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# Recorder News

## CONTENTS

<b>Records from Roofs.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chairs column.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Editors piece.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Bursary Report.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SBIF Blog.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SBIF Update.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Book Review.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>NBN News.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>BRISC information.....</b>	<b>12</b>

benefits – including building thermoregulation and water filtration – there has been surprisingly little research into the ecological benefits of green roofing. Not one Scottish study exists, and those occurring elsewhere in the UK have focused largely on ground dwelling invertebrates and bees. This is worrying, as many conservation charities now promote installation of the structures on the grounds that they support urban wildlife. To test these claims, I decided to spend last summer on various green roofs around Edinburgh, recording the pollinators.

## Records from Roofs

### Apithanny Bourne

Green roofing has been popular in many European countries since the 1960's but has only started to catch on here in the UK relatively recently. A quick walk up Edinburgh's Calton Hill reveals the city is something of a hotspot for the trend, with a number of businesses now adorned in greenery. Whilst there are many well-known



Seven green roof owners agreed to take part in the study and were visited weekly from June through to September. This covered the peak flight periods for Hymenoptera, Lepidoptera and Syrphidae, which were recorded along a 10m transect. Seven ground level partner sites were also sampled and represented the closest area of accessible greenspace to each green roof site. I'm pleased to report that green roofs supported a far greater abundance and diversity of pollinators than expected. No significant difference was detected in pollinator communities between roof and ground level habitat – indicating green roofs to be a worthwhile extension of existing greenspace. Roof area and height were also found to be unimportant – diversity of flowering plants was a far greater predictor of pollinator abundance and diversity. This is an important finding, suggesting that popular "Sedum carpet" roofs, may not be the best choice for conserving pollinators.

A total of 21 species were recorded foraging on rooftops, including many other invertebrates not considered in this study. Seven species of common bumblebee were abundant and records of leafcutter bees (*Megachile willughbiella*) on one roof were a particular highlight. Four species of Lepidoptera were spotted on the more florally diverse green roofs – with small tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*) and small white (*Pieris rapae*) being the most prevalent. To my surprise one green roof also hosted breeding common



field grasshoppers (*Chorthippus brunneus*) and a very curious family of ducks.



Whilst this study had a limited sample size and many confounding variables – it has made a good first attempt to address gaps in the literature. We now know that green roofing in Edinburgh is providing foraging habitat for a diverse community of pollinators. This is even more promising considering that the rooftops were not necessary

created with pollinators in mind. London alone boasts over 26,000 hectares of unused roof space – cities therefore offer considerable potential in providing habitat for declining pollinators, without sacrificing valuable ground level space. As urban populations continue to rise and connection to nature rises on the political agenda, greenspace availability will become even more important. I believe that green roofing can support both people and pollinators, whilst offering exciting opportunities to engage people with nature. This summer I'll be venturing back onto rooftops again with an ambitious citizen science project in mind – I can't wait to see what's up there.

a number of excellent speakers lined up on this topic including Ashleigh Whiffin (entomology, National Museums Scotland), Elspeth Haston (botany, The Royal Botanic Garden) and Richard Sutcliffe (museum collections, Glasgow Museums Resource Centre). So far this year I have been monitoring moths, with two wonderful species



Emperor moth (*Saturnia pavonia*)  
at Low Moss



**Chairman's  
Column**  
April 2019

I write these words following a stunning few days of weather over the Easter bank holiday weekend. Sun, warmth and south and easterly winds have resulted in the appearance of butterflies such as orange-tips and green hairstreaks, the arrival of many migrant birds, leaves emerging on trees, and the flowering of plants.

seen near Glasgow. The first in late March was Rannoch brindled beauty, with a number of males and females. Both can be found through the day on fence posts with the females flightless "fuzz balls". The second species, emperor moth, appeared last weekend, with large numbers of males flying over moorland searching for females. I used the trick of a pheromone lure which brought in many moths. Later in the year I try the same approach with another moth I wish to see, Welsh clearwing.

We are starting to plan the **BRISC autumn conference**, which will take place at the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church. The conference will focus on **'Museums, Collections & Biological Recording'**, and we already have



Rannoch Brindled Beauty (*Lycia lapponaria*)  
male above and female below



Finally, best wishes, and good recording through 2019

Information from Butterfly Conservation website - the Rannoch Brindled Beauty is a UK BAP Priority Species and UK Scarce (Nationally Scarce A).



