PLANT RECORDING IN THE NORTH EBUIDES

Unless you are familiar with Watsonian vice-county nomenclature, the first thing you may be asking is: "Where are the North Ebudes?" The answer is that this is the name given by this system to the northern part of the Inner Hebrides comprising Skye, Raasay and the Small Isles (Canna, Rum, Eigg and Muck) plus associated smaller islands.

I have been recording plants on Raasay for 25 years. For over half that time recording has been undertaken on a 1 km square basis resulting in nearly 17,000 records. Publication of the results is not imminent. Over the years each of Raasay's ninety-eight 1 km squares has been visited often at different times of the year. Raasay was quite comprehensively studied in the 1930s and many of the plants recorded then can be found today at the same sites.

The biggest changes in the intervening sixty years are the loss of arable weeds and the appearance (everywhere) of New Zealand Willowherb (Epilobium bruceanum) plus coriaceae plantations.

During this project, over 30 species have been added to the Raasay list including a number that are new to the vice-county such as Small Adder's-tongue (Ophionous azoricum), Wild Onion (Allium vineale) and Round-leaved Wintergreen (Pyrola rotundifolia).

Despite the amount of effort already invested in plant recording on Raasay, new things continue to be found. These tend to be hybrids.

(Continued on page 3)
microspecies or garden escapes, recognition of the first group becoming more frequent as my own expertise has developed and also thanks to the help of specialists who have visited the island or determined specimens. As the Raasay project nears completion and since I became BSBI vice-county Recorder, the focus of my attention has turned to the rest of the vice-county.

A group of botanists (including myself) has made several visits to Rum in recent years and a flora is in preparation based on tetrads (2x2 km squares). A group will be spending a week on Eigg in 2008 to attempt tetrad recording. Existing records for Eigg are good, thanks in part to the efforts of John Chester, the SWT Warden.

I have managed a short visit to Muck thanks to a SWT Skye Members’ Centre excursion, though more needs to be done. Canna has not been visited in the current recording period for plant records i.e. from the year 2000 onwards.

This leaves Skye and its smaller island neighbours. I have tackled Scalpay, Pabay and Longay on the east side, though Scalpay needs more work. Scàbhas has had a one-day visit, again thanks to a SWT trip, but here too much more work is required. Various small islands around Skye have yet to be reached but the bulk of my efforts for the next fifteen years, if I am spared, as they say around here, has to be devoted to Skye itself.

I have started on tetrad recording on Skye. There are nearly 550. Already, this approach has produced firsts for Skye such as Lesser Pond-sedge (Carex acutiformis), several dock hybrids and quite a number of aliens, plus Round-leaved Crowfoot (Ranunculus acris) on Scalpay (during yet another SWT trip) which is new to the vice-county and pretty much at the northern limit for this plant.

In an ideal world each tetrad would be visited at least twice at different seasons and be studied for a day at each visit. If I am mostly doing this on my own in a reasonable number of years, then most tetrads will only receive a single visit and on many a day more than one will be traversed. However, some time around 2020, I hope to be able to report that Skye tetrad mapping is “complete”!

Plant records from readers of this article would always be welcome. Tetrad-bashing anyone!

Dr Stephen J Bungard, Raasay.