

## RECORDING IN CO. WEXFORD (H12) DURING 2010

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2010 has been a strange year as I was out of action for much of the first half of the year with a slipped disc. The second half of the year seemed to have made up for it with a good number of records. A total of 16,126 records were added to Mapmate the database I use to computerise all the counties records. The strangest thing of the year was seeing two plants of *Ficaria verna* subsp. *verna* (Bulbiferous Celendine) flowering on 22 August in a ditch at Kiltra (S85.10). I gave up the idea of filling in forms for Corn Marigolds for the Threatened Plants Projects, as 2010 seemed to be the year of the 'Corn Marigold' in Co. Wexford, as they were so common, turning many cultivated fields yellow. If I had been given a Euro for each Corn Marigold I saw I could have taken early retirement!

**DBN** = cited specimens deposited in the National Herbarium, Glasnevin, Dublin.

Besides myself the following have also contributed during the year: Dominic Berridge gave me a number of records including a report of *Crassula helmsii* (New Zealand Pigmyweed) from a Kettlehole at Ballyvalloo (T11.30) shown to him by the land owner Kevin Murphy and later to me, not a welcome addition to the county; Frankie Tennant and Roy Watson were the largest contributors during the year, sending in records from many parts of the county; besides coming out with me several times Jenny Seawright added *Papaver pseudoorientale* (Oriental Poppy) to the county list; Megan Morris did her year bird count at Caim (S90.40) and made a plant list including the first county record for *Bromus hordeaceus* subsp. *longipedicellatus*; Paula O'Meara added many new 1-km<sup>2</sup> records, including *Silybum marianum* (Milk Thistle) the first reported county sighting since 1995; Zoe Devlin allowed me to extract records from a website of Irish Wildflowers, plus contributed records via Mapmate, the first person in the county I have talked into doing it this way and the Wexford Naturalists' Field Club gave me plant lists made on several of their field excursions. I was also joined during the year for recording walks by Markus Schmidt and Olivier Martin and received a few records from Matthew Roche and Sylvia Reynolds. David Allen was kind enough to look at a box of 20 bramble specimens I sent him: *Rubus armipotens* from a roadside hedge by the entrance to a house at Finshoge (S74.25) was a new bramble for Ireland and *Rubus ordovicum* from a disused quarry at Ferns (T00.48) was a new county record.

The 8 June took me over to Rosslare (T09.15) to look for *Trifolium subterranean* (Subterranean Clover) which was a new county record when found by Roy Watson and Frankie Tenant the previous year in short thin turf of a children's play area. As hard as I looked I could not find it. A call to Roy soon helped me out as he said look for bluish leaves in the mown turf. There were just a few flowers hanging on. It was not long before I was getting even more excited as also in the grass were thousands of little pink flowering heads of *Trifolium glomeratum* (Clustered Clover). A species that was found in the area by E.S. Marshall in 1897 but not reported since. Marshall found his Clustered Clover in sandy fields, there does not seem to be any of this habitat left in the area. The thin short turf of a children's play area is a good modern day substitute. Also growing with the above two clovers were *Ornithopus perpusillus* (Bird's-foot), *Trifolium striatum* (Knotted Clover) and *T. micranthum* (Slender Trefoil).

The 10 June took me down to Duncannon Fort (S72.08) for a guided tour of the fort and to see what plants were on the walls. *Trifolium scabrum* (Rough Clover) was common on the wall tops, a species I had not seen in the county before. Also on the wall tops were *Galium verum* (Lady's Bedstraw), *Ononis repens* (Common Restharrow) and *Trifolium campestre* (Hop Trefoil).

*Asplenium marinum* (Sea Spleenwort) was common in places on some of the wall sides and *Petroselinum crispum* (Garden Parsley) was extremely abundant. To finish the afternoon off I drove down the Hook Peninsula, stopping by the ruined church at Churchtown (X73.98) for a little ramble before heading home. Here to my surprise was a good 6 m stretch of *Pelargonium tomentosum* (Peppermint-scented Geranium) growing on the field wall just down from the church. A species that I would have thought unable to survive our cold winters was flourishing, a new county record.

The next day I visited Kilmore Quay (S96.03) where I found the purple flowers of *Tragopogon porrifolius* (Salsify) dotted about amongst the small area of dunes, established here since found by Ro. FitzGerald in 1992. In a rough field between houses were several large patches of *Iris orientalis* (Turkish Iris) just coming into flower. Another new alien to the county.