### Editors piece

I have heard quite a few references recently on radio & TV programmes, to the way people can get involved in nature through biological recording. Farming Today twice, and another was the most delightful and fascinating Erica MacAlister on the beauty of flies. I recommend listening to her story on 'The Life Scientific' via the BBC Sounds app. I'm not sure that the links to recording apps like iRecord, are well publicised, but the activity is obviously becoming more mainstream. Erica gave a good plug for the data sets already collected by 'amateurs' (a term she didn't like) and because everything matters in ecology, she encourages us all to collect more!

Rachel Tierney recently gave me a "random" idea for the newsletter - "to ask the LERCs for the top 5 or 10 species most frequently recorded in their patch. .... to see what the top species are across the country and if there is overlap or totally unique areas and compile a Scotland list of most recorded species". I have barely followed this up so far, though SWSEIC replied. To be continued....

This issue comprises news and updates on the Scottish national data scene with an update by Rachel Tierney on SBIF, a previously published blog by Glenn Roberts and our regular NBN news. However, many thanks again to those who stepped in with offers of the other articles.

In trying to keep this edition to 12 pages I have missed out events - so please look at BRISC website for a good start. There is a lot going on and some which have happened.

## **BRISC BURSARY REPORT**

### **Bryophyte Identification**

**Logan Johnson**

During a weekend in late October 2018, I headed to the Kindrogan Field Studies Centre, on the edge of the Cairngorms to attend a Bryophytes for Beginners Course, with thanks to a BRISC Bursary that I received earlier in the year. Previous to starting the course I knew nothing about Bryophytes, or for that matter what the word even meant, I had to google it to be completely honest. But I decided to take this course as I wanted to know more about this subject that I had scarcely come across in the past.

The weekend was generally focused around a mixture of fieldwork and laboratory work, outside for collecting our specimens and seeing them in their natural environment, while the inside work was to allow for us to identify the species with guides and microscopes while also receiving important lessons on Bryophytes and how to go about identifying them.

Both fieldwork sessions were generally spent in nearby woodland scoping out the various Mosses, Liverworts & Sphagnum that could be found in the area. Day one was an intense day personally as we managed to rack up around 60 species of Bryophyte within a few short hours. At the time it certainly felt like a bit of information overload. However, all this knowledge would be put to good use on day two, where most of these species showed up again and I even felt confident to attempt to try and identify some of them.

It was certainly an eye-opening course, and one which I'll make good use of in the future, hopefully back home in Shetland I will get the chance to explore more of the

isles and discover their Bryophytes, ideally filling in the blanks where records are sparse and allowing for a better understanding of Bryophyte coverage in Shetland.

Another way I'd like to make use of my knowledge gained from this course and the coming years would be to pass on what I've learned to others. Eventually by doing this it could help for a local group of people becoming knowledgeable in Bryophytes and allowing for Shetland to be better covered by recorders.

It will be a while before I can start my project back in Shetland, so in the meantime I am meeting with other Bryophyters in North-east Scotland while I'm studying in Aberdeen. Locally a few of us who share the interest have got together and are aiming to meet regularly and attempt to identify the Bryophytes of Aberdeenshire and beyond. Currently our first informal meeting is at the Muir of Dinnet NNR in late January 2019, this I would hope would be the start of a long-term set of meetings. Maybe in the future it could develop into something bigger and more formal. We will see.



## **SBIF from a Local Record Centre's perspective**

**Glenn Roberts**

**North East Scotland Biological Records Centre Co-ordinator**

The outcome of the SBIF Review is very important for Scotland's biodiversity. There is now a clear opportunity for the Scottish Government to act upon the Review's recommendations and revolutionise the way that biological data is produced, managed and analysed to ensure informed decision making and to benefit Scotland's wildlife and habitats.

Since I started working at the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC) in 2007 there has always been discussion about the need for a sustainable strategy for managing biological data across the whole of Scotland. Indeed, that need has been around for much longer than just those 12 years. A disjointed situation has persisted where some parts of Scotland are well served and covered by a Local Records Centre (LRC) but other areas do not have an LRC at all. NESBReC was set up in 2000 and has steadily forged good working relationships with individual recorders and the local authorities of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City in order to stimulate recording and to aid the use of species and habitat data in the local decision making process. Presently, there are close to 1.5 million records in the NESBReC database that are searched regularly for a range of interests, such as planning applications, research, site

management and even general interest. However, just to the south, the local authority area of Angus has no LRC and this situation is replicated in many parts of Scotland. This patchwork situation is clearly unfair and does not serve the whole of Scotland well.

