

Recording in Wexford (H12), 2012

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2012 has been an exceptionally busy year in the county, as on average I only spent 8 days a month at home. The flow of records has been well above the planned 20,000. This was helped with giving advice to BSBI and non-BSBI members on MapMate. By the end of the year 29,456 records had been entered into my MapMate for 2012. These came in via e-mail, excel spreadsheets, MapMate syncs, paper recording cards, phone calls, text messages and word of mouth. One out of three records was made by others than myself. I also received many photos to help with identification as well as a few specimens to cast my eyes over. In exchange for the records received I try and tell the active recorders in the county of any of the good native finds I make.

I have started to computerise records from literature for the county. I am very grateful for Paula O'Meara for searching place names on old maps and the internet so that records can be assigned at least a hectad. Jim Hurley was kind enough to supply a species list from the 1980s for the Keeragh Islands, the only records in my database for these islands. I checked my database for errors and duplicated records, over 20,000 records were deleted or edited. After the corrections by the close of 2012 my MapMate holds 148,916 records for the county.

The year was kicked off on 27 January when I found *Allium cepa* (Onion) on waste ground in New Ross (S71.27). This was one of 24 new county records (NCR) in 2012. Of these, only one was native: A hybrid marsh-orchid – *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* x *kerryensis* from a marsh at Ballinesker (T11.28).

Paula O'Meara found the second new county record of the year on 11 March; two clumps of *Lysichiton americanus* (American Skunk-cabbage) on the bank of a drainage dyke, escaped from Kilmokee House (S68.16). Paula also had a number of other non-native species from waste ground-abandoned building sites at Campile: *Nerine bowdenii* and *Begonia semperflorens* (Wax Begonia) on the south side (S72.15) of the village and from the north side (S73.16) *Allium schoenoprasum* (Chives) and *Oxalis tetraphylla* (Four-leaved Pink-sorrel), all of which I took a look at. At St Mary's, Rosslare GAA grounds at Tagoat (T09.11) Paula found a large stand of *Gnaphalium luteoalbum* (Jersey Cudweed). Her best find of the year must be *Valerianella dentata* (Narrow-fruited Cornsalad) (see photo on page 40) from the disused railway line at Campile. Roy Watson and Frankie Tennant found two strands of *Cuscuta epithymum* (Dodder) on the dunes at Chour (T09.04), the first reported county record since 1992. Their *Vulpia fasciculata* (Dune Fescue) here fills in a gap for this species along the south Wexford coast. *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) on the edge of the parking area on the edge of the dunes at Tilladavin (T03.05) was a new site for this orchid as was their *Trifolium scabrum* (Rough Clover) on the bare track nearby. *Allium ampeloprasum* var. *ampeloprasum* is found at several sites on road banks and verges at Carrick (T10), Zoë Devlin was kind enough to give me map references for the sites, and embarrassed her daughter, by asking at the post office in the village if it could be possible to arrange to stop having the road bank from being cut where the *Allium* was growing. The post mistress was on Zoë's side and made all the arrangements. After all the efforts to protect this *Allium* somebody came along and picked the flower heads. Mary Foley reported *Helminthotheca echioides* (Bristly Oxtongue) from Crosstown Cemetery (T0423), a species that has become very common in the southern half of the county in the last few years.

While driving along near the county border on the 23 April at Drumderry (S89.59) a patch of *Geum rivale* (Water Avens) was spotted, a new site, and the first county record since 1972. One spike of *Orchis mascula* (Early-purple Orchid) was also on the road bank. The following day a visit to a disturbed corner of a field at Busherstown (S89.11) turned up the county's most visited plant of the year, *Lamium confertum* (Northern Dead-nettle). Last reported from the county in 1995 by Ro FitzGerald. Here also for good comparison were *L. hybridum* (Cut-leaved Dead-nettle) and *L. purpureum* (Red Dead-nettle). Just up the road a garden was covered in *Ranunculus parviflorus* (Small-flowered Buttercup), and on a road verge a *Paeonia officinalis* (Garden Peony) was in full flower and at the base of a ditch was a fine clump of *Dracunculus vulgaris* (Dragon Arum), both NCR. I went and had a look for *Rubus spectabilis* (Salmonberry) on the 22 May along a wooded stream below Dunbrody Country House Hotel (S72.10), found here in 1993 by Ro FitzGerald and John Akeroyd. Very easy to find! But rather alarming as it was extremely well established in a number of woods in the area. On a roadside wall by where I had parked the car were nine clumps of *Sedum dasyphyllum* (Thick-leaved Stonecrop) a NCR. A month later I noticed *Echium vulgare* (Viper's-bugloss) growing on a heap of soil in a small field at Rocksborough (T05.18), I stopped to take a look and found there was also a single plant of *Anethum graveolens* (Dill), a NCR.

A visit to a working sandpit to see *Clinopodium acinos* (Basil Thyme) at Drumderry (S90.58) on 4 June proved to be a very rewarding morning. A large clump of *Cladium mariscus* (Great Fen-sedge) was an unexpected surprise in a wet corner. Here it grew with *Eleogiton fluitans* (Floating Club-rush) and *Carex vesicaria* (Bladder-sedge). The bare open dry sandy areas were covered in large quantities of *Echium vulgare*, *Erigeron acris* (Blue Fleabane), *Filago minima* (Small Cudweed), *F. vulgaris* (Common Cudweed) and *Sanguisorba minor* subsp. *minor* (Salad Burnet); all rare species in the county.

