

# THE FLORA OF EASTER ROSS RAILWAY STATIONS

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The railway lines to Wick and Kyle of Lochalsh survived the Beeching cuts and have continued to provide a picturesque route with mainly quiet stations. 12 stations are in VC106 (E Ross) and these are: Muir of Ord, Dingwall, Alness, Invergordon, Fearn, Tain, Ardgay, Culrain, Garve, Lochluichart, Achanalt and Achnasheen. Over the years have only been lightly maintained and provide a colourful display of flowers. However, more recently there may have been more active management and the central areas of platforms have often become lifeless, although plants survive better around the car parks and goods yards.

Lists of plants were made for 9 of the stations in 2000 and the other 3 (on the Kyle line) in 2005 before the management became more active. 2 visits were made between May and August and plants in publically accessible areas including platforms, car parks and the edges of goods yards were recorded. Obviously planted species were excluded.

A similar survey was repeated in 2011. Records made in other years were excluded.

Results: 227 vascular plant species were noted in total on the 12 stations . 72 of the species recorded in the first survey were not found again in the second. 31 species were seen on the 2011 visits that had not been recorded in 2000-2005.

There was a decline of 2 or more station locations for 25 species and 13 species increased by 2 or more stations over the period of the study.

In 2000-2005 the following occurred on 10 or more stations: *Agrostis capillaries*, *Bellis perennis*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Cerastium*

*fontanum, Festuca rubra, Holcus lanatus, Poa annua, Ranunculus repens, Senecio vulgaris, Sagina procumbens, Sonchus asper.*

*In 2011 the following were found on 10 or more stations: Chamerion angustifolium, Epilobium montanum, Holcus lanatus, Matricularia discoidea, Poa annua, Ranunculus repens, Senecio jacobaea, Trifolium repens and Urtica dioica.*

Plants typical of a variety of habitats were present indicating the various station locations. Those of particular note included *Orobanche minor*, a new VC record and well outside its usual geographical area. *Crassula tilleaea* was first found in Easter Ross at Dingwall and Invergordon stations, where it lives on a little precariously. The only recent sites for *Senecio squalidus* and *Trifolium arvense* (not in this sample) and most of the *Vulpia myuros* locations are at stations.

Conclusion: Railway stations, perhaps especially on branch lines, are well worth looking at for plant interest. There is some suggestion that recent changes in site management may have resulted in a slight loss of some floral diversity and quantity. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that these two surveys were not conducted in a completely standardised way and access to some station areas had altered by the time of the second visits.

Although the desire to have tidy stations is understandable, there is also a case for allowing wild flowers to flourish in some parts of the sites.

I am very grateful to those who helped with this survey including the late Barbara Ballinger, members of the Inverness Botany Group and Mary Dean.

