Recording

Bryophyte news and records 2022

A report by John Norton

There has not been a great deal of bryophyte recording in the three vice-counties during 2022, but meetings of the BBS Southern Group held in October and November produced some interesting records and there have been a few new vice-county records which are listed below.

As mentioned in my short note in the last issue (*Flora News* 63) Jonathan Sleath has now taken over from Fred Rumsey as VC12 bryophyte recorder (Fred retired from his job at the Natural History Museum, and is enjoying life in Somerset). If you have any records for VC12 please send them to Jonathan. See my website (*jnecology.uk/bryophytes/index.html*) for contact details and a downloadable recording form.

I have also recently updated the Hampshire hectad distribution maps on the website and added 5km square maps. These incorporate all records sent to me or Jonathan by end of December 2022, most records from organised meetings and my own records up to the end of 2018 (I am busy trying to catch up with record input!).

New publications

The long awaited updated national vice-county census catalogue for bryophytes (mentioned in my last main report in *Flora News* 62) was published at the end of 2021 and is available on the BBS website (*britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk/publications*).

In January 2022 I updated my Rare and Notable Bryophytes Register for Hampshire, which I had issued in November 2021. A pdf is downloadable from my website (link above). If I can find time in 2023 I will update again to include photographs.

Jean Paton published a supplement to her much acclaimed liverwort flora during the year. It includes additional information for many of the species accounts and twelve completely new species accounts with hand-drawn illustrations. There are also some updates to the keys.

A new field guide for beginners, covering 133 of the more common species, by Dominic Price and Clive Bealey was published in December 2022 by the Species Recovery Trust.

Leucobryum news

Back in May 2021 I was contacted by Tom Ottley who was undertaking a study of *Leucobryum* species in Britain and Ireland. He wanted me to send him any specimens in my collection, so I duly obliged. It transpires that what we were calling *Leucobryum juniperoideum* should now more correctly be called *Leucobryum albidum*, a North American species, but *L. juniperoideum* does occur in the UK, where it is possibly restricted to bogs

in the west, so we now have three species instead of two. At Tom's request I visited some bogs in the New Forest to look for potential *L. juniperoideum*, but only found *L. glaucum* (I only looked briefly at two sites, so further investigation would be useful).

The first documented record of *L. albidum* in Britain was by a Frenchman called Bernard Piffard, who collected it from Boldre Bridge and Holmsley Station in the New Forest in 1882. At Tom's suggestion I checked out these two sites in January 2022, but couldn't really find any suitable habitat at Boldre Bridge and had trouble getting around the Holmsley station area due to the road and footpath closures there. Instead I collected some material of *L. albidum* from White Moor and Wood Crates, and managed to get some photographs of fruiting capsules at the latter site. Tom will be publishing a paper in *Journal of Bryology* on the identification of the three species. They can be separated microscopically by the size of the pores in a longitudinal section of the leaves (a very fiddly procedure to carry out), but the two which occur in our area can fairly easily be separated by habitat and physical form of the hummocks. *L. albidum* (i.e. what we were calling *L. juniperoideum*) is generally a species of acid woodland, so usually grows in moderate shade. The individual hummocks (which often coalesce into larger colonies around the bases of trees) are bright green and usually around 15–25 cm in diameter, and almost as tall. *L. glaucum* grows in more open wet heath and bog, forming small or often much larger hummocks, especially when growing through heathers or *Molinia*. I think it may typically be paler in colour, though because it grows in the open the hummocks become desiccated, turn whitish and start to disintegrate during warmer weather in the summer. *L. albidum* is abundant and *L. glaucum* probably frequent in the New Forest, but elsewhere in our area I think it is likely that *L. glaucum* is quite scarce, so *L. albidum* will be the usual species.

Left: a large mound of *Leucobryum glaucum*, Matley Bog, June 2021 (partly disintegrated and dried out during a spell of hot, dry weather); top right: *Leucobryum albidum* (numerous small mounds which have coalesced) growing over an old stump in beechwood, Wooson's Hill, New Forest, December 2018; bottom right: small mounds of *L. albidum* on roots of Pedunculate Oak, White Moor, Lyndhurst, January 2022. *John Norton*

Meetings

We had our usual joint meeting of the BBS Southern Group and Wessex Bryology Group at the end of October at Ogdens in the New Forest to look at a section of the Latchmore Brook. It was an impressive turnout with 23 participants at one point. The weather had been extremely wet prior to the visit, but was fairly kind on the day and we recorded 93 taxa of which 8 were new for the hectad (SU11) and no fewer than 45 were updates of old records prior to 2000, reflecting the lack of recent recording in the square. Highlights included *Hypnum imponens*, *Fossombronia foveolata* and *Calypogeia sphagnicola*. Sharon Pilkington wrote up an account of the meeting, which is on the BBS website (*britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk*; click on Events then select VC11 from the vice-county drop-down box). Neil Sanderson also had a good haul of lichens.

