

Field Botany in Dunbartonshire

Newsletter - August 2021

Progress

Since the official Launch of the Dunbartonshire Botany Network on 22nd May, there has been such a lot going on! It's all about finding, identifying and recording plants growing in the wild: as you'll read below, a lot of ground has been covered and a rich diversity of plants found and enjoyed.



Grahame and Stan on steep ground above Loch Lomond

We have held 12 outings so far, and there are plenty more in the pipeline. (Please request a copy of the Outings Programme if you don't have it already.) And, of the 48 people who have joined the network, more than half have been actively involved - whether at arranged outings or by contributing records on their own.

The level of energy, commitment and learning has been remarkable, showing that the lofty aim of refreshing the botanical record for all 700 **monads** (map squares) over a ten-year span may actually be achievable!

Over 13,000 records* have already been uploaded to the BSBI database. (this surpasses the previous best of 10,802 records back in 1991)

Of these, more than half are New Monad Records (plants never recorded in that monad before).

43 monads have had over 100 species recorded this year so far.

734 different species have been found - that's means we've seen over 40% of the known Dunbartonshire plant diversity in three months!



Rubus chamaemorus (Cloudberry)

* for our purposes, a 'record' is simply a note of one species in one monad

Highlights

Here are a few of the plants spotted recently:



Clockwise from top left:

Gymnadenia borealis (Heath Fragrant-orchid)

Saxifraga aizoides (Yellow Saxifrage)

Luzula campestris (Field Wood-rush) - snapped by iPhone through a hand lens

Spergularia rubra (Sand Spurrey) - by same technique

Saxifraga stellaris (Starry Saxifrage) - now *Micranthes stellaris*

Chance conversation

It was a glorious summer's day as I stood on Kilcreggan Pier, awaiting the arrival of the passenger ferry from Greenock. Angus Hannah, my colleague, mentor and friend, was visiting for the day to assist in re-finding as many as possible of the local Bramble microspecies originally recorded by the late Allan Stirling over thirty years previously.



Panorama of Renfrewshire - from Erskine to the Cloch lighthouse - from Kilcreggan

I fell into conversation with the Piermaster who, it turned out, is very interested in botany - not the recording of plants but foraging for edible species!

He told me of various wonders:

- harvesting *Urtica dioica* (Nettle) seeds to sprinkle over food
- using young seeds of *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan Balsam) as an alternative to pine nuts
- adding fresh *Cytisus scoparius* (Broom) flowers to add subtle flavour to a glass of water
- using *Sambucus nigra* (Elder) berries to make homemade Elderberry Mead, with the option of adding a little of that to fizzy Elderflower cordial for a refreshing long drink on a hot day

He explained that he always researches everything thoroughly, to ensure health benefits rather than toxicity, and always picks well away from roads, chemicals and dog-walking areas!

Having lived locally almost all his life ("I'm not a local . . . I moved here when I was two"), and following in his father's footsteps as Piermaster, he knows all the best haunts for edible plants.

Michael Philip

Recipe Corner

Arising from further chat about the above, it has been suggested that readers should send in their top recipes or tips using locally-available, edible wild plants.

So please send them in! (One qualification, though: heresay or 'googling' is forbidden - you must have direct, personal experience of any item you submit.)

Identification by microscope (A word from Peter Wiggins)

I'm happy to receive specimens of any of the plants below, so that I can improve my identification skills with a microscope.

Polypodium (Polypody fern)

Please send me a couple of pinnae (the 'teeth' on the "comb") which have the round sporing bodies (sori) underneath. They need to be mature, i.e. orange to brown. If the fresh shoots don't have any sori, look around - there are usually some dead fronds below which will be fine.

Montia fontana (Blinks)

Blinks can easily be taken down to subspecies by seed. Please send me any plants with closed seed pods.

Callitriche (Water-starwort - any species)

These Water Starworts are fruiting now. I need a shoot with fruits. If there is a flower with pollen then wonderful! Pop it in a sealable freezer bag with damp tissue either side and a description of where it was growing (for example muddy pool, lake, stream, ditch, canal).

Please send specimens (as advised above), along with an accurate grid reference and a date for your find, and include your name, address and email.

I will let you know what I think the identification is, and why. If I am sufficiently sure, I can also send details to the relevant Vice-county Recorder to ensure that they are recorded in the BSBI database.

Thank you.

Peter Wiggins, 26 Braidpark Drive, Glasgow G46 6NB



Polypodium sori have distinctive patterns when seen under the microscope



This mass of aquatic vegetation is simply a colony of lots of individual *Callitriche* plants. Specimens can readily be hooked out using a walking pole, placed in a plastic bag or tub - and sent in!

Statistics

For those who like facts and figures, here is our updated 'Totaliser'.
In each edition, a selection of statistics is shown - just to keep you in touch with progress.

The key figure is the number of 'well-recorded' monads. To produce a big list (preferably including the re-finding of a high proportion of historic records and/or significantly increasing the overall count) for each of our 700 monads over ten years, we are aiming to achieve around 70 monads per year, i.e. 10%.

