



The Munro Society

Mountain Quality Indicators Bulletin 2 September 2011

Introduction

The MQI Committee, looking to stimulate and maintain interest in the MQI project, decided earlier this year to produce a regular bulletin. It includes data on progress, topics of interest arising from MQIs submitted and, hopefully, articles from those contributing to the project. This is the second MQI Bulletin and covers the Summer period of June to August 2011. You are encouraged to submit articles, photographs and comment for inclusion in future editions.

Summer 2011 Data

When MQIs are received they are checked and individually referenced using Munro's Tables and then entered on a database. This database comprises a listing of all MQIs received from inception of the project and includes information on date completed, season, who completed and rating given. From the database MQIs are also recorded in the MQI Tracker, which appears on the Website, and in the Newsletter. The following information shows the number of MQIs submitted since inception in 2002 to year 2010 and for 2011 by season. The years quoted are based on the four seasons Spring through to Winter (March to February).

MQI Submitters	Total 2002 to 2010	Spring 2011	Summer 2011
Butterfield I	13	-	-
Breaden G	54	-	1
Burdin J	44	-	-
Grant K	3	-	-
Jessett J&P	1	-	-
Robertson I A	128	3	-
Ross J	6	-	-
Sime D	358	15	21
Allan J	1	-	-
Campbell A	16	-	-

MQI Submitters	Total 2002 to 2010	Spring 2011	Summer 2011
Hunter E	9	5	3
Urquhart M	15	-	-
Ward F	4	1	-
Bunting D	36	-	-
Milner A	4	-	-
Willimott P	1	-	-
Brook A	17	8	3
Sharpe S	2	-	-
Walter C	11	-	-
Batty D	82	18	38
Manson R	2	-	-
Murray C	1	-	-
Cran D	5	-	-
Foot A-M	1	1	-
Butler A	-	6	37
Green J	1	-	-
Jones M	5	-	3
Other	6	-	-
Total	826	58	106
Submitters	27	9	7

We have received or have been promised 106 MQI reports for Summer 2011 which is encouraging. However, it can be seen that the number of individuals submitting is still too low. Of the 106 reports, 96 are attributed to 3 individuals. Not everyone can be expected to be so active but a few more contributors would be appreciated. It would be a great help if those only able to submit a few during the year could target some of their Munro days out to the hills still requiring MQIs so we can progress our goal of one completion for each Munro for each season by around 2015. There are a few individuals trying to contribute in this way. A few more would be helpful.

The Tracker shows the status for unique MQIs received. At the end of Summer 2011 (i.e. end August 2011) this was:

Tracker	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Total
<i>Munros</i>					
Total Count	222	227	150	87	686
% Complete	78%	80%	50%	31%	60%
<i>Furths</i>					
Total Count	1	6	25	6	38
% Complete	3%	18%	74%	18%	28%

A full house of summer completions should be possible for next year provided we are active in the North and on Skye. We have 990 MQIs in total of which 724 are firsts, the other 266 being repeats. The Tracker is published in the Newsletter and on the Website so information as to what still needs to be done is readily available.

Summer 2011 Observations

Bird Sightings



A scan of the 106 Summer MQIs received showed sightings of: Ptarmigan 7, Golden Plover 4, Snow Bunting 4, Ravens 16, Buzzards 4, Peregrine Falcons 1, Dipper 2. Eagles were seen on the Strathfarrar four, above the crags on Coire na Fearna of Meall Buidhe, Beinn Dubhchraig and Derek Sime saw two ravens successfully chase off an Eagle on The Saddle. In addition there were sightings of a wide selection of smaller birds and wildfowl.

Schiehallion Completion



Schiehallion is a very popular mountain and one we have eight MQIs for (only Meall nan Tarmachan, with nine, has more). On 18 June, 2011 Munro Society member Colin Walter completed his second round on Schiehallion. Colin was joined by his family and Munro Society members Eleanore Hunter, Iain Robertson, Alan Hinchcliffe and David Batty (see the misty photo). It was wet and cloudy all day and cold on top, not what Colin hoped for when he set June for his final Munro. But the occasion created a great buzz and the usual imbibing on top and a meal in Pitlochry later kept the worst of the cold at bay. Congratulations to Colin!

For the record the MQI for this ascent is now the fourth which coincides with a completion, the others being:- Meall nan Tarmachan 7.10.06; An Stuc 15.09.07; An Socach (Affric) 25.07.09 which was also Derek Sime's second round completion.

Mystery of the dead Frogs



Walking up An Caorann Mor towards Mullach Fraoch-choire I came across the very sad sight of nine frogs all dead in a pool of water beside the track. Some of the frogs were pregnant. The pool of water was formed immediately beside the path from water draining off the open hillside. It is hard to see how the water got polluted in any way. If the pool had dried up at some earlier stage the frogs would surely have moved on. The only plausible suggestion I have heard so far was that, perhaps, the pool of water was hit by lightning. It remains a sad mystery.

