

Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, *Hyacinthoides hispanica* and *Hyacinthoides x massartiana*) in Banffshire v.c. 94

*Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell) has a wide distribution in the British Isles, and at the hectad scale is almost ubiquitous in England and Wales. In Scotland, it has a more restricted distribution, and is more or less absent from large areas of the north-east and far north. Here its distribution is centred on western, near coastal and lower altitude areas. As a native, it is absent from Shetland, Orkney, Lewis and Harris (Preston et al 2002).

The hybrid was first reported in the British Isles in 1963, but attention was not effectively drawn to this taxon until 1987, and was included in Rich et al (1988) and Stace (1991). Subsequently, Preston et al (2002) reported the hybrid as occurring in 1080 hectads in the British Isles in the period 1987 – 1999. A recent study (Kohn et al 2009) has examined the potential for introgression between the native bluebell and the two alien taxa.

In Banffshire, *H. hispanica* (Spanish Bluebell) and *H. x massartiana* (Hybrid Bluebell (*H. non-scripta x hispanica*)), were first recorded in 1954 and 1999 respectively. In the period 1987 – 1999, records of *H. non-scripta* outnumbered the two alien taxa 4.7:1. However, in the decade 2000 – 2009, records of the alien taxa have outnumbered those of the native bluebell 8.9:1, with 94% of records of alien taxa referring to the hybrid. While the hybrid may be increasing in range and abundance (though there is no evidence to support this in Banffshire), it must be that prior to 1999, the hybrid was either misidentified as the native bluebell, or was ignored during plant recording. Therefore, I conclude that the majority of records of *H. non-scripta* pre-2000 in the county are not reliable, and any assessment of the distribution and relative abundance of the taxa should be restricted to the period since 2000. In summary:

*H. non-scripta* has been recorded, as a native, from 5 tetrads post 2000. All sites are at less than 50m AOD, with 4 tetrads being in coastal hectads. The species is County Scarce (Amphlett 2010).

*H. hispanica* has been recorded from 4 tetrads post 2000. All sites are at less than 25m AOD. Three of the sites are on the coast, the fourth is within 1km of the sea.

*H. x massartiana* has been recorded from 43 tetrads post 2000. 53% of sites are in coastal hectads. The site furthest inland is at Auchnarrow (NJ2123), which at 330m AOD is also the highest recorded altitude.

The hybrid is by far the most widespread, frequent and abundant of the three taxa in Banffshire. Records of *H. non-scripta* and *H. hispanica* require corroborative evidence, eg. close-up photographs of the flowers and of the inflorescence.

## References

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Andy Amphlett  
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