***Leptodontium flexifolium*, Shortheath Pond.** *John Norton*

Jonathan Sleath led a meeting to Shortheath Common on 26 November 2022, helped by June Chatfield, who knows the site well and had led the previous meeting on 20 October 2013. We recorded 72 taxa including a good variety of sphagna (though it was interesting to note that the majority of the bog habitat was dominated by *Sphagnum fallax*). Bog hepatics were very scarce, but we did refind *Mylia anomala*, *Kurzia pauciflora* and *Cephalozia connivens*. Highlight of the day, however, was finding a patch of the acrocarp moss *Leptodontium flexifolium* in an area of sandy, dry heath, which I think was new for the site and very rare in our region, and a few small patches of the liverwort *Ptilidium ciliare*, also rare, though previously known from here and seen a few years ago by June. Other good finds during the day included *Herzogiella seligeri* at the base of a rotting tree and *Warnstorfia fluitans* at the edge of the main bog area.

Other new and interesting records

Jamie Warren, a keen bryologist and one of the few bryophyte twitchers in the country, paid a visit to the Isle of Wight in March to see some of the island specialities, including *Southbya nigrella*, *Cephaloziella baumgartneri* and *Acaulon triquetrum*. However, whilst at the site of the latter species at Culver Cliffs, it appears that he came across a large patch of *Crossidium squamiferum* – the first record since it was discovered new to Britain at St Catherine's Point in June 2013. Unfortunately, I have not been sent the full details of the record.

In September 2022 I was contacted by Robert Sharp, who had been carrying out a botanical survey of Avon Heath County Park in the Avon Valley. He sent me convincing photographs of what he had keyed out as *Riccia huebeneriana*, a rare ephemeral thalloid liverwort of dried up ponds and reservoirs. This year has proved to be exceptional for this and other short-lived bryophytes characteristic of this habitat around the country, due to the warm, dry summer. This species was known to appear particularly after long, hot summers. We organised an impromptu meeting to see and confirm the *Riccia*, which was growing sparsely around the margins

***Riccia huebeneriana* from Avon Heath CP (top) and Hogmoor Inclosure (bottom, with *Pseudephemerum nitidum*).** *John Norton*

of a tiny pond but didn't find anything else of interest. With rainy weather already setting in during the month and therefore no time to lose, I hastily made a visit up to North Hampshire, where the species had never been recorded, to check a couple of potential sites. Unfortunately, Jonathan Sleath was abroad and couldn't join me. At Hogmoor Inclosure Debbie Allan and I searched several small ponds without success, eventually coming to the larger 'statue' pond, which looked wholly unsuitable due to trampling by humans and poaching by dogs. However, careful searching around the far side of the pond revealed several small thalli of *Riccia huebeneriana*, so this was duly confirmed as new to VC12. Jonathan later saw these plants and also checked out a number of other sites in north-east Hampshire, but did not find it anywhere else. However, he did collect what turned out to be *Bryum creberrimum*, which was new for VC12.

In January, Jonathan Sleath collected a voucher of *Microbryum davallianum* var. *conicum* from Hursley chalk pit, south-west of Winchester, which was still needed for VC11, after having recently been (re-?) admitted to the bryophyte vice-county census catalogue. An article on the separation of this and the other two varieties (var. *davallianum* and var. *commutatum*), was published in *Field Bryology* 127 (May 2022) by Sharon Pilkington. I've since recorded it near my house in Gosport (it is not necessarily associated with calcareous soils) and one specimen from Portsdown Hill that I checked also appeared to be this form, so it could turn out to the commonest of the three in Hampshire (in our area var. *commutatum* has so far only been recorded from the Isle of Wight, but probably does occur in VCs 11 and 12). Jonathan also 'debracketed' *Fissidens crassipes* (i.e. this is the first post-1969 record) and ticked off *Ulota intermedia* (one of the recent splits of the *Ulota crispa* group) for VC12 during the year (details below).