On the 1 July Megan Morris took me to see a pear she had found in a hedge near a farm at Moddybeg (S89.21). After much debate and another visit later in the year I came to the conclusion it was *Pyrus pyraster* (Wild Pear). What was remarkable about this pear was that there were dozens of young trees, many over a metre tall. It was not easy to tell whether these were suckers or had arisen from seed. Seán Meehan joined me for a walk along the coast at Courtown (T20.56) the next day. Our first surprise was *Artemisia stelleriana* (Hoary Mugwort) self-sown on the harbour walls in several places, a NCR. Along the seafront we had *Hordeum murinum* (Wall Barley); the first reported record here since 1965. Our best record was two patches of *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (Bird's-foot Clover) on an area of mown grass. This site is 50 kilometres north of the nearest county site at St Helen's.

Dominic Berridge and I led a walk on 14 July for the Wexford Naturalist's Field Club at Johnstown Castle (T01.16) gardens looking at invasive species. We had a good look at a number of the species that had become naturalised on the garden walls including *Berberis aggregata* (Clustered Barberry), a NCR. *Oxalis stricta* (Upright Yellow-sorrel) and *Selaginella kraussiana* (Krauss's Clubmoss) are both well naturalised in the lawns.

Zoë Devlin showed me *Veronica agrestis* (Green Field-speedwell) in her garden on the 13 August, a species I had not seen in the county before. While out with Jackie O'Connell, Pete and Zoë that day at Rostonstown (T08.05) we stopped at a large yellow patch in a roadside ditch. This turned out to be *Lysimachia vulgaris* (Yellow Loosestrife), the first reported county record since 1990. Two days later came, the surprise of the year as I drove past two

large patches of *Betonica officinalis* (Betony) at Wellingtonbridge (S85.13) on a steep heathy wooded bank, a road I had driven along many times in the last couple years. Several hundred plants were in full flower. This could be the site found by W. MacMillan (Colgan & Scully, 1898), near the head of Bannow Bay. The head of Bannow Bay which is less than a kilometre away. The only other extant site in the county is down to seven plants.

On my way to Dublin on 17 August I made an early morning stop at Hollyfort (T12.64) as Janet Whelehan wanted to show me *Campanula trachelium* (Nettle-leaved Bellflower) growing on the roadside, found here the previous year by Deborah Darcy. There were four plants, two had white flowers. Even though I would like to say it is native, I think it is more than likely to be a garden escape. A visit to the site on the 23 September to see if I could find anymore bellflower along the nearby Bann River was unsuccessful. Several patches of *Mimulus moschatus* (Musk) were in a field on the bank of the river, a NCR. Keeping the Musk company was a profusion of *Mimulus guttatus* (Monkeyflower). As I walked through the field I kept tapping all the fruiting heads to see if they rattled. This kept me amused for a while and was a good way to see if the plant was fertile.

Jim Hurley kindly arranged permission from Patrick and Liezel Gratton-Bellow the owners of Saltee Island Little (see photo 2 on page 2) for a small group to visit on 15 September. Before we started the job of recording Patrick showed us one of the rooms of his house. As it was a little on the damp side, eight species of fern had made the walls of the room home. There were several clumps of *Asplenium marinum* (Sea Spleenwort), a fern that proved to be common on the sea-cliffs. It was the only place we saw *A. scolopendrium* (Hart's-tongue). We settled down to freshly brewed tea and coffee provided by Liezel and a homemade rhubarb pie that Rose Hurley (see photo 1 on page 2) had brought across. *Erodium maritimum* (Sea Stork's-bill) was plentiful in many places in the short turf along the cliff-top edge. *Lemna minuta* (Least Duckweed) was found in several of the small marshy areas. We had a list of the 81 species Ro FitzGerald recorded in 1990 to work with. We could not find 16 of these. An additional 42 species were added to the list. The group worked well as a team, as each member found at least one species not seen by anyone else. There were many seals and their pups to be seen in the coves. A big distraction to some of the group. A very enjoyable day was had by all. Other NCRs recorded by the author unless stated, not mentioned above are: *Vinca difformis* (Intermediate Periwinkle) – large patch on road bank, Ballyhackbeg (S81.12); *Persicaria amplexicaulis* (Red Bistort) – patch on field bank, Cushenstown (S77.25), Paula O'Meara; *Oxalis exilis* (Least Yellow-sorrel) – large patch on mown verge, Kilcarby (S97.36); *Helleborus foetidus* (Stinking Hellebore) – one on waste ground, Strandfield (T05.19); *Aster x salignus* – bank of River Slaney, Ballyhoge (S97.30); *Jasminum nudiflorum* (Winter Jasmine) – wall of ruin, Ballyhoge (S98.29); *Pulmonaria officinalis* (Lungwort) – waste ground, Aughermon (S90.15); *Cotoneaster salicifolius* (Willow-leaved Cotoneaster) – one bush on waste ground, Wexford (T05.21), det. J. Fryer.

Reference:

Colgan, N. & Scully, R.W. (1898) Contributions towards a Cybele Hibernica.
Second edition. Edward Ponsonby, Dublin.