

BRITISH LICHEN SOCIETY

CONSERVATION STRATEGY



Teloschistes flavicans
Golden Hair Lichen

THE SOCIETY'S STRUCTURE

The Society's Council oversees its affairs; three committees consider matters of detail pertaining to Great Britain and Ireland:

Conservation Committee,

which is supported by two sub-committees dealing with;
Churchyard Conservation;
the Biodiversity Action Plan

Data Committee

Education & Promotions Committee.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The Committee's remit is to further lichen conservation. This it does by promoting surveys, publishing reports and by raising awareness in liaison with the government's Conservation Agencies and other bodies. The Society has an honorary Conservation Officer.

The Committee meets twice a year and is composed of members of the Society with an expertise in conservation plus representatives from:

- Countryside Council for Wales
- Natural England
- Natural History Museum
- Plantlife International
- Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
- Scottish Natural Heritage

Conservation Officer

The Honorary Conservation Officer represents the Society on conservation issues at a variety of meetings and seminars and answers enquiries from many sources.

WHAT WE CAN OFFER

Through the Conservation Committee, the Society provides help and advice on all aspects of species, habitat and site conservation including:

- species conservation and management
- habitat conservation and management
- assessment of a species based on the Society's data
- site assessment in terms of importance for lichen conservation
- site management to maintain and enhance the lichen interest

A LEARNED SOCIETY

The Royal Society produced a report in 2002 entitled *The Future of SSSIs*, which recommended that the Conservation Agencies should seek the advice of learned societies pertaining to the notification of SSSIs. In doing so, the Royal Society was giving due recognition to the need for taxonomic expertise when conserving groups such as lichens. Conversely, the Society needs to be proactive in advising local authorities, NGOs, the Country Conservation Agencies and the JNCC of species, communities, habitats and sites considered to be of local, regional, national and international importance for their lichens, and the Conservation Evaluation of species for Red lists using the latest IUCN criteria.

Liaison

Through the Conservation Committee the Society provides advice and information to:

- the country Conservation Agencies
- JNCC on the Quinquennial Review of Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
- the Environment Agency, through the River Jelly Lichen Steering Group on catchment management plans
- Plantlink, Plantlink Scotland and Plantlink Cymru: these act as a fora for botanical conservation agencies in the UK

AIM 1: The Society will continue to advise Local Authorities, NGOs, Country Agencies and the JNCC of species, communities, habitats and sites considered to be of local, regional, national and international importance for their lichens.

The Society intends to promote closer links with other learned societies, in particular, the British Bryological Society, the British Mycological Society, the Botanical Society of the British Isles. There would also be merit in exchanging ideas with the Ancient Tree Forum, the RSPB, the NT/NTS and the Wildlife Trusts.

AIM 2: The Society will explore ways of developing lichen conservation with other learned societies such as the British Bryological Society, the British Mycological Society, the Botanical Society of the British Isles, and with the Ancient Tree Forum, the RSPB, the NT/NTS and the Wildlife Trusts.



Peltigera horizontalis

Cladonia incrassata

Degelia plumbea

Caloplaca granulosa



Cryptolechia carneolucea

Lecanora pruinosa

Fulgensia fulgens

Checklist and Species Dictionary

The documented British lichen flora is constantly being added to as more species are discovered or described. Keeping up with taxonomic changes is a key responsibility of the Society, which maintains an up-to-date list, the most recent being the *Checklist of Lichen of Great Britain and Ireland* Coppins, 2002. This feeds into the Natural History Museum's Species Dictionary. There is a need to formalise this process.

AIM 3: In liaison with the Natural History Museum's Species Dictionary, establish a procedure for maintaining the Checklist / Species Dictionary.

Databases

In recent years a database has been set up to store data on a site and species basis. This is being made available, in stages, for public use on the NBN Gateway.

This database, held in Recorder 6, will eventually include data on all species from all sites held by the Society. Most of the data for Scotland is already included, records from England and Wales are still being collated.

In addition, a Threatened Lichen Database (TLD), capable of providing up-to-date and detailed cartographic information on the status and location of rare and threatened species, is being developed. This provides the key to the future management and conservation of these species. All relevant records held by the Society have already been included but the TLD is not yet fully comprehensive and more up-to-date information is needed for many species.

AIM 4: The Society will promote, in discussion with the Conservation Agencies, government and Plantlife International, the continued development of:

- the database on all species from all sites
- the Threatened Lichens Database

Lichens in Ireland

The Society has participated in data collection for LichenIreland, a project supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Heritage Service, Dublin; National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin; Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland; the Ulster Museum and the National Biodiversity Data Centre based in Waterford.

AIM 5: The Society will continue to develop links with lichen recording and conservation in Ireland.