Cathy Wilson contacted me in February 2022 to say she had started to get interested in bryophytes, and sent me photos of a few of her initial finds to confirm IDs, including one of *Bartamia pomiformis,* a species now rare and declining in Hampshire. This is one of relatively few mosses (in my opinion) that have memorable vernacular names: 'Common Apple-moss', so called because of the large, pale green, spheroid capsules. Cathy found this at The Brocas, north of Bordon (SU798372) and it appears to be the first record for SU73.

***Bartramia pomiformis* (Common Apple-moss) specimen.** *Cathy Wilson*

I managed to undertake a short trip to stay at a friend's house on the Isle of Wight in October 2022 and bryologised around the western end of the island for a few days. It wasn't too exciting but noteworthy finds included the third or so record of *Ulota intermedia* at Bouldnor, *Zygodon rupestris* at Newtown and a good candidate for *Tortula pallida* at Alum Bay. The last of these has recently been recognised as a full species, distinct from *T. caucasica* (previously *T. modica*) and seems to be associated with coastal saltmarsh and sea cliff habitat, as here; however, the plants weren't producing capsules which are needed for confirmation and a VC10 voucher.

***Hedwigia ciliata* var. *ciliata*, Alresford, January 2023.** *Pete Flood*

Late news concerns a record of the very scarce moss *Hedwigia ciliata* var. *ciliata* which Pete Flood found on the roof of his family house in Alresford during Christmas 2022, the first record for VC12 if confirmed, though coincidentally Jonathan Sleath recorded the closely similar *Hedwigia stellata* a few hundred metres away in 2018. To date these are the only two *Hedwigia* records from Hampshire.

Bryophytes in Gosport

I have been slowly adding records of new bryophytes to my local area of Gosport. Of note over the past year or so are *Pleuridium subulatum*, *Hennediella macrophylla* (in two places), *Bryum pallescens*, *Dicranum tauricum*

and *Aloina ambigua*. The last of these, found in December 2022, was a VC11 'debracketer', the only previous record being from a limeworks at Buriton in 1958 by Jean Paton. In Gosport it was growing on imported limestone rocks used for coastal stabilisation at Haslar Lake, but had clearly naturally colonised.

***Aloina ambigua*, Haslar Lake, Gosport, December 2022.** *John Norton*

Pleuridium subulatum is a rather scarce (or probably under-recorded) ephemeral species of calcareous bare soil, so was unexpected in Gosport where most of the soil is acidic. It was growing on vertical soil slippages on a large tree lined embankment running alongside Howe Road (c. SU582006) in company with *Microbryum rectum* (also usually on calcareous soil) and other ephemerals. This was back in January 2022 during a walk after going to get my Covid booster jab. Initially I thought it was a *Dicranella* or *Ditrichum* of some sort and spent considerable time attempting to reach an ID, before returning to find better developed material with the characteristic male shootlets in the leaf axils.

***Dicranum tauricum*, Fort Brockhurst, Gosport, April 2022.** *John Norton*

Hennediella macrophylla was found on a nearby bank in Howe Road (SU583008), also in January 2022, but more recently during my BSBI New Year Plant Hunt on 1 January 2023 I found some more at Stanley Park (SZ591990). This is an alien species which has been spreading in urban areas in recent years, though we have been slow to record it in Hampshire. As mentioned in past issues of *Flora News* I had first recorded it at Pook Lane, Warblington (confirmed in 2017). Since then I have found it outside the toilets at Burley car park, and Jonathan Sleath saw it in several places around Winchester in 2021. It seems to like heavily trampled damp soil under trees.

Bryum pallescens is a species which characteristically grows underneath chain link fencing, possibly because it is tolerant to zinc. After much frustration at never being able to find ripe capsules at another site where I was sure it occurred I came across a colony in January 2022 under a fence on the north side of HMS Sultan polo field (c.SU588000) and managed to confirm it microscopically. Surprisingly this is only the second record for the vice-county, the first being from North Baddesley (SU3919) in 2008 by Nick Hodgetts. It is still needed for VC10 and VC12.