Totaliser

	<u>2021</u>	<u>Project total</u>
Total records made	13,028	(same in first year)
Total species recorded	734	
Monads visited, with at least one record made	335 (47.9%)	
Monads visited with no previous record	27	
Monad with highest species count	NS2982 (261) (Helensburgh)	
Monads regarded as 'well-recorded'	65 (9.3%)	
Monads where total record is current <small>(i.e. 100% of species <u>ever</u> recorded in that monad have been found or re-found within the Project)</small>	36	
New Vice-County Records <small>(i.e. species never recorded in Dunbartonshire before)</small>	33	
Number of people in 'Team 99' network	48	
Number of different people on outings	28	
Number of group outings held	12	

(correct as at 31st July, 2021)

One of the encouraging factors as our Team has developed is the number of people contributing plant lists on their own. If you would like to have a go at this, how about using 2022 to compile a list of plant species in your 'home monad' - i.e. the square in which you live, or work?

Brush up your skills during the remainder of this season, then go for it in 2022!
We will give full instructions about such recording at the start of next season.

Keep in touch

You are warmly invited to join in our activities at any point. No previous experience is required. Full details of venues and dates are in our Outings Programme.

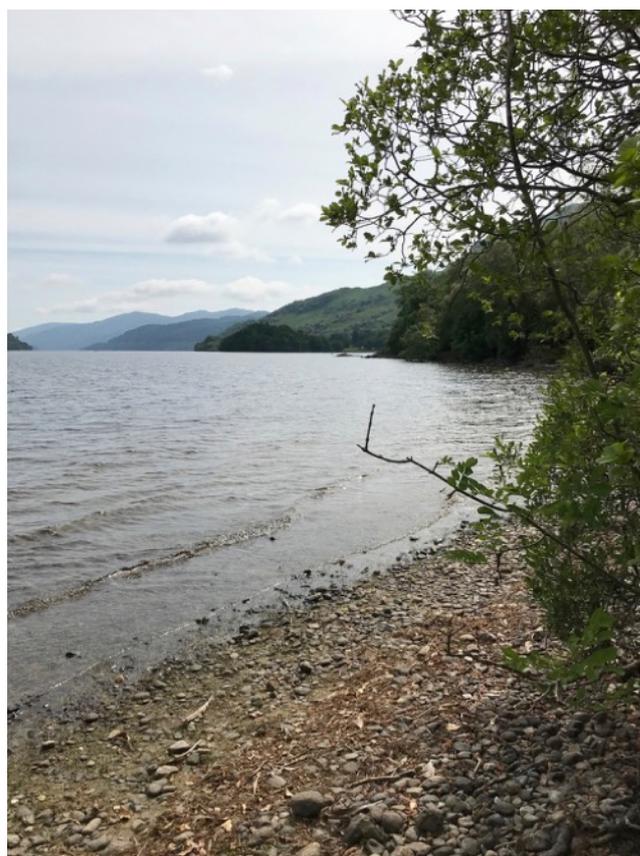
Please request and complete our team Questionnaire if you have not already done so, and remember to spread the word that we need people in various other roles (photography, data-handling, organising - or even editing this Newsletter!) who can help facilitate plant recording even if they do not feel able to take part personally in field activity.

You are welcome to email Michael at any time. He will also be happy to have a go at identifying plants from photographs if you get stuck!

Please check out the Dunbartonshire page on the BSBI website: <https://bsbi.org> (choose the 'Get involved' tab and click the county shape on the map)

We're looking forward to seeing you whenever you can next join in!

Michael Philip (BSBI acting Recorder, vc99)
email: botany@opus44.co.uk



View southwards, down the western shore of Loch Lomond, from Rubha Ban

Photo credits*:

Grahame and Stan on the hillside	Fiona Merrilees, north of Glen Douglas, 26th June, 2021
<i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>	Fiona Merrilees, north of Glen Douglas, 26th June, 2021
<i>Gymnadenia borealis</i>	Stan Campbell, Carman Muir, 7th July, 2021
<i>Saxifraga aizoides</i>	Stan Campbell, Beinn Bhreac, 17th July, 2021
<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Fiona Merrilees, Ballagan, near Balloch, 12th June, 2021
<i>Spergularia rubra</i>	Fiona Merrilees, Glen Fruin road summit, 24th July, 2021
<i>Saxifraga stellaris</i> (now <i>Micranthes stellaris</i>)	Stan Campbell, Beinn Bhreac, 17th July, 2021
<i>Polypodium sori</i>	Peter Wiggins, 15th July 2021
<i>Callitriche</i> (<i>Callitriche stagnalis</i>)	Peter Wiggins, Woolfords, 5th May 2018
Panorama of Renfrewshire	Michael Philip, Kilcreggan Pier, 15th July 2021
Loch Lomond, western shore	Michael Philip, Rubha Ban, 30th June, 2021

* You are welcome to send us your photos of Dunbartonshire's landscape or plants at any time.