

Some Dumfriesshire Botanical highlights 2021

Early searches for **Toothwort** *Lathraea squamaria* were rewarded with two new hectad records for Dumfriesshire both on river systems with no previous records. The first was a good population along the Moffat Water, at least one of them growing on **Bird Cherry** *Prunus padus*. The second was found on the County Boundary with Cumbria on the Liddle Water.

The River Esk in Dumfriesshire has in recent years proved a profitable hunting ground for an interesting range of rare and scarce species. This is perhaps all the more surprising given that much of the upper catchments where the Black and White Esk join are dominated by coniferous plantations. In many places the only semi natural vegetation is a narrow zone of grassland on river flood plains and steep river banks and in places there is boulder clay with flushes. This year two further stands of **Holy Grass** *Hierochloa odorata* were found together with an extensive population of **Adder's-tongue Fern**, *Ophioglossum vulgatum* in late May and a healthy population of



Adders Tongue Fern Esk Valley 2021

Globeflower *Trollius europaeus*. This is only the fourth site for Adder's-tongue Fern post 2000 and only the 10th hectad record ever in Dumfriesshire. **Slender Sedge** *Carex lasiocarpa* is always a good find and was in good quantity on a mire on the Black Burn a tributary of the Esk only the 10th monad record.

A number of scarce plants have turned up on Dumfriesshire Botany Meetings this year. Most notable are probably refinds of monad records for **Hairy Stonecrop** *Sedum villosum* in the Lowther Hills, and a new monad record for it on Queensbury Hill. A good-sized colony of **Chickweed Wintergreen** *Lysimachia europaea* was found on rocky ground under bracken on part of Langholm Moors. This area has been purchased by the local community to turn into a nature reserve. This is only the second find of Chickweed Wintergreen since 2000 and only the 5th Hectad record ever for Dumfriesshire. On disturbed ground just east of Moffat we found **Thorn-apple** *Datura stramonium*

which is only the second occurrence for this annual in Dumfriesshire. It was growing with a range of other notable species like **Hybrid Deadnettle** *Lamium hybridum* at only its third site in the County.

A continued focus on visiting all monads in Moffatdale has unveiled further populations of some of the scarce plants there. **Dwarf Cornel** *Cornus suecica* was found in two new monads and **Bog Bilberry** *Vaccinium uliginosum* was seen high up on the White Coombe summit heath in a new monad probably because grazing has been excluded allowing it to bush up. We found **Alpine Saw-wort** *Saussurea alpina* in a second monad in the Ettrick hills.



Dwarf Cornel with Cloudberry Firthybrig Head

A good population of **Spignal** *Meum athamanticum* was found in steep grassland in Upper Tarnberry. It was more obvious as a result of a new fence keeping sheep off the area. Unexpectedly **Whorled Caraway** *Carum verticillatum* was found in flushed grassland at Birkhill right on the county boundary with Selkirkshire. This is normally only found on the western side the Dumfriesshire. An interesting plant to have escaped all the botanists visiting these hills over the years.



Northern Deergrass Longbridgemuir 15 July 2021

There is a relatively narrow window in July and early August to find **Northern Deergrass** *Trichophorum caespitosum* with fruit when it is so much easier to pick out. So, progress on searching for this species has been slow but this year we went to the large raised mire at Longbridgemuir in mid-July and were able to find convincing examples later confirmed by Jeremy Roberts. This

becomes the second record for Dumfriesshire. There are plenty of other bogs to explore. While at Longbridgemuir we also found that **Greater Sundew** *Drosera anglica* was extensive at its main stronghold in the County. A couple of distinctive hybrids new to Dumfriesshire were shown at the Scottish Botanists Conference and can be seen here [Two distinctive hybrids new to Dumfriesshire – Scottish Botanists' Conference \(scottishbotanistsconference.org\)](http://scottishbotanistsconference.org).

In recent years I have been slowly looking to update Hieracium records for Dumfriesshire. Each year I send a few specimens to the referees David McCosh or Brian Burrow and this confirms refinds or new records for the vice county. This year it was good to refind **Silver Hawkweed** *H. argenteum* the first since 2000, **Golden-flowered Hawkweed** the first from Blackhope since 1964 and **Orkney Hawkweed** *H. orcadense*, the first since 1892 all in the Moffat Hills. New finds for the County include **Cher Hawkweed**, *H. cheriense*, **Diaphanous Hawkweed** *H. diaphanoides* and **Stiff-haired Hawkweed**, *H. lasiophyllum*.

Only a few botanists visit Dumfriesshire and send records. It is helpful as they see things often overlooked. This year Paul Stanley sent a record for **Northern Yellow-cress** *Rorippa islandica* from Heathhall a first record for Dumfriesshire. It was confirmed by Tim Rich.



Northern Yellow-cress Heathhall October 2021

This is close to the much commoner **Marsh Yellow-cress** *Rorippa palustris*. A key difference in the rarer taxon is in the fruit being as long as the pedicels and tending to be on one side of the stem. Having visited the site to see the plant we also came across three plants of **Broad-leaved Helleborine** *Epipactis helleborine*, the first record for the NX97 hectad since 1847!