Validating-as-you-go

The great advantage of validating records that you have just sent to the BSBI Database, is that, even if you have a big validation backlog – it won't get any bigger!

It works well with the little-and-often approach to data entry and synching that we advocate and is much preferable to an end-of-season splurge! It prevents a huge build-up of records that require validation for Atlas 2020.   It also has the advantage that if queries arise, you are more likely to remember the answers. Wet weather is the perfect opportunity to do this.

Are all my sites' grid references in my VC?

One of the most important validation check is to ensure that all your recently entered sites are in your VC and not in a neighbour's or in the sea!

First devise a search query which will return a list of the records you are trying to validate. Typically, you can do that by entering the exact date of your recording excursion and your name in the Recorder field. Click "Display results" and check that none of your records have an asterisked VC number which indicates that the Grid Reference is outside your VC but within 2km of it or that the VC number is high lit yellow which indicates it is more than 2km from your VC[1]. Click the "VC" header to sort records by VC and VC annotations and click again to sort in reverse order.

Are all my sites' grid references in the correct place my VC?

Make sure that your detailed records are exactly where you think they should be and that you haven't mis-entered a GPS reference. A small error can make a big difference in how easy it is to re-find records. For example, GPSs aren't very accurate in gorges and the grid reference might place a site on the wrong side of a river.

Use the zoomable map to check for anomalies, then check the exact position of the records grid-square by viewing the record's details and clicking on the 'map' tab, or click on grid-references from the search results table.

Here is an example of why it is so useful to use the zoomable map option: This zoomable map shows some records of from a recent recording day, along the A9 cycle path at the Slochd. Even after carefully entering grid refs, and double checking them, the circled group of records were accidentally entered as NH828253 whereas they should have been NH838253. The grid reference was entered into MM incorrectly.

Alternatively, you can manually plot the grid references on [Streetmap](#) or [Cucaera](#) – which have the advantage of 1:25,000 maps and the latter will also display VC boundaries.

Investigate any Grid Reference anomalies and remember to correct them in MapMate and resynch to the BSBI Database.

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[1] If you hover over the VC annotation you will get a fuller explanation, e.g. Grid Reference is 1-2km from VC.

One final point; if you investigate and resolve the errors listed in the "Grid-reference – vice-county boundary matching" table on the Data Validation tab in the BSBI Database's My County in each error category, so that they all read zero (or at least low numbers) it will then be much easier to spot any new errors that appear after records are subsequently added to the DDb.

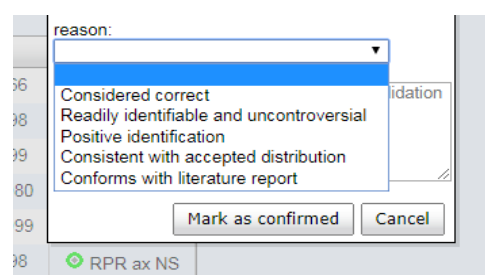**Have all the correct taxa been entered?**

It is easy to get grid references correct, but it is much harder to check that all the correct taxa have been entered. A good approach is to look out for any anomalies. The DDb has lots of validation tools to search for odd looking records. No need to use them all, just find the set of queries that works for you, and adopt that as your standard workflow. Here is a selection of queries that you *could* use to help you spot such records:

- Is any record the only occurrence of a species in a hectad in the dateclass? Login first, then click here and click display results to see a demonstration of that for records collected during July in vc88
- Is any record the only occurrence of a species within 25km? Click here (There are none in this case – which is re-assuring!)
- Does any species record occur in four or fewer adjacent hectads? Click here
- Is any record a species on the GB Red Data List? Click here.

In each case take a look at the example query and the results, then alter the VC to your own, make any adjustments required to the date and click "Display results". Going through all the steps outlined last month and above only takes a few minutes and efficiently finds the more unusual and interesting records, even if there were several hundred records to be checked. If the records returned by these queries were correct, then I would just confirm the whole lot in one go. To do that, carefully select all the records for the period tested[2] and using the features at the bottom of the results table, click the down arrow in the box prefixed by "mark validation state" and select "confirmed". Finally click the button "apply change to selected records". It is that easy!

Commenting on the Validations

You should add a comment to the validations, typically using the drop-down list, see right. If they are your own records or from a very trustworthy recorder I use 'Positive identification'. For most other records, I use 'Considered correct'.   Do consider the different reliabilities of different recorders / species ID difficulty.

Do not confirm records over which there is any doubt. There is an option to mark records as 'Needs checking' which removes them from maps but they are still returned by default queries. Handy until you have made up your mind whether to accept or reject a record.

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[2] NB If you tick "Select All" on a multipage list of records then it will select all records on all pages.