



September 2021 Sample Issue

See inside for a selection of articles from *BSBI News* no. 148 and details of how to join the BSBI. Members receive three print copies of *BSBI News* each year as part of the package of membership benefits.



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Contributions for the next issue of *BSBI News* (no. 149) should be sent to the Editor, John Norton (john.norton@bsbi.org) by 25 November 2021.

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In *BSBI News*, members report on botanical topics such as plant conservation, new discoveries and much more...



Planning fieldwork targeting vanishing habitats

GEOFF TOONE

Our most threatened plant species are those of habitats which are themselves dwindling and especially vulnerable to the effects of exploitative agriculture, neglect and changing climate. To know, and perhaps protect, what remains well defined search criteria are our most useful resource. Arable and wetland habitats, those of disturbed ground and undamaged

Glebionis segetum (Corn Marigold) in a field corner on the Isle of Wight. Photographs by the author

unfashionable after seventy years of often ruinous decline and yet, here on the Isle of Wight (v.c. 10), taxa thought to be absent like *Carex humilis* (Dwarf Sedge) and *Pulsatilla calcarata* (Chalk Milkwort)

The his are better t From them where. Who will usually miles of m of weeds li *Galium apar* species bec remaining of geology of identific level.

Across deserve it

National Plant Monitoring Scheme: Species lists and interactions

National Plant Monitoring Scheme: Species lists and interactions

SARAH SHUTTLEWORTH

In my role as Volunteer Manager for the National Plant Monitoring Scheme (NPMS), I was recently leading a training session for some of our volunteers. The location was a beautiful spot in Wiltshire, with excellent Dry Calcareous grassland habitat which supports some interesting invertebrates as well as some great plants. This was a perfect spot to set up a mock plot (5 x 5 metre quadrat) and record the species from the lists. A feature of the NPMS is that recording can be done at different levels, depending on the surveyor's ID skills: there are 30 species for Dry Calcareous grassland at Indicator level and



Dryopteris pseudodisjuncta in England

ANTHONY PIGOTT

About two y section of I noticed a pla *Dryopteris pseud* of *pseudodisjunct* that this was n 'D. affinis comp but on checking I'd noted that it was but that *pseudodisjuncta*. specimen and t fact that my so and 1996 respe more attention plant had prob remained smal Having ha strongly growi

Elm recording – a window of opportunity

MAX COLEMAN

A Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) tree in fruit in April (with a leafless Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) on right of image. Max Coleman



On 20 April, despite the national lockdown, I had a legitimate reason to travel between London and Edinburgh and I took the opportunity to spot elms from the train window as I went.

This was not just idle high-speed botany as I had a purpose in mind. I have always been sceptical of the Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) distribution map in the Atlas as it shows almost blanket coverage with a few gaps in the Scottish Highlands. It is not the gaps in

be more common in the north. The published hectad map by itself would give you the opposite impression.

South of Newcastle I could see few elms in the trackside land or the discernible distance. Field Elm (*U. minor*) and hybrids (*U. minor* x *U. glabra*) are the taxa you would expect to find in the south. Field elms are not known to be good colonists via seed and the very widespread English Elm clone (*U. minor*



Common problems with field identification – the *Polygonum aviculare* aggregate

BOB LEANEY

As defined by Stace (2019), this aggregate includes four taxa:

- *Polygonum depressum* (syn. *P. atenastrum*) – Equal-leaved Knotgrass;
- *Polygonum aviculare* s.s. – Knotgrass;
- *Polygonum boreale* – Northern Knotgrass; and
- *Polygonum rurivagum* – Cornfield Knotgrass.