➤ *Gnaphalium luteoalbum*

An e-mail received from a concerned local about Bee Orchids on the lawns of St Helen's Hotel (T13.12) at Rosslare Harbour took me over to have a look on 25 June. The hotel is going to be demolished and have an old folk's home built in its place. What a lawn it turned out to be for Bee Orchids and other interesting plants! A total of 61 Bee Orchids was seen flowering, the tallest had 17 flowers. It was not the only orchid as 17 Common Spotted-orchids were in a damp part of the lawn. *Lotus subbiflorus* (Hairy Bird's-foot-Trefoil) was common. Several species of *Carex* were on the lawns including one clump of *C. muricata* subsp. *pairae* (Small-fruited Prickly-sedge) and lots of *C. leporina* (Oval Sedge) and a little *C. otrubae* (False Fox-sedge) in the damper parts and a single spike of *Orobanche minor* (Common Broomrape). The non-native species were also well worth a look as *Gnaphalium luteoalbum* (Jersey Cudweed) was abundant and the Fleabanes gave me a headache for a while as there were four different species there which all superficially look alike. This was a very good way of learning the differences between *Conyza floribunda* (Bilbao Fleabane) a greyish green bristly plant, *Conyza canadensis* (Canadian Fleabane) like the previous species but lime green in colour and not so hairy, *Conyza sumatrensis* (Guernsey Fleabane) greyish green and much hairier and individual flowers almost twice the size of the previous two species and *Conyza bonariensis* (Argentine Fleabane) (DBN). The latter a new alien species for Ireland with flowers much larger than the other three species. It is surprising *C. bonariensis* has not been reported from Ireland before as it is common in much of Europe. I finished the afternoon

by going down to the dunes by Rosslare Ferry Port (T13.12) as after reporting my brother finding *Festuca arenaria* (Rush-leaved Fescue) there last year (Green, 2009) several botanists contacted me to say it did not occur in Ireland. Several specimens were sent to Arthur Copping the BSBI referee for *Festuca*, who replied with a very in-depth letter why my grass was indeed *Festuca arenaria*, it was good to have it confirmed at last for the county.

A red flowered *Potentilla* found on the side of a forest track in Curragh Wood, Killinierin (T16.65) on the 2 July took some time to identify. The internet came to my rescue. I scrolled down a large list of *Potentilla* photos until I found red coloured flowering plants and came to the conclusion that it was *P. nepalensis* Hook. (Nepal Cinquefoil) (**DBN**). Later in the year I saw it labelled in a botanic garden, very pleased the internet had given the correct answer for another new county record.



➤ *Potentilla nepalensis*

The 16 July I went and collected some of the roses I had seen during the summer that I was not sure of their identification and sent to Roger Maskew. The most interesting of these was one seen on a BSBI meeting I lead at Park (T03.23) on 6 June. This was *Rosa x scabriuscula* (*R. canina* x *R. tomentosa*), an erect bush with pale pink flowers and hairy leaves. The second record for the county.

I stopped to look at *Cichorium intybus* (Chicory) on 29 July which I could not remember seeing as part of the wild flower mix sown in 2007 on a verge at Holmestown (S96.22). This verge proved much more worthy of a stop than I had expected as also on it were several patches of well established *Bromopsis inermis* (Hungarian Brome) and many plants of *Pimpinella peregrina* L. (Long Burnet Saxifrage), a new alien to Ireland. This is a species much like our native *Pimpinella major* (Greater Burnet-saxifrage) but taller, larger umbels and bristly fruit. It just goes to show, sowing of non-native grass seed mix can introduce the unexpected; two more species with the potential of becoming established in our countryside.

I was heading north along the N72 on 2 August, passing a bean field at Forestwood (S82.31), I thought that I spied *Bromus diandrus* (Great Brome) amongst the bean crop. So I turned the car around and pulled into the field gateway. Then I realised I has been mistaken about it, but as there were a few *Glebionis segetum* (Corn Marigolds), I decided to take a look. The farmer came along to see whether I had something to do with the new road that was to go through the field (Enniscorthy-New Ross bypass). He said the local name for the Corn Marigold is ‘yellow bottom’ because of its yellow flowers and that I could pick them all if I wished.



➤ Bean field at Forestwood

But the stop proved to be very worthwhile as, under the crop the ground was pink with the minute flowers of *Valerianella dentata* (Narrow-fruited Cornsalad). There must have been millions of these. I noticed another rare arable weed scattered between the rows of beans: *Euphorbia exigua* (Dwarf Spurge).

I also spotted one plant of the very rare *Valerianella rimosa* (Broad-fruited Cornsalad) but as hard as I searched could not find any others. Doing some research, it proved that this is the first Irish record for this plant since 1962 when it was recorded from a root field at Borris, Co. Carlow and a cornfield at Clohamon, Co. Wexford. Both found by E. Booth and M. McCallum Webster. Unfortunately, in a couple of years time, they may all be gone because of the building of the new road.