**Species List:** *Anthriscus sylvestris*, *Arrhenatherum elatius*, *Arabidopsis thaliana*, *Aira praecox*, *Acer pseudoplanatus*, *Alopecurus geniculatus*, *Agrostis capillaries*, *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Anthyllis vulneraria*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Asplenium ruta-muraria*, *Asplenium trichomanes*, *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Angelica sylvestris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Aphanes arvensis*, *Aphanes australis*, *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Abies grandis*, *Aira caryophylla*, *Alchemilla mollis*, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, *Achillea ptarmica*, *Bellis perennis*, *Betula pendula*, *Betula pubescens*, *Brassica napus*, *Buddleja davidii*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Cirsium arvense*, *Cirsium vulgare*, *Crepis capillaries*, *Cytisus scoparius*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Capsella bursa-pastoris*, *Cerastium fontanum*, *Cerastium semidecandrum*, *Cerastium glomeratum*, *Cynosurus cristatus*, *Cotoneaster sp*, *Cardamine hirsuta*, *Cardamine flexuosa*, *Calystegia sepium*, *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Chenopodium album*, *Crassula tillaea*, *Claytonia perfoliata*, *Chamoecyparis lawsoniana*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Dactylis glomerata*, *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Dianthus deltoides (cultivar)*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Elytrigia repens*, *Epilobium brunnescens*, *Epilobium montanum*, *Epilobium obscurum*, *Equisetum arvense*, *Euphorbia peplus*, *Euphrasia arctica*, *Euphrasia officinalis*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Festuca arundinacea*, *Festuca ovina*, *Festuca pratensis*, *Festuca rubra*, *Festuca vivipara*, *Filago minima*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Fumaria capreolata*, *Fumaria muralis*, *Fumaria officinalis*, *Galium aparine*, *Geranium dissectum*, *Geranium molle*, *Geranium robertianum*, *Geranium pratense*, *Glechoma hederacea*, *Gnaphalium uliginosum*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Holcus mollis*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Heracleum sphondylium*, *Hieracium agg.* *Helianthemum nummularium*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Hypericum pulchrum*, *Hedera helix*, *Hesperis matronalis*, *Hyacinthoides x massartiana*, *Juncus buffonius*, *Juncus bulbosus*, *Juncus conglomerates*, *Juncus effusus*, *Juncus squarrosus*, *Leucanthemum vulgare*, *Lathyrus pratensis*, *Lupinus x regalis*, *Lolium multiflorum*, *Lolium perenne*, *Linum catharticum*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Linaria purpurea*, *Lapsana communis*, *Laburnum anagyroides*, *Luzula campestris*, *Luzula multiflora*, *Luzula sylvatica*, *Larix decidua*, *Leontodon autumnalis*, *Lamium purpurea*, *Lunaria annua*, *Maricularia discoidea*, *Mecanopsis cambrica*, *Medicago lupulina*, *Mentha spicata*, *Montia fontana*, *Myosotis arvensis*, *Myosotis discolor*, *Myrrhis odorata*, *Odonites verna*, *Oenothera glazoviana*, *Ononis repens*, *Orobanche minor*, *Potentilla anserina*, *Poa annua*, *Poa humilis*, *Poa pratensis*, *Poa trivialis*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Plantago major*, *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, *Papaver dubium*, *Papaver pseudorientale*, *Papaver somniferum*, *Polygonum aviculare*, *Picea abies*, *Picea sitchensis*, *Phleum pratense*, *Pinus sylvestris*, *Persicaria maculosa*, *Pilosella aurantiaca*, *Prunella vulgaris*, *Phalaris arundinacea*, *Polemonium caeruleum*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Rumex acetosa*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Rumex crispus*, *Rumex longifolius*, *Rumex obtusifolius*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Rubus idaeus*, *Rosa sp*, *Rhinathus minor*, *Ribes sangiuneum*, *Rhododendron ponticum*, *Senecio jacobaea*, *Senecio squalidus*, *Senecio viscosus*, *Senecio vulgaris*, *Sonchus arvensis*, *Sonchus asper*, *Sonchus oleraceus*, *Silene dioica*, *Silene x hampeana*, *Silene latifolia*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Sagina apetala*, *Sagina maritima*, *Sagina procumbens*, *Salix aurita*, *Salix caprea*, *Salix cinerea*, *Salix viminalis*, *Sedum acre*, *Sedum album*, *Stellaria graminea*, *Stellaria holostea*, *Stellaria media*, *Spergularia marina*, *Spergularia rubra*, *Sinapsis arvensis*, *Sisymbrium officinale*, *Stachys sylvatica*, *Symphoricarpos albus*, *Spiraea sp*, *Schrophularia nodosa*, *Taraxacum agg*, *Tanacetum parthenium*, *Tanacetum vulgare*, *Trifolium campestre*, *Trifolium dubium*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Trifolium repens*, *Tripleurospermum inodorum*, *Tussilago farfara*, *Triticum aestivum*, *Tragopogon pratensis*, *Tropaeolum majus*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Ulmus glabra*, *Urtica dioica*, *Valeriana officinalis*, *Verbascum thapsus*, *Veronica arvensis*, *Veronica chaemedrys*, *Veronica serpyllifolia*, *Vicia cracca*, *Vicia hirsuta*, *Vicia sativa*, *Vicia sepium*, *Vulpia myuros*, *Viola arvensis*, *Viola tricolor*,

**Species Lost:** *Alopecurus geniculatus*, *Asplenium ruta-muraria*, *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Angelica sylvestris*, *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Abies grandis*, *Betula pendula*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Cotoneaster* sp, *Cardamine hirsuta*, *Calystegia sepium*, *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Chenopodium album*, *Claytonia perfoliata*, *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Cerastium semidecandrum*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Euphorbia peplus*, *Epilobium brunnescens*, *Epilobium obscurum*, *Euphrasia arctia*, *Euphrasia officinalis*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Festuca arundinacea*, *Festuca ovina*, *Festuca pratensis*, *Filago minima*, *Fumaria capreolata*, *Glechoma hederacea*, *Helianthemum nummularium*, *Hesperis matronalis*, *Holcus mollis*, *Juncus bulbosus*, *Juncus conglomerates*, *Juncus squarrosus*, *Larix decidua*, *Linaria purpurea*, *Linum catharticum*, *Lolium multiflorum*, *Lupinus x regalis*, *Luzula sylvatica*, *Medicago lupulina*, *Mentha spicata*, *Montia fontana*, *Oenothera glazioviana*, *Ononis repens*, *Papaver somniferum*, *Papaver orientale*, *Persicaria maculosa*, *Picea abies*, *Poa humilis*, *Poa trivialis*, *Rhinanthus minor*, *Sagina maritima*, *Schrophularia nodosa*, *Senecio viscosus*, *Sisymbrium officinalis*, *Spiraea* sp, *sonchus arvensis*, *Stachys sylvatica*, *Tanacetum parthenium*, *Tropaeolum majus*, *Trifolium campestre*, *Triticum aestivum*, *Viola arvensis*, *Viola tricolor*.

**Species Gained:** *Achillea ptarmica*, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, *Aphanes arvensis*, *Asplenium trichomanes*, *Brassica napus*, *Cerastium glomeratum*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, *Fumaria muralis*, *Fumaria officinalis*, *Geranium dissectum*, *Geranium robertianum*, *Hyacinthoides x massartiana*, *Lamium purpureum*, *Luzula campestris*, *Luzula multiflorum*, *Lunaria annua*, *Orobanche minor*, *Phalaris arundinacea*, *Polemonium caeruleum*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Rhododendron ponticum*, *Rumex longifolius*, *Sagina apetala*, *Salix viminalis*, *Sambucus nigra*, *Silene x hampeana*, *Stellaria holostea*, *Veronica chaemedris*, *Veronica officinalis*.