The principal aim of The British Lichen Society, formed in 1958, is "to encourage the study and conservation of lichens". The Society has some 650 members, about half of whom live overseas. It produces *The Lichenologist*, a journal of international standing, *The Bulletin* to inform members of news and views in the lichen world and maintains a website: www.theBLS.org.uk



Lichen Communities

Given the inadequate coverage by the NVC of lichen and bryophyte dominated communities a publication to replace the 1977 preliminary conspectus by Peter James, David Hawksworth and Francis Rose is long overdue. This is a task of such complexity that it would be sensible to take a wider look at lower plants generally and it is suggested that an approach to its commissioning and funding should be explored with the British Bryological Society.

AIM 6: Explore with the British Bryological Society the joint commissioning and funding of a National Vegetation Classification of lichen and bryophyte communities.

Key Lichen Habitats

With its inventories of the 1980s, the Society led the way among the lower plant societies by producing conservation assessments of epiphytic and terricolous habitats (Fletcher 1982, 1984, 1993). Since then many more woodlands and heaths have been surveyed and there have been many taxonomic changes, such that these earlier reports need updating. Other key lichen habitats such as maritime and montane merit detailed survey. Sites identified as a result of these surveys, as hosting habitats of national or international importance, can be incorporated in Important Plant Areas.

AIM 7: Update the surveys of epiphytic and terricolous lichen habitats; promote surveys of maritime, montane and other key lichen habitats.

Important Plant Areas

Plantlife International has sought from the Society (in common with other botanical societies in Europe) nominations for Important Plant Areas. Whilst based on best knowledge, in many cases this is far from complete. Delineation and documentation of the lichen interest of these sites is a continuing requirement.

AIM 8: In liaison with Plantlife International the Society will continue to build its information base on Important Plant Areas for lichens.



Coastal rocks, The Lizard



Parkland

What we need - Funding

While the Society has a wealth of knowledge it has no employees and all the committees are attended and chaired on a voluntary basis. The Society requires resources for large projects such as the Threatened Lichen Database, Important Plants Areas, maintenance of the Checklist, surveys of key lichen habitats and to commission jointly with the British Bryological Society a National Vegetation Classification of lichen and bryophyte communities. The Society acknowledges the support it has received from Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature, the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh and the Natural History Museum. A mechanism to support ongoing projects would greatly facilitate the Society's work and enable it to plan ahead. Together the agencies, this Society and the Government could then better meet the targets set by the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation and the Killarney Declaration.

AIM 9: Prepare a rolling budget for discussion with funding agencies and Government, consistent with the aims of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation and the Killarney Declaration's Recommendations on Biodiversity Research.

Training

Despite the boost given to lichen conservation by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, the number of surveyors with sufficient expertise to undertake field survey has been in sharp decline. However, as an integral part of a grant from SNH to the Society, experienced surveyors have been linked with 'lichen apprentices' to train them in the skills of lichen identification. This exercise has been very successful, with some eight new surveyors having been trained. Ways should be explored of maintaining this training programme.

AIM 10: Seek the Conservation Agencies help with funding to continue the 'lichen apprentices' scheme.

Field Meetings and Workshops

The Society holds field meetings dealing with the identification of particular genera and the recording of under-worked areas. The Conservation Committee has convened workshops on habitat management, monitoring and Nitrogen pollution.

REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Amongst the lower plants societies, the BLS has been a trail-blazer, producing information on site and species conservation:

Atlas of British & Irish Lichens [edited by MRD Seaward, and ongoing]

Survey and assessment of epiphytic lichen habitats, 1982, Fletcher, A *et al*

Survey and assessment of lowland heathland habitats, 1984, Fletcher, A *et al*

Revised assessment of epiphytic lichen habitats, 1993 Fletcher, A *et al*

The Lichen Flora of Great Britain and Ireland 1992 Purvis, OW, Coppins, BJ, Hawksworth, DL & Moore, DM

Lichens and habitat management, 2001, Fletcher, A (ed) [Proceedings of a workshop held in Bangor 3rd - 6th Sept 1997]

Monitoring with Lichens - Monitoring Lichens, 2002, Nimis, PL, Scheidegger, C & Wolseley, PA (eds) [Proceedings of a workshop held at Orierton, Pembrokeshire, 16th - 22nd August 2000]

Checklist of Lichens of Britain and Ireland, 2002, Coppins, BJ

Indices of Ecological Continuity for Woodland Epiphytic Habitats in the British Isles, 2002, Coppins AM & Coppins BJ

A Conservation Evaluation of British Lichens, 2003, Woods, RG & Coppins, BJ

Lichens in a Changing Environment, 2004, English Nature Research Report Peterborough

The Lichens of Great Britain and Ireland, 2009

Data

Over the past 40 years the membership has collected a vast amount of data. This has been used:

- as the bases of the Mapping Scheme initiated in 1963
- to produce an Atlas of British and Irish Lichens (Seaward, 1983)
- to model the effects of atmospheric pollution
- to select species for the Biodiversity Action Plan
- to produce a Conservation Evaluation of British Lichens (Woods & Coppins, 2003)

The first society in the world entirely devoted to the study of lichens

Usnea articulata



Heterodermia japonica



Dermatocarpon miniatum



British Lichen Society
Department of Botany
The Natural History Museum
Cromwell Road
LONDON
SW7 5BD



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