The *Dicranum tauricum* was found in April 2022 growing in crevices of an old felled pine tree on the south-west side of Fort Brockhurst (SU594020). This was only the second time I have ever seen this species, even though I have frequently checked out the characteristic habitat (as well as logs it also occurs on standing trees with acid bark). It is possible I could have overlooked it, but I suspect it is currently genuinely scarce in Hampshire even though nationally it was reportedly to be increasing rapidly in the 1990s. It has been recorded in 11 hectads in Hampshire since 1990, all single records, but this is the first record since 2012.

***Rhodobryum roseum* growing on the side of an anthill at Butser Hill, March 2022.** *Debbie Allan*

Rhodobryum roseum at Butser Hill

I have paid a few visits to the Butser Hill and Oxenbourne Down area in recent years to try to refind *Rhodobryum*

roseum, which Francis Rose studied here in the 1980s and who recorded the last record on the database in 1991. I finally managed to find some during a visit on 23 March with Debbie Allan, where we located it on two anthills (the typical habitat) near the top of the north-facing part of Ramsdean down on the south side of Rake Bottom. We looked at a few dozen more anthills in the vicinity without finding any more, but there are 1000s of anthills over the whole down here, so potentially much more suitable habitat is available. Our find was close to Francis Rose's 1991 record (SU713205). Elsewhere in Hampshire the only recorded localities are 'Brimsdown Hill' SU8239 (about 4 km NE of Bordon, VC12) also by Francis Rose in February 1985 and Old Winchester Hill by Jean Paton in April 1960. There are some other historical records for hectads SU11, SU53, SU55 and SU62, but it is quite possible that Butser Hill is the only extant site for this species in the county. On the Isle of Wight it has only ever been recorded from four localities, the most recent at Afton Down by the BBS meeting of 1964, so a search for it on the Island is also long overdue.

***Rhodobryum roseum* habitat at Butser Hill, March 2022.** *John Norton*

List of new and debracketed (post-1969) records

***Aloina ambigua*, VC11.** Haslar Lake, Gosport, SZ 6202 9934, 5 December 2022 (voucher collected 13 December 2022). A few small colonies on at least two large limestone boulders used for an artificial sea embankment (on north side of bridge). Present in small eroded pockets on upper surface of boulders, with other typical calcareous mosses, including *Didymodon* sp., *Bryum* sp., *Barbula unguiculata*, *Schistidium crassipilum* and *Dicranella howei*. All these have naturally colonised (not imported with the rocks). Bank is unshaded, SW-facing. J. Norton, det. S. Pilkington (originally thought to be *A. rigida*). Debracketer for VC11.

***Bryum creberrimum*, VC12.** Woolmer Forest, Blackmoor, SU 788 331, 6 October 2022. Disturbed sandy/peaty soil on wet heath. J. Sleath, conf. S. Pilkington. New to VC12.

***Fissidens crassipes*, VC12.** Itchen Stoke, SU 5585 3219, 22 September 2022. On stonework by bank of R. Itchen. J. Sleath, conf. S. Pilkington. Debracketer for VC12.

***Hedwigia ciliata* var. *ciliata*, VC12.** Arle Mill, Alresford, SU 5878 3320, 27 December 2022. On S-facing terracotta roof tiles of house. P. Flood (voucher to be submitted).

***Microbryum davallianum* var. *conicum*, VC11.** Hursley, SU 4278 2602, 29 January 2022. In disused chalk pit. J. Sleath, conf. S. Pilkington. Debracketer for VC11.

***Riccia huebeneriana*, VC11.** Avon Heath Country Park, SU 1330 0390, 21 September 2022 (voucher collected 25 September 2022). In wet bare mud around margin of small pond in dry heathland. About 20 thalli scattered around northern and eastern sides of the pond, associated with *Eleogiton fluitans* (locally dominant), *Juncus bulbosus* and *Pseudephemerum nitidum*; unshaded. R. Sharp, conf. N. Hodgetts. New to VC11 and Hampshire.

***Riccia huebeneriana*, VC12.** Hogmoor Inclosure, SU 7889 3494, 28 September 2022. In damp, muddy, trampled sand on margin of shallow pond within area of dry heath and pine plantations. About 40 small thalli in a localised area on west side where least disturbed by dogs; lightly shaded by adjacent trees. J. Norton, conf. N. Hodgetts. New to VC12.

***Ulota intermedia*, VC12.** Itchen Stoke, SU 5597 3211, 22 September 2022. On willow by bank of R. Itchen. J. Sleath, conf. S. Pilkington. New to VC12 following the splitting of the *Ulota crispa* group.