

Co. Down recording in 2011

Monthly field meetings were organised in support of the second year of recording for the proposed flora of Co. Down, and to make records under the new date-class. Thanks go to Margaret Marshall, Roger Field and Mark Wright who sent records to me.

Several visits were made along the outer Ards peninsula in early April to record *Cochlearia* spp. and while at Cloghy, *Stellaria pallida* was re-found at its first recorded site in Co. Down. In mid-April, six attended the first of the monthly field meetings at Ballyquintin at the southern-most tip of the Ards peninsula. Here, much of the agricultural land is now owned by the National Trust, which on taking over appeared to have changed the husbandry of the fields. However, when we visited, previously 'good' fields had become virtually weed-free. A very small area had been left close to the old coastguard look-out, and here a wide range of species was found.

Roger Field recorded eleven very small *Botrychium lunaria* plants at a single station at Murlough in late April. He also found *Viola canina*, *Myosotis ramosissima* and *Erophila glabrescens*.

Four attended the second monthly meeting at Hollymount NNR in mid-May. *Hottonia palustris* was re-found, but it was still to flower and was only re-found with some difficulty due to marshy ground, scrubby trees and the spring growth of herbs.

Over two hundred species were recorded on a very pleasant walk on newly developed access paths at Sketrick, Strangford Lough in late May, a number swollen by numerous introductions including planted *Gunnera tinctoria*.

The Belfast Harbour Estate was visited in mid-June to record *Ophrys apifera* growing on land-fill by Heron Road. *Dactylorhiza purpurella* and *D. fuchsii* were also noted.

BSBI had requested that historical records of *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* be checked, but all searches were fruitless. The first, at Ballyalloly Lough, where several interesting records were made by Praeger, is now mostly taken over by reed-mace and taller sedges, and has very small suitable areas of open water. It was absent too from Derryboy Lough in late July. *Berula erecta*, *Spirodela polyrhiza*, *Lemna minuta* and *Azolla filiculoides* were present at Derryboy together with a blue-green alga thickly coating emergent vegetation. It was absent from Barrick Hill quarry near Gilford when Julia Nunn, Roger Field and I looked, and from Loughinisland Lake where again there was a thick blue-green alga and absent too from Clea Lakes in late July. The waters of the Clea Lakes remain clear and are extensive. It was possible to search only the northern shore, but this was very productive, producing large stands of *Butomus umbellatus* with *Sparganium emersum*, *Oenanthe aquatilis*, *Lythrum portula*, *Littorella uniflora* and *Berula erecta*.

In early August, the north shore road at Killyleagh was walked and *Asplenium marinum* was found growing on a wall north of the harbour, *Hieracium aurantiacum* on waste ground and on the upper shore, a single plant of *Phalaris canariensis*.

There was an excellent turn-out with the Belfast Naturalists Field Club on 6 August when the old railway line north of Dundrum was walked. The ground included salt marsh, brackish and fresh-water marsh. The pace was slower than usual, and time was taken to point out identification features of numerous species. Progress completely halted for a short time in the afternoon, as we

walked out into Dundrum Bay to watch the Red Arrows make a spectacular display at the Newcastle Air Show. A good range of species was found, including *Vicia sylvatica*, but we failed to re-find *Crithmum maritimum*, recorded separately by Paul Hackney and I several years ago.

In mid-August, the first of two meetings for the BSBI took place at Tollymore Forest Park. Fiona Devery, Margaret Marshall and I walked along the Azalea Path to the Shimna River Bridge where *Epilobium brunnescens* x *E. montanum* was found. At the Hermitage, *Polysticum aculeatum* was noted growing at its known station. *Festuca altissima* appeared to be spreading as several stations were noted and a single plant of *Carex pallescens* was found. *Dryopteris aemula* and *Oreopteris limbosperma* were found by the track to the Spinkwee River. *Melampyrum pratense* was found close to the bridge, but unfortunately, the water level in the river was too high to search effectively for filmy-ferns in the Spinkwee gorge.

The second meeting took place at Strangford, when four of us walked around the headland to the north of the village. *Erigeron karvinskianus* and *Erinus alpinus* were noted in the village, but we failed to find *Briza maxima* that I had recorded several years ago, possibly because the site was strimmed. *Acaena caesiiglauca* (NMW), a new record for Ireland, was found growing on the same wall that Ian McNeill found *Arenaria balearica* five years ago and, judging by the size of the plant, had been established for some years. Unfortunately *Arenaria balearica* was not found.

A second new record for Ireland was made in Lisburn the following day when *Arabidopsis arenosa* was found growing in mud on a footpath. In the absence of a botanist at the Ulster Museum, this plant was sent to Tim Rich at the National Museum of Wales for identification and was retained by him.

Graham Day

18 Jan 2012