A call from Roy Watson on 16 August sent me over to White Hole, Tacumshin Lake (T03.05) to look at *Rumex maritimus* (Golden Dock) on the bank of a ford. Even though I was very pleased to see the four plants as it was a species I had not seen in Ireland before, they were the most miserable small Golden Docks I have ever seen; one plant was only 2 cm high. In the stream by the dock was *Potamogeton crispus* (Curled Pondweed) and on the edge of the water was *Lemna minuta* (Least Duckweed), a species that is increasing at an alarming rate in the county, found on nearly every pond or lake I have visited in the last two years in the county. The open bare muddy area by the ford had an abundance of the tiny *Centaurium pulchellum* (Lesser Centaury) and along the shore of Tacumshin Lake was *Chenopodium rubrum* (Red Goosefoot).



➤ *Rumex maritimus*

On the 20 August before meeting up with Markus Schmidt for a walk along the coast at Cahore Point I stopped and looked at a *Ficus carica* (Fig) growing out of a field wall at Ballygarrett (T20.48), a new county record. We headed south on the coast path on the cliff top before heading into the dunes and back along the beach. The back of the dunes had a few scattered patches of *Thalictrum minus* (Lesser Meadow-rue) and *Equisetum x moorei* (Moore's Horsetail). The dead heads of *Carlina vulgaris* (Carline Thistle) were dotted about in the open areas and just coming into flower was *Hieracium umbellatum* subsp. *umbellatum* (Umbellate Hawkweed). There were very few signs of any strandline plants and the ones we did see had extremely small populations, these included: *Atriplex laciniata* (Frosted Orache), *Cakile maritima* (Sea Rocket) and *Salsola kali* subsp. *kali* (Prickly Saltwort). Nearly back and we found several stands of *Humulus lupulus* (Hop) on the edge of the scrub. We finished our afternoon walk by meeting back up with Markus's family and friends for a barbeque which rounded the day off nicely.

The next day I joined Dominic Berridge for some survey work, we had a look in one of the Kettleholes (T10.29) on the edge of the area we were surveying. Somebody had been doing a little gardening and planted *Cyperus involucratus* and the White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*) looked like it may have arrived the same way. Among the many native species in the water was *Sparganium natans* (Least Bur-reed), a plant I had not seen in the county before. After we had finished our work we visited a disused sandpit at Ballyconnigar (T13.33), with no disturbance anymore the plants were not as good as I had hoped. However we still had a few good species, the best native species being one fruiting patch of *Zannichellia palustris* (Horned Pondweed) in the pond in the bottom of the pit as it is the first time I have seen it in the county. Some dumping had taking place; this produced a good list of non-native species including one new county record: *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* (Ragweed) (DBN).

The 23 August saw me over on the coast at Maytown (T11.12). I had hoped to get down to the water's edge but the cliffs were too high and unstable. Much dumping had taken place, *Urtica*

*urens* (Small Nettle) and *Chenopodium rubrum* were on the heaps of soil along with *Nepeta x faassenii* (Garden Cat-mint), a new county record. A patch of *Lepidium draba* (Hoary Cress) survived on the cliff edge, a species I have not seen in the county before.

I took Jenny Seawright to the old lime workings on the edge of New Ross (S73.30) on 10 September to show her *Minuartia hybrida* (Fine-leaved Sandwort) in its only county site, where Ro. FitzGerald found it in 1993. I also showed Jenny the only site in the southern part of the county for *Erigeron acris* (Blue Fleabane). There was also an abundance of *Conyza floribunda*. It was not long before Jenny asked ‘what is this?’ I looked at it and knew straight away Jenny had found what I had been looking for each time I visited the site: the hybrid between *Erigeron acris* and *Conyza floribunda*. We contacted Clive Stace that evening to see how common this hybrid was, and almost by return of e-mail he said it was new to science. For the time being I have nicked named it ‘Jenny’s Fleabane’.

My last full day out in the county for the year took me over to Killurin to see if I could re-find *Senecio erucifolius* (Hoary Ragwort) on the railway bank where Ro. FitzGerald had seen it in 1991. I have looked on several other occasions and never had any luck. I was just eating my banana before heading back home when I looked up and realised I could see a clump of what I had come to see. Directly above the railway bridge (S97.27) was a clump a metre round with one flower out. What an end to the day! Before this I had had a very successful afternoon, as it started by finding lots of *Sagina nodosa* (Knotted Pearlwort) on the wall along the River Slaney and in the river fruiting *Callitriche truncata* (Short-leaved Water-starwort) was plentiful in places and below a bridge (S98.27) over a tributary of the R. Slaney was a clump of *Sagittaria sagittifolia* (Arrowhead), a species I had not seen in the county before.



➤ *Senecio erucifolius*

## REFERENCE

Green, Paul R. (2010). Botanical highlights during 2009, Co. Wexford (H12). *Ir. Bot. News* No. 20: 18-20.