

Louise Marsh & Geoffrey Hall, vc55

Herbarium collections under threat:
how should BSBI respond nationally?
Can local BSBI groups help?

Fairy Story I

- Once upon a time there was a lonely Herbarium in the middle of a botanical wilderness...
- Presided over by a kindly but sad curator



Fairy Story II

- Because he and his delightful assistant had to curate their herbarium sheets all on their own
- The bad fairy Bursa Minima had cursed all herbaria with a plague of budget deficits, so there was no money left to pay any little helpers ☹️



Fairy Story III

- Fortunately, they were both active BSBI members, so they encouraged three amateur botanists to set up a local BSBI group, and to Do Something About the Herbarium!
- Five years on...



Local & national fieldtrips, recording & sharing



Training opportunities: Plant ID courses/FISCs



Developing survey skills with LRWT

Botanical Recording in a Landscape-Scale Conservation Project

Geoffrey Hall, Uta Hamzaoui & Louise Marsh, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust

Lockington Marshes SSSI

The survey revealed new records of the locally and nationally notable plant species *Stellaria palustris*, *Myosurus minimus*, *Polygala minor*, *Bidens cernua* and *Callitriche brutia* within the SSSI and particularly in the surrounding grassland.

Habitat Surveys

- Identifying Local Wildlife Sites.
- Survey mapping to identify contribution to habitat network.
- Preparing landowner reports and giving conservation advice.
- Helping landowners with grant applications.
- Notifying Natural England of potential extension of an SSSI.

The Soar & Wreake Valley Living Landscape Project in Leicestershire

- A mosaic of nature reserves, farmland, amenity land & the built environment where wildlife & people can flourish.
- Restores, recreates and reconnects fragmented habitats.
- Provides habitat networks, producing a resilient and healthy environment.
- Enables wildlife to move through reservoirs of existing good habitat and sympathetically managed land.

The River Lin

7 Local Wildlife Sites were identified along the River Lin, which feeds into the River Soar. Rare & notable species identified: *Scirpus sylvaticus*, *Cardamine* spp. and *Rumex* spp.

Floating Pennywort

Identifying riverbank sites suitable for the deposition of plant material removed from the river, and species-rich ones to be avoided.

New Records of Notable Species Highlight the Conservation Value of the Soar Valley

Myosurus minimus, *Bidens cernua*, *Callitriche brutia*

Watermead Park

The first baseline survey of this large, 140 ha site will be used to inform future management. Several local BSBI members have contributed to this work over a four-year period.

Notable Plants in Aylestone Meadows

Rumex, *Stellaria*, *Myosurus*

Aylestone Meadows

A comprehensive survey of Aylestone Meadows Local Nature Reserve in Leicester City was carried out as baseline for conservation management as the area was threatened by development of a football pitch.

Broughton Astley Floodplain Meadow

These 4 ha of species-rich hay meadow in the Soar floodplain are still managed traditionally with aftermath grazing. The old river courses are still visible today. This could become a new SSSI.

TPP Species Recorded

Stellaria palustris, *Myosurus minimus*, *Bidens cernua*, *Callitriche brutia*

Soar & Wreake Valley LL in Leicestershire

Benefits for LRWT

- Large area surveyed in a short time
- FISC guarantees high quality identifications
- BSBI seen as a neutral organisation

Benefits for BSBI

- Local VC55 members involved in recording
- Rare plant records contribute to TPP
- Sites offered for BSBI national group visits
- Pool of skilled botanists enlarged

Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust

At BSBI Outreach events 2012

- Big Nature Day – NHM, London
- Gardeners World Live - Birmingham
- Birdfair – Rutland Water, vc55
- NHM Campsite – NHM, London
- Butterfly Conservation AGM - Nottingham
- NBN Conference – Royal Society, London

