

Criffel, 24th September 2022

Wow, I did wonder if I would make it to the top. Yes, I did, accompanied by Mair and Jan - did I put most of you off by citing the steep ascent? Worth it though, and hopefully so did the other 40 or so people we met on route, some of whom stopped to ask us what we were up to.

Well, the 4 old records from 2 Criffel monads are now joined by 190 others, of 128 different species in 3 monads – we actually crossed 6 but recording these is enough to handle in one day! Plus a few casual records in the other monads. The habitats recorded varied from disturbed ground (the car park and paths) and commercial forestry to upland moorland and mire, so there was a good selection of species. But being a granite massif, we weren't expecting a large number of species or anything unusual.

The car park and the first monad didn't bring up anything out of the ordinary but gave us a chance to renew acquaintance with many widespread and common species like heath cudweed *Gnaphalium uliginosum*, birdsfoot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, hemp nettle *Galeopsis bifida* and that dreaded and extremely well-armed bramble which I think was *Rubus dasyphyllus* - confirmed by Angus Hannah.



We had a fair crack at the ferns, finding Lady fern *Athyrium filis-femina* with its distinctive J-shaped sporangia; both broad and narrow buckler ferns *Dryopteris dilatata* and *D. carthusiana*; soft shield fern *Polystichum setiferum*, and hard fern

Blechnum spicant with its two distinctive fronds, fertile and vegetative. But the highlight was finding two separate clumps of the distinctive beech fern *Phegopteris connectilis*, the reflexed lowest pinnae being the decisive identifier.



Sarah White (from a visit the week before)

Once clear of the forestry, we met moorland of basically heather, bell heath and various grasses.



Halfway up view (previous week) Sarah White

But we went straight for the top and lunch – along with many other people around the cairn and trig point! Bright and sunny but cool and the view was spectacular

from inland (Windy Standard to Moffat Hills) to the Lakes and the Isle of Man, and Burrow head in VC74.

Lunch over we explored the summit vegetation which consisted of mire and heath with crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* with linear leaves and black berries, cowberry *vaccinium vitis-idaea* with rounded leaves and no berries, amongst heather and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* on the higher bits.



Crowberry and cowberry with blaeberry and heather Jan Davidson

Clumps of green-ribbed sedge *Carex binervis* with its dark green leaves which tapered abruptly to a long thin red tip edged the drier areas of the summit. Between these areas were small areas of bog with dense clumps of deer grass *Trichophorum germanicum*, the pale fertile but now empty, seed cases on each leaf tip.



and both cotton grasses, common *Eriophorum angustifolium* and haretail *E. vaginatum* and in the lowest levels large areas of bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* at this time of year showing as dark brown seed heads above green scythe-shaped leaves.

It was noticeable that the area around the cairn and along the edge of newly laid path on the slopes supported a number of invasive species which had been transported with the new gravel – amongst them rosebay *Chamerion angustifolium*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, mouse-ear chickweed *Cerastium fontanum*, annual meadow grass *Poa annua*, other common grasses, nipplewort *Lapsana communis* and, rather surprisingly, 4 clumps of squirreltail fescue *Vulpia bromoides*.



And the weather was