

Summary paragraph from the Biodiversity and Conservation for the BPS AGM January 2020 by Martin Wilkinson (chair)

Items to be noted by Council

Field meetings and courses

- Annual seaweed identification course at MBA, Plymouth, 5-7th May, organised by Francis Bunker and Christine Maggs
- Possible marine field meeting at St.Andrews, 19-22 August 2020, in the new Scottish Oceans Institute which has replaced the Gatty Marine Lab. M. Wilkinson and C. Scanlan have met with Dave Patterson and Emma Defew from St. Andrews who are very enthusiastic and would be happy to co-organise to help keep costs down.
- Eileen Cox and Elliot Shubert's Freshwater algae course at Kindrogan could not take place in 2019 due to renovation work at the field station. They are not listed as running this course in 2020.
- Paula Lightfoot is running a course on biotope mapping at Millport FSC field station from 24th-27th July 2020.
- Dave's and Brian Whitton's freshwater identification course at Durham ran in summer 2019 with a largely UK contingent. Less easy to run courses now at Durham, so the course may not run in 2020. Possibility of holding it elsewhere, but the location needs to fulfil certain criteria. NHM is a possibility, as is the FBA. Dave John and Jo Wilbraham to look into this.
- Martyn Kelly and Dave John had a second joint freshwater field meeting with the Quekett Society at Ennerdale Bridge. Found at least 55 desmid taxa. A plate of the desmids will go into the Quekett magazine. They would like to organise a further meeting at Malham Tarn.

Algal Recording

- Front page of BPS recording site needs improvement, particularly to encourage freshwater records. Dave John with Liaise with Andrew on this.
- BRC recorders meeting in Edinburgh on Saturday 7th March 2020 which it is hoped one or more committee members can attend to represent BPS.

Publications

- Freshwater Flora - sales are beginning to drop off, 9 in the past six months. Now £152 per copy.
- Desmid posters - sold 3 copies in last 12 months, now about 10 left.
- Brown seaweed flora - Juliet now has everything, ca.600pp. Juliet valiantly to continue preparing for publication for which we are really grateful – simplification of nomenclature needed.
- Seaweeds book (FB) - no update from publishers.
- Noted that FSC guide to diatoms is out of date, and Alan Pentecost's freshwater book is out of print and out of date but still useful.
- European book on charophytes in progress. 32 charophyte species in the UK. Molecular work needed and is in progress.

Research projects

- BPS-funded Desmids of Britain & Ireland - checklist & conservation (JW). Going well but a large mis-match between the record cards and the current checklist being resolved. IPAs should be revisited when lists are confirmed, so rare species can be identified. BPS funding has run out, but not necessary for this phase of the project.
- Natural England-funded *Gongrosira scourfieldii* project (DJ) - Found travertine streams on the Jurassic coast with several more sites for *G.scourfieldii*. No *Gongrosira* at Malham Tarn. Report submitted to NE in March. Thanks are due to Richard Landsdown at NE for funding.
- Diatom project with National Museum of Wales (MK) - BPS funded. The project is proceeding, but slower than planned. Subject to approval from BPS Council, Ingrid has been given 40 days per year for the project for ca.£100 per day from BPS. Unclear who has overall responsibility for the project and its direction. Martyn to discuss with Graham Underwood as he will become chair of the grants committee.

IUCN aquatic plants taxon group/Natural England Aquatic Plants Taxon Group

- This group deals with all types of aquatic plants (except seaweeds) and has an interest in freshwater algae. Dave John has been attending. Projects might include possible red-listing of *Nostoc* and *Rivularia* and freshwater *Vaucheria* but there are major problems. Guidelines for SSSIs for algae need to be revisited.

Threats to large brown seaweeds

- OSPAR Threatened and/or Declining Species & Habitats - proposals to include kelps being discussed. Jo Foden from OSPAR was unable to attend our meeting but sent detailed information to us. It was not clear who exactly has made the assessments so far, and Juliet will follow this up with Jo.
- Seaweed harvesting – an online petition circulating in summer 2019 started a scare that the Scottish Government might have reversed its decision in 2018 not to allow destructive mechanical sampling of kelp beds. It turned out that this was an old petition from before the 2018 legislation that was still going round – a danger with online petitions. Martin now receives weekly digests of business from the Scottish Government so we can avoid this in future. Martin will collate the committee's views on seaweed harvesting with a view to having a possible BPS position on this.

Future meetings.

Our annual all-day meeting is very valuable with face to face discussion. However, we may sometimes need to meet more often. In 2020 we shall experiment with additional meetings, if necessary, by electronic means e.g, Skype