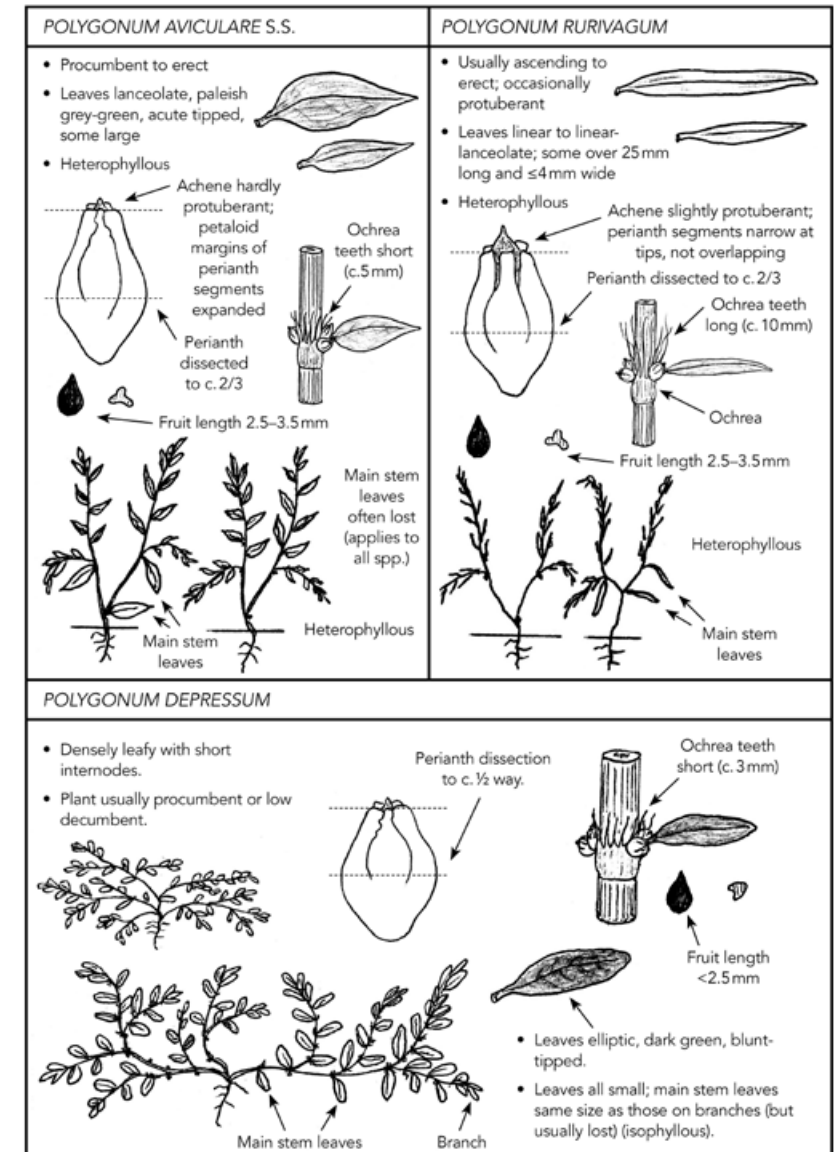
The aggregate continues to cause problems on almost every meeting of the Norfolk Flora Group, both in separating *P. depressum* from *P. aviculare* s.s., and also in attempting to recognise *P. rurivagum*. The former problem is made worse by the fact that the main stem leaves subtending the branches, which are needed to demonstrate heterophylly or lack thereof, have usually fallen by the time the diagnostic floral and fruiting characters are apparent; but there are also frequent plants that seem intermediate and cannot be assigned to the usual species concept. Attempts to find *P. rurivagum* are virtually always fruitless, mainly I feel because this taxon, at least nowadays, is actually very rare!

Polygonum depressum (Equal-leaved Knotgrass): Low, decumbent form with all small, dark green, elliptic, blunt-tipped leaves. Bob Leaney

I have no experience of *P. boreale*, which is confined to Scotland, so will not deal with this taxon. It differs from the other three taxa within the complex mainly in having obovate leaves with quite long petioles that are well exerted from the ochreae (fused stipules).

