needed to put in some graft to find my beetles. I had hoped to find something dead that I could bait a pitfall trap with to make the task easier, but carrion was also scarce on the ground. I eventually managed to find a Seven-spot ladybird (*Coccinella septempunctata*) on a towel on the washing line during a brief sunny spell and then five



Black clock beetle (*Pterostichus madidus*)

Black clock beetles (*Pterostichus madidus*) all hiding under a reptile mat in my garden. My assignment wasn't exactly brimming with diversity.

However, I found the course incredibly useful as I regularly take volunteers out to do work in woodlands and participate in biological recording, and with my new found knowledge of basic beetle shapes, anatomy and feeding



Nettle weevil

habits, I am now able to make educated guesses as to the species of beetle we have found, or indeed if it even is a beetle at all. Carrion beetles are still my favourites, but when running bioblitz's and bug hunting, the knowledge I have gained from the course has saved me many hours of research. Biological recording is an important aspect of my work and we have run two bioblitz's so far this year and have another two coming up which will contribute important records for the sites we visit. I think it is important that we should all have a little knowledge about the organisms that share our surroundings so that we can appreciate them and the roles they play and the FSC courses and BRISC bursaries allow everyone to learn something.



The Future of BRISC

We (the BRISC Committee) are considering the future of BRISC and drafting a proposal to put to the membership at the AGM (November 23rd). We are circulating a draft document now as we wish the membership of BRISC to be aware of the Committee's thinking plus we need the input of our membership to make this proposal reflective of your thoughts on this crucial matter. In this document we have detailed the current situation and have identified three options for BRISC's future. We are asking all members to email info@brisc.org.uk with their thoughts and any suggestions on the proposal by the 11th November.

The Current Situation

Since our previous Chair stood down, we have not been able to identify a new chair of BRISC which causes a constitutional issue as well as a practical one. The constitution states we must have four Officers; Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary. The last three are long-standing Committee members, and we are now lacking a Chair. As an interim arrangement we are continuing to meet with new chair for each meeting, this being a volunteer from the Committee. How we deal with this issue at the next AGM, has still to be discussed by the Committee.

Even with the identification and appointment of a new chair it would not solve the issue that of the Committee having a limited capacity to deliver more than the constitutional