I think I speak for most Scottish LRCs when I say that the very least outcome we want to see from the Review is that there is full coverage of the whole of Scotland and that support for the framework is sustainable. The Review identifies the preferred model as being one where financial support comes from central government in Scotland through an environmental levy. I think that this is a clear and simple solution. It is the only solution that will lead to achieving truly open biological data in Scotland, something that is surely the preferred goal.

The long and detailed SBIF Review consultation process highlighted the importance of working at the local level to inspire and support the general public in appreciating their local wildlife, recording what they see and then submitting those records for future use. Existing LRCs have been doing that since they started out and the SBIF Review recommends that there should be such regional hubs covering the whole of Scotland. Where these hubs are to be located exactly is up for discussion but there may well need to be as many as 10, under the supervision of an overarching Scottish co-ordinating body, most likely an NBN Scotland.

There are also potential benefits to society, not just to wildlife or data users. The regional hubs can help people to engage with nature, increase awareness of biodiversity and encourage people to care about their natural environment. In addition, people who are actively engaged in recording may become more active physically, as well as mentally – all important in terms of health and well-being.

Of course, at this stage the SBIF Review is nothing more than a set of well researched and devised recommendations and we can only hope that the Scottish Government grasps this opportunity to effect change. We all now need to do our bit to make sure that the Review remains on the agenda, encouraging the Scottish Government to discuss the issues and make an informed decision.

supporting the SBIF Chair and SBIF Advisory Group to communicate the recommendations of the Review, working closely with the Scottish LERCs, NBN Trust and BRC to identify priorities and opportunities for early or phased adoption of recommendations from the review.

The Review continues to gain traction with key stakeholders and in May we will be meeting with Gillian Martin, Convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) committee in Holyrood to discuss the importance of a supported, sustainable definitive evidence base for biodiversity information across Scotland. At the time of writing we are still to receive a formal response from Scottish Government on the SBIF Review Recommendations, and we look forward to working with Scottish Government to plan our approach over the coming months.

It was great to have got out on the road and attend a series of Recorder's Conferences held by NESBReC, SWSEIC and Tayside Biodiversity Partnership in March. Speaking at these conferences once again highlighted the energy and commitment from recorders to help 'unpickle the pickle' and improve biological data flows. We thank everyone for their continued support to this project and we are confident that, through maintaining our joined-up approach to seeking one common solution, we can successfully

*Continued on page 9*

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## **SBIF update - April 2019**

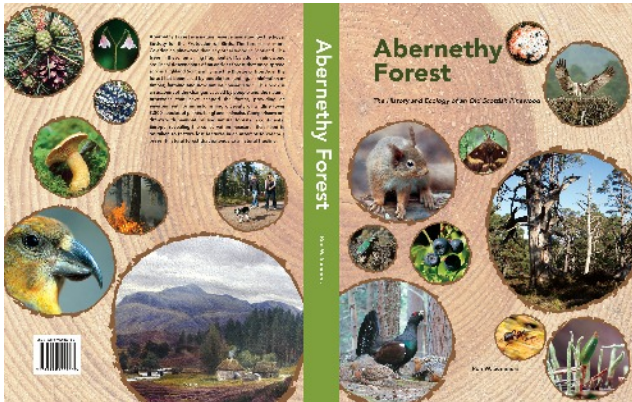
### **Rachel Tierney**

Its been a busy few months behind the scenes and we are grateful to SNH for the extension of the SBIF Development Officer's post for a further 12 months which is enabling us to keep momentum going. The post, with me, Rachel Tierney will continue to be hosted at Scottish Wildlife Trust. Over the next year my focus will be on

## Book Review

**Ro Scott**

*Abernethy Forest the history and ecology of an old Scottish pinewood* by Ron W. Summers, published by RSPB. Price £29.99. ISBN 978-1-9999882-0-3.



The book begins with a chapter on the nature of boreal forests and Abernethy's place within this biome. There then follows a history of Abernethy Forest from the retreat of the ice, through colonisation by vegetation, changing ownerships and land uses over the intervening centuries, from woodland exploitation via settlement for farming, through the Victorian sporting era, right up to the present day emphasis on nature conservation. A chapter on fire explains its importance as a driver of boreal forest processes.

The final third of the book sets Abernethy in its context as a pinewood reserve, and explores the evolving approach to conservation management

Abernethy Forest will be well-known to many BRISC members as the second-largest RSPB Reserve (after Forsinard Flows) and the largest remaining example of Caledonian pine forest. Although this book is not a treatise on recording, or an ID guide, it is firmly based on the results of concentrated biological recording over a long time period, and therefore merits a review here.