Scotch Argus Butterflies



In August I did the round of Beinn Dubhchraig, Ben Oss and Ben Lui, specifically to ensure they had summer MQI completions. Early on the weather was fine and I took a slightly circuitous route through grassland and open woodland to the lower slopes of Beinn Dubhchraig. I was treated to a magnificent display of Scotch Argus butterflies. They were too numerous to count but there were hundreds of them. Hostile Habitats informs me

that the adult flight period is from end July to early September and sunshine encourages males to fly almost continuously and females to bask. Being a sunny morning on 19th August I found myself in the right place at the right time.

MQI “Sightings” and Munro “Heightings” Joint Venture



One of the projects for the Munro Society’s summer heightings programme was Ruadh Stac Mor in Fisherfield. This already had a summer MQI but its close neighbour A’Mhaighdean didn’t. It was obvious, therefore, that the opportunity to fill that gap for such a remote mountain should be taken while the two hours of data collection took place.

Once I had handed over my share of the survey equipment (all 3.5 kilos of GPS) to surveyor Graham Jackson I headed off to A’Mhaighdean. I had intended to re-ascend to Ruadh Stac Mor but Stewart Logan dropped off to keep me company beside Fuar Loch Mor while we waited for the rest of the party to join us after finishing the heighting. One of the benefits of the “joint venture” was the wide variety of flora and fauna we were able to identify as a group with everyone trying to contribute. We had some great sightings including a family of peregrine falcons nestling on the crags at Beinn Airigh Charr and a very wide range of flora including spotted orchid and field gentian. My best memory was sitting beside Fuar Loch Mor watching the gentle breeze creating ripples on the surface which the sun then turned into sparkling diamonds. A truly magic moment. Glen Breaden also completed an MQI for Ruadh Stac Mor and needless to say both mountains rated 30 on the day. Glen summed it up.

“Everything for me was perfect – walk-in, scenery, views, fauna, eagles, lochans, weather conditions, visibility, paths and tracks, photo opportunities, great company, quality day, complete rainbow from summit, only thing missing was my energy level! A truly outstanding and memorable day – it cannot get better than this!”

News from the Furths

We received summer MQIs from Marion Jones for Ill Crag, Broad Crag and Helvellyn. Marion’s prose is always enjoyable as I am sure you will agree when you read her aesthetic/physical response.

“The Borrowdale area of the Lakes never disappoints. Seathwaite is home to Wordsworth’s Fraternal Yews, which were visible across the valley. Shepherds were returning newly shorn sheep to the fells so it was impressive watching sheepdogs at work. Once I left the path at Esk Hause I was in new territory thoroughly enjoying the scramble to the summit. Although it was only grade 1 it felt quite serious scrambling alone. A challenge! Clear views lower down revealed the Langdale Pikes but Great Gable and Scafell were shrouded in mist unfortunately. A good mountain day.”

The Importance of Evidence

Evidence, particularly in relation to fauna, is something that should be noted, if seen, when completing MQIs. Some evidence is easy to spot other not so easy. I would think we can all recognise the droppings of sheep and deer or of grouse, ptarmigan and hare. Fox scats are quite common but Pine Marten scats and Otter

sprints less so. Mole hills are easily identified and Vole runs can readily be spotted as the snow melts in Spring. Location on the hill can be an important clue to identity e.g. is it ptarmigan or grouse, sheep or deer? The book *Hostile Habitats*, published by SMT, gives helpful guidance on some of the more common evidence.



I took the picture on the left when ascending The Forcan Ridge in June. There were two examples high on the ascent. I had never seen anything like it before and asked several regular hillgoers if they could shed any light on it. None could. I also asked a friend who is expert on birds what he thought. He confessed to being at a loss but did offer a suggestion - could it be ptarmigan droppings? It certainly looked nothing like any ptarmigan droppings I had ever seen!



To my surprise, however, I think he could be right. I was on Sgorr nam Fiannaigh recently and took this picture of ptarmigan droppings. It looks like ptarmigan can get the human equivalent of diarrhoea and what I probably saw on The Saddle was indeed ptarmigan droppings long since dried and gone hard. Has anyone got a better idea?

Autumn Targets for MQIs

The Tracker shows which mountains still require an autumn MQI. All 143 are equally important in the long run but some of the Sections are nearly complete so it would be good to see them covered in green before Autumn is over.

For Autumn the numbers required by Section are:

<i>S1</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>S3</i>	<i>S4</i>	<i>S5</i>	<i>S6</i>	<i>S7</i>
7	9	14	13	3	3	5
<i>S8</i>	<i>S9</i>	<i>S10</i>	<i>S11</i>	<i>S12</i>	<i>S13</i>	<i>S14</i>
6	5	18	10	10	7	17
<i>S15</i>	<i>S16</i>	<i>S17</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Welsh</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Total</i>
3	2	2	4	1	4	143

Is there anyone willing to take on some of these and do Autumn completions? Even better, is someone willing to “adopt a section”? Also, how about completing the outstanding Autumn Furths? I would welcome contact from anyone willing to take up the challenge of particular mountains or sections.

Next Edition

The intention is to issue the next edition, following the “Autumn MQI Season”, in early January. Please let me know what you think of this edition and, if you feel so inclined, offer your submissions, comments and/or photographs for inclusion next time. If this Bulletin is to continue on a regular basis it needs your support and input!

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