Our usual nomenclature and identification characters derive from a large morphometric study by Styles almost 60 years ago (Styles, 1962). He recognised *P. aviculare* s.l. as being comprised of the four species listed above, and considered species status for *P. aviculare* and *P. depressum* as being 'beyond doubt'. However, he was less sure of the specific status for *P. rurivagum*, and experienced considerable difficulty in tracing populations, either in the field or in herbarium collections. Styles' study suggests that *P. rurivagum* was very scarce even in his time, and confirms the supposition that the species is rare rather than under-recorded nowadays.

Common problems with field identification – the *Polygonum aviculare* aggregate



The 'Adventives and Aliens' section features vice-county roundups of recent discoveries of escaped and naturalised plants, plus other articles on non-native species.

ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS: Adventives & Aliens News 24

ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS

Adventives and Aliens News 24

Compiled by Matthew Berry

Flat 2, Lascelles Mansions, 8–10 Lascelles Terrace, Eastbourne BN21 4BJ
 m.berry15100@btinternet.com

If I pick out a few records from what follows, it is by way of an introduction and should not be seen to detract in any way from the other records, all of which have their particular interest and importance. Nevertheless, I trust members will be fascinated to read about the occurrence of two unfamiliar Himalayan species, one woody and one herbaceous, which have been found in 'wild' situations, both in Scottish vice-counties (see v.c.c. 96 & 104); and a S. African grass seen flowering remarkably early in the year in v.c.c. 17 and 21, and with which we might like to familiarise ourselves in case it becomes more widespread. I have also included some more of Paul Stanley's remarkable alien finds from the farmed landscapes of v.c. 10. Many thanks.

V.c. 4 (N. Devon)

Verbena incompta P.W. Michael (Purpletop Vervain). Northam (SS4500227855), 4/1/2021, R.I. Kirby: one c. 2m tall plant growing at side of green track, Hanson Park. The first county record. See v.c. 15.

V.c. 9 (Dorset)

Nemophila menziesii (Baby-blue-eyes). Swanage (SZ0210879409), 1/5/2021, D. Leadbetter: three plants on verge south of sewage works, likely where soil had been imported the previous year. See Adventives & Aliens News 21, v.c. 14.

Collinsia heterophylla Buist ex Graham (Chinese-houses). Swanage (SZ0210779409), 16/5/2021, D. Leadbetter: a number of plants on verge south of sewage works. At a somewhat later date 20 plants were seen in flower (D. Leadbetter pers. comm.). An annual (Plantaginaceae) native to California sometimes grown as a garden plant. The two-lipped flowers have an unusual structure with a



Nemophila menziesii (left) and *Collinsia heterophylla* (right), Swanage, Dorset (v.c. 9). David Leadbetter

ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS: *Eremopoa persica* re-found in Britain after a 60-year absence

Eremopoa persica (Trin.) Roshev. (Persian Meadow-grass) re-found in Britain after a 60-year absence

BOB LEANEY, JO PARMENTER & OLI PESCOTT

In December 2020, a single plant of a mystery grass species was found growing on part of the medieval town wall of Great Yarmouth (v.c. 27), close to the historic quayside, by Bob Leaney and Jo Parmenter. After all attempts to identify it failed, the specimen was sent to the referee for alien grasses, Oli Pescott.

The general morphology and appearance initially suggested an *Eragrostis*, although our plant lacked the fringe of hairs which very often forms the ligule in many members of this genus, and there were some other unusual features: OP observed that our specimen had long anthers at c. 1.4 mm, thus ruling out the most commonly found annual *Eragrostis* species listed in Cope & Gray (2009); this feature also appeared to be somewhat atypical for the whole genus, at least for those c. 90 members that have been found in western Europe (Portal & Duham, 2002). Initially too, our specimen was thought to have only two anthers, again, a less common state in European *Eragrostis*, and indeed in grasses generally (Clayton, 1990).

The issue with there being only two anthers was eventually resolved by dissecting a number of other florets, which showed that at least some had three (so, some florets had undeveloped anthers, which is apparently not uncommon in *Poa*; Soreng et al., 2020).