Ron Summers guides the reader through the incredible inventory of species recorded at Abernethy, with chapters on each of the major taxonomic groups: plants higher and lower; fungi; lichens; invertebrates and vertebrates. These chapters cover all of the expected specialities and rarities of the Caledonian pine forest, without neglecting the matrix of commoner species within which they are embedded. But this is much more than a treatise on species and habitats.

since it came into the RSPB's ownership in 1988.

The book contains a fabulous array of illustrations, from the author's own (and others') photographs to old maps, paintings and documents, which serve to bring alive the wonder of this magical place. Particularly intriguing are several pairs of photos of the same view at different times. These clearly illustrate the changes which have taken place in vegetation cover, tree regeneration, and recovery from erosion. In addition to the wildlife, due acknowledgement is given to the many human characters who have been involved with the exploration, exploitation and management of Abernethy Forest over the years.

Appendices give lists of common and scientific names of the species mentioned, place names with their meanings and grid references, human census information, loch



chemistry, some meteorological data, locations of archaeological sites, and methods of ecological study. There is a separate glossary of technical terms.

*Continued from page 7*

start making the steps forward that are so desperately needed.

The book has been produced to a high standard; it is beautifully bound; the smooth high-quality paper means that there are no fuzzy photos; and there is a remarkable lack of typos. All facts are meticulously referenced - the list of references extends to nearly 800 publications. Scientific information is presented in a way which would be comprehensible to any non-scientist, with many clear graphs and diagrams. My only quibble would be that, as a large-format hardback, it is a bit unwieldy for bedtime reading!

### **So, how can you help?**

Talk to us, tell us your ideas, and keep raising awareness of the SBIF Review within your circles and communities. This is a collaborative project and we need to have a unified, loud voice to ensure we keep on being heard. If you fancy writing a short article for the SBIF Blog (<https://nbn.org.uk/blogs/sbifblog/>) please get in touch.

With its multiple designations Abernethy Forest is one of the most special places in the UK. The author's love for it shines through. This book is a worthy introduction to Abernethy for anyone still in ignorance, and a treasure trove of information for even the best-informed native pinewood aficionado. It is remarkable value for its price. – We have the RSPB to thank for funding its publication and, of course, the author for writing it.

Additionally, we are populating our events schedule for the next few months and so, if you would like an SBIF update at any events, meetings or gatherings please get in touch and we will try and get out to you.

Contact: Rachel  
[rtierney@Scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:rtierney@Scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk)



Abernethy Forest (SNH) from [www.nature.scot](http://www.nature.scot)



Twinflower from <http://cairngormsnature.co.uk>



## **NBN Atlas News**

In order to allow users to stay up to date with NBN Atlas developments we have created a NBN Atlas news page on the NBN website <https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/latest-stories-from-our-network/nbn-atlas-news/>

## **NBN update for BRISC**

### **April 2019**

The National Biodiversity Network Trust has been awarded £190,500 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to build its resilience and sustainability

The National Biodiversity Network Trust (NBN Trust), the charity that promotes and facilitates the collection, sharing and use of wildlife data, through the NBN, has received a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £190,500 to explore how it can become more sustainable.

In particular, the NBN Trust will have the resources to be more responsive to the needs of users of the NBN Atlas and keep up to date with rapidly changing technological advances, as well as enthusing and engaging more people about the wonders of British wildlife.

Currently the NBN Atlas holds approximately 220 million species records across 43,000 species in 800 datasets. It aims to be the single source of high-quality wildlife data at the national level, making it the leading website to share, view, analyse and use this data for everyone from schoolchildren, students and academic researchers to commercial users, government agencies and the general public.

We have also just issued our first NBN Atlas newsletter, which will be sent to all registered NBN Atlas users on a six-monthly basis. If you are not a registered user you can still sign up for the newsletter on the NBN website <https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/latest-stories-from-our-network/nbn-atlas-news/nbn-atlas-news-sign-up/>

Some of our most recent NBN Atlas news includes: Enhanced access to sensitive records, How to Flag an issue on an occurrence record, New editing rights for data partners and an update on Spatial layers.

### **SBIF blogs**

Did you know that the NBN website features a section dedicated to Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF) blogs?

On the blogs you can explore opinion pieces from across the Scottish recording community and if you have been inspired by the SBIF Review and would like to share your story and write an opinion piece, then you can do so by contacting Rachel Tierney, SBIF Development Officer. Visit the NBN website to read more and for Rachel's contact details.

<https://nbn.org.uk/blogs/sbif-blog/>

## **Beta NBN Atlas Northern Ireland has launched for testing**

We are delighted to welcome the NBN Atlas Northern Ireland into the family, as this newest Atlas goes live!