NHM Campsite: 108 new Duckweed experts



Butterfly Conservation AGM





At Birdfair, talking
to a young BSBI
member

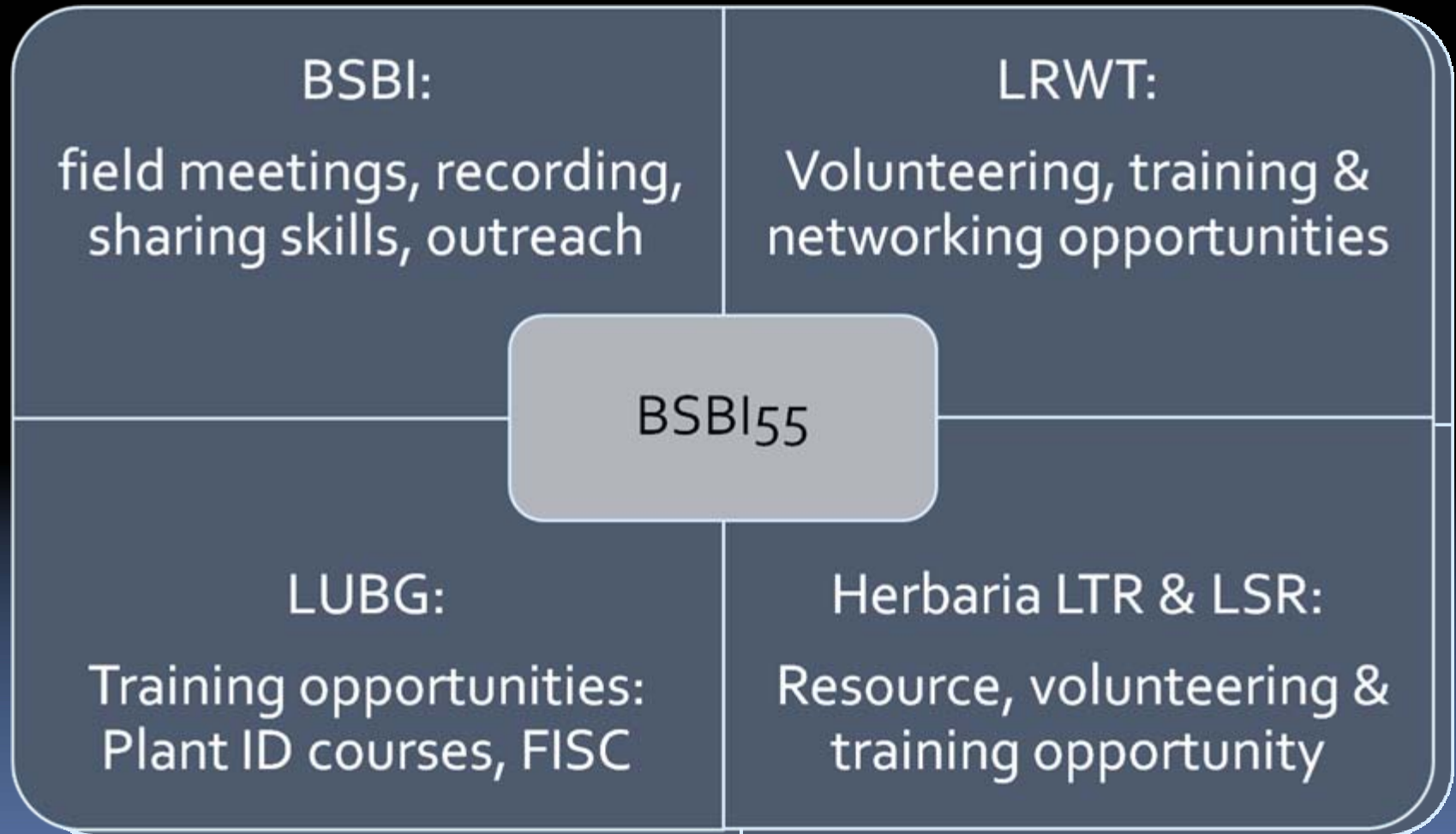
At one of three
Bioblitzes in vc55
this year



BSBI55 Outreach in 2012

- Main feedback from events:
 - ▣ more local BSBI groups,
 - ▣ more T&E opportunities,
 - ▣ local, affordable, beginner-friendly.
- Not every vc has an active local group yet!
- Prospective members became less keen to join if they had no local group in their v.c.

BSBI55, LRWT, LUBG & Herbaria



The Herbarium Volunteers



Volunteering opportunities: BSBI55 members acquire herbarium skills & assist with curation

Herbaria

A national, regional & local resource for BSBI members



Offers herbarium facilities to local botanists at all skill levels, including Plant ID students.

Museum to Meadow projects

- Roses in LSR & LTR (inc Primavesi's sheets)
- Elms in LTR (1970s sheets)



- But while Leicester University's Herbarium is thriving, many are not
- Over to Geoffrey...

Perceived Status of Herbaria

National – Least Concern

University – Near Threatened

Local – Vulnerable

Small – Endangered

IUCN conservation status terms

Threats

Funding

- Reduced opening hours
- Reduced scope and/or size
- Closure
- Staff cuts
 - Curators
 - Role/job changes
 - Museums' agenda

Consequences

- Deterioration and damage
- Loss of expertise
- No 'herbarium advocate' or 'champion'
- Dispersal or merger of herbaria
- Destruction of herbaria

Implications for BSBI Members

- Reduced access
- Increased travel
- Loss of a local resource
- Loss of collection knowledge and expertise

What is the BSBI doing?

- **Why should it be involved?**
 - National resource
- **Herbaria at Home**
 - Digitise collections
 - New Project Officer
 - Prioritise digitisation process
 - Set up partnerships
 - Seek further funding

A few questions:

- Do British & Irish herbaria need the support of the botanical community?
- How do members use herbaria eg how many VCRs visit local herbaria?
- Are other groups running similar local projects in their herbaria? If so:
- Let's encourage others by sharing these stories & images on a BSBI webpage!
- 2012 was "Atlas Hemi-centenary Year" – how about "Support Herbaria Year" in 2013?