

Sorosphaerula veronicae in the Outer Hebrides

Paul A. Smith¹

¹ S3RI, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BJ.

p.a.smith@soton.ac.uk

A spring visit to North Tolsta, Lewis (vc110) to look at the sand dune flora led to a certain amount of hands and knees work looking at tiny plants, and when

there is such a detailed inspection there is always the chance that a gall will turn up too. There was plenty of *Erophila verna*, which in other places in the Outer Hebrides hosts a weevil gall, *Ceutorhyncus hirtulus*, but it wasn't in evidence here. There were interesting little *Veronica* plants, however, and while some were clearly *V. arvensis*, others looked possibly different so I collected a specimen. It turned out to also be *V. arvensis*, but had a gall – collected entirely by accident! It keyed out to *Sorosphaerula veronicae* (J. Schröter) Neuhauser & Kirchmair, 2011, a fungus-like organism now classified with the protozoa. In this specimen it formed a swelling in the stem, solid inside and smooth on the outside, though it may also create swellings in leaf veins and roots (Redfern, Shirley & Bloxham 2011). It was previously very rare, but there have been several records since 1999, including one other record on *V. arvensis*. Whether this is a change in distribution or, perhaps more likely, an increased awareness is not known. Nonetheless, it is interesting to have a record from the north to supplement previous southern finds.

Reference

REDFERN, M., SHIRLEY, P. & BLOXHAM, M. 2011 *British plant galls*, 2nd edition. Preston Montford: Field Studies Council.



Figure 1: *Sorosphaerula veronicae* gall (arrowed) on *Veronica arvensis*, Sidhean Mor, Lewis, vc110, NB540485, 13 May 2021. Photo: Paul A. Smith.