With all the same features as the other partner NBN Atlases, the NBN Atlas Northern Ireland will bring together information on over 11,000 species from almost 3 million occurrence records.

NBN Atlas Northern Ireland is currently a beta version and we welcome comments and feedback on the Atlas as we now prepare for a formal launch at the end of May 2019. Please add any feedback and comments by 13/05/2019 to the NBN Atlas NI forum:

<https://forums.nbn.org.uk/viewforum.php?id=49>

You will need to register with the forum before you can add any comments.

## **NBN Trust has a new Chair**

At the February 2019 Board meeting, Michael Hassell retired as Chairman of the NBN Trust and Neil Hodges was welcomed as the new Chair.

Neil's background is in law, having trained and practiced at the law firm Allen & Overy and subsequently holding senior in-house roles at Barclays and, most recently, Zurich Insurance where he was General Counsel for ten years. He has significant experience of governance, commercial, compliance and management issues at team, executive and board levels.

Reflecting his interest in the natural world and environmental issues, Neil is currently pursuing a post-graduate course on environmental law with a focus on biodiversity and species/habitat protection.

## **Call for nominations – Honorary membership of NBN Trust**

The NBN Trust is seeking nominations for Honorary Members. Do you know someone who you think should receive this accolade?

Honorary Membership can be awarded to one or two persons each year and is agreed upon by the NBN Board of Trustees. They do not have to be a member or part of a member organisation to be nominated.

Nominations must be received by Friday 7 June 2019.

You can find out more on the NBN website: <https://nbn.org.uk/news/call-nominations-honorary-membership-nbn-2/>

## **NBN Conference 2019**

This year's NBN conference is taking place on Wednesday 13 and Thursday 14 November and will once again be held at the Albert Hall in Nottingham.

The theme and programme will be announced in due course, but for now - save the date!

## **NBN Awards 2019**

These annual Awards, which recognise the unsung heroes of the wildlife recording world, will launch on 8 May and will be open for nominations until August. Keep an eye on the NBN website, Network News and social media for more information and how to nominate someone.

**COPY DEADLINE  
SEPTEMBER ISSUE**

**15<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2019**

Articles are welcomed but also snippets of interesting recording news and details of events. Book reviews welcome too. Please include a picture of the cover, plus all the title details and price if available.

Please send articles in Word or Open Office format. Photos are welcomed but best as jpeg files and less than 800kb in size. Please do not embed them in your text as it sometimes can be hard to extract them!

Please send by email to the editor:

[saraheno@riseup.net](mailto:saraheno@riseup.net)

**JOIN BRISC and get 3 newsletters  
(Jan, May, Sept) and conference  
benefits**

- Individual £15
- Student £5
- Corporate, LRCs etc £50

There is a very good full colour A4 leaflet (pdf) all about BRISC. Print some off to take to any event you are off to.

*See BRISC website for contact and further information :*

[www.brisc.org.uk](http://www.brisc.org.uk)

**BRISC contacts & committee**

**Chris McInerny, Chair**

Email: [chairman@brisc.org.uk](mailto:chairman@brisc.org.uk)

**Louisa Maddison, Secretary**

Email: [secretary@brisc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@brisc.org.uk)

**Jonathan Willet, Treasurer**

Email: [treasurer@brisc.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@brisc.org.uk)

**Andy Wakelin, Membership &  
Web manager**

Email: [webmaster@brisc.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@brisc.org.uk)

**Sarah Eno, Editor**

Email: [saraheno@riseup.net](mailto:saraheno@riseup.net)

**Christine Johnston, Scottish NBN  
Liaison Officer**

Email: [c.johston@nbn.org.uk](mailto:c.johston@nbn.org.uk)

**Graeme Wilson**

Email: [graemewilson1@hotmail.com](mailto:graemewilson1@hotmail.com)

**Richard Weddle**

Email: [richard@canto.plus.com](mailto:richard@canto.plus.com)

**Kelly Anne Dempsey**

Email: [DempseyK@angus.gov.uk](mailto:DempseyK@angus.gov.uk)

**Sarah Jayne Forster**

[Sarah-Jayne.Forster@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Sarah-Jayne.Forster@rspb.org.uk)

**Francesca Pandolfi**

[Francesca.Pandolfi@eastdunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:Francesca.Pandolfi@eastdunbarton.gov.uk)

**Duncan Davidson**

[duncan@dwwd.freemove.co.uk](mailto:duncan@dwwd.freemove.co.uk)