ADVENTIVES AND ALIENS: Three aliens from the Isles of Scilly



Calandrinia menziesii growing in fallow field on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly. Left: Tim Harrison; middle, right: Liz Askins

quite diverged from the tropical mountain *C. ciliata*, and, just as importantly, *menziesii* is more closely related to *C. breckeri* than it is to *C. ciliata*. This is why I recognized *menziesii* as a distinct species from *ciliata*. *Calandrinia menziesii* is included under *C. ciliata* in Clement & Foster (1994).

Interestingly, *Calandrinia umbellata* (Ruiz Lopez & Pavón) DC. is also listed in Clement & Foster (1994) for Scilly. This was apparently recorded from a field on St Mary's in around 1983 by Clare Harvey, the

it is truly naturalized on Scilly. There are collections of this species from several localities in Europe, including Czechia and Finland. All of these records seem to be associated with ornamental gardens, rather than with natural or agricultural areas. But it does not appear to be naturalized anywhere in Europe, not even in the Mediterranean region, which is its native climate and physiognomy. It would be necessary to examine the site for a few years and note especially whether there are more or fewer or no plants.'

Other regular sections include news and announcements from BSBI, short notes and learning articles, a round-up of plant records from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland and book reviews.

BOTANICAL NOTES

'MOLLY HAS HAIRY KNEES' AND OTHER CURIOUS WAYS TO REMEMBER PLANTS

For the beginner, whether on a university course, training day or group excursion, learning botanical identification can sometimes feel like an overwhelming challenge. So many characteristics to remember and each must be linked to the correct scientific and/or common name! In teaching botany, we strive to impart the most knowledge possible during our always-too-short time together in the field. Learning to key out an unfamiliar specimen is crucial, of course, but we also want to remember many plants without looking them up (again!) and for

fern pinnules are nearly entire. Hence, male ferns have balls and lady ferns are frilly.

Sketches are even better, since looking at the characteristics of plants lends itself to visual memory (see illustration for a further example). As you can see, minimal or no artistic ability is required!

We have made up many of these over the years but many of you must have done likewise or come across examples. If you have any aids that help you remember plants and would like to share them, please email them (sketches can be photographed and emailed as image files) to Kathy Velander or Jay Mackinnon, or post to Jay Mackinnon (contact details below). Please include your full name and the source of the meme (if known, and not yourself)

WALES

In Monmouthshire (v.c. 35) some wonderful meadows have been discovered whilst undertaking survey work for the Monmouthshire Meadows Group, and at least six warrant Local Wildlife status, if not SSSI status. In one meadow *Genista tinctoria* (Dyer's Greenweed) was abundant, and a total of 36 good indicator species of unimproved species rich grassland were present. It must be among the very best in the county. At Blaentrotty meadows, an SSSI, eleven species of sedge were found.



REVIEWS

Compiled by Clive Stace, Book Reviews Editor
Appletree House, Larters Lane, Middlewood Green, Stowmarket IP14 5HB
cstace@btinternet.com



Foraging Pocket Guide
Marlow Renton & Eric Biggame
WildFoodUK, in association with
Otherwise, Byford, 2019; pp. 351,
numerous photographs; pbk,
£14.99, ISBN 9781850933333

paragraph is given for each edible species.

One assumes that the authors activities are mainly inland; widely collected maritime species such sea beet (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *maritima*), glasswort (*Salicornia* spp.) and sea-kale (*Crambe maritima*) are omitted. There is some incorrect information. Small-leaved lime cannot be 'easily identified by the dense clusters of suckers or side shoots', and a forager hoping to find shepherd's purse in 'woodland' would have a lengthy search, and find it much easier 'almost everywhere' else.

What value is this book to BSBI members? As the division into 'trees' and 'plants' indicates, the

according to their blurb 'specialise in turning information and ideas into compelling, beautiful books'.

Roy Vickery



Herbarium. The Quest to Preserve & Classify the World's Plants

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