

## BLS FIELD MEETING - NORTH HARRIS, 23-30 April 2022

### Draft Programme

Saturday 23 April. 20.30hrs – gather at the Scaladale Centre for a short introductory meeting to discuss plans for the week.

Sunday 24 April. Lower Gleann Sgaladail (NB1709/1809) and adjacent crags, North Harris. There is ample parking on both sides of the road where the river (Abhainn Sgaladail) goes under it (NB182099). Alternatively, it is possible to walk from the Scaladale Centre (850m along the road, passing some large lichen-covered boulders along the way). In addition to the river, Gleann Sgaladail has rock outcrops and boulder scree (Lewisian gneiss), with steep crags on both the north and south sides.

Monday 25 April. Luskentyre, South Harris (NG0699, NB0600 etc). There is ample parking at the end of the minor road to Luskentyre at NG066998, next to the modern cemetery. Immediately behind the shore, looking north, is an area of short turf with small rock outcrops and small streams. A walk north from here takes one along a rocky coastline to a headland and beyond. Although the underlying geology in this area consists of granite, or gneiss with granite, there is a strong influence of wind-blown sand, creating base-enriched conditions (and marram-grass dunes to the south). This influence decreases as one moves north and/or away from the coast.

Time permitting, participants might like to explore the stream that runs down onto the shingle shore at Mol an Tighe (NB074010). This stream, Abhainn Àird Grothadnais, descends the hillside in a small, steep-sided gully with some interesting-looking rock exposures. For anyone with an interest in bryophytes, this is a good place to see *Myurium hochstetteri*, a Hebridean speciality.

Incidentally, the beach at Luskentyre is renowned for its scenic beauty.

Tuesday 26 April. Stornoway Castle Grounds, Lewis (NB4032, 4131, 4132, 4133). This is the only extensive area of mature (though mostly planted) woodland in Lewis & Harris, with a good range of macro-lichens, including three species of *Lobaria*. A recent lichen list exists following visits by Brian and Sandy Coppins, John Douglass and Peter Lambley in September 2021. Their finds, which were summarised by Peter Lambley in *BLS Bulletin* 129 (Winter 2021), included *Ramalina portuensis* at possibly its northernmost site in Britain.

There is a large parking area adjacent to the main road at NB40423255, with the Creed Lodge entrance to the castle grounds on the opposite side of the road at NB40473262. From here it is possible to walk down the River Creed and ultimately reach the shore, the lower part of the valley being more interesting. Several other areas in the grounds have mature trees. Refreshments are available at the Woodlands Centre (NB42183319) and Lews Castle (NB41983320), both locations being accessible on foot from the Creed or by vehicle via the main castle grounds entrance at NB42473375.

Stornoway Castle Grounds is a large area, but anyone wanting a change from trees could park at the bottom of the Arnish road (NB425302), west of the castle grounds, for easy access to a rocky coastline, a small loch and other habitats.

Wednesday 27 April. Coire Loch nan Eang (NB145081), North Harris. This is an upward extension of Gleann Sgaladail (see Sunday 2 May for access details), The small lochan in this corrie (Loch nan Eang) has the highest elevation (460m) of any in Lewis and Harris, and is surrounded by steep slopes and boulder scree, the underlying rock on the north-facing slopes being granite rather than the usual gneiss. From the main road, it is a walk of more than 4km, and steep in its latter stages.

For anyone not wanting to go the whole way, Loch Mhisteam (NB152089) and surrounding area, at the foot of the final steep ascent, could be explored. Alternatively, and weather permitting, anyone feeling particularly energetic could ascend the slope to the west of Coire Loch nan Eang to reach the summit ridge near Mulla bho Thuath (720m, NB140084).

Thursday 28 April. Gil Lacasdail, South Harris (joining the road at NG108967). In its lower section, this is an often steep- and high-sided ravine, through which a lively stream, Abhainn Gheurasdail, runs. By Lewis and Harris standards, it has a good number of trees, mainly rowans, and this may well be the nearest thing to natural woodland that the group visits during the week. Depending on the water level, it is possible to follow the bottom of the ravine for the first 300 metres or so going north, before climbing out and descending again after a short distance.

To access the site, there is a very large parking area on the south side of the road, about 200 metres west of the bottom of the ravine at NG10599675.

Friday 29 April. Gleann Lacasdail, North Harris (NB1800/1801/1802). This north-south glen contains a large loch and two smaller ones, with steep crags on either side. There are several parking areas along the road from Tarbert to Scalpay, with access to the west side of the glen from NB17680038 (along a track that ultimately joins with the main Stornoway-Tarbert road), and to the east side from NB18400045. The underlying rock is again gneiss, with (according to the geological map) abundant metabasic pods.

Note that the above programme may be adjusted at the time to give the best chance of good weather for Coire Loch nan Eang. Anyone who does not wish to accompany the main group on this more strenuous walk might like to consider exploring areas adjacent to the main road in the direction of Tarbert, where there are several parking places, or along the minor road to Rheinigidale. Tarbert itself has urban habitats and mature trees, though most of the latter are on private land. We have permission to collect lichens anywhere within the North Harris Trust area, bordered in red on the attached map, except for the small area shaded green in the vicinity of Amhuinnsuidhe Castle. Note that North Harris Trust land does not include the immediate vicinity of Ardvourlie Castle, near the Scaladale Centre. Also, the woodland shown on the map on the landward side of the Scaladale Centre is relatively recently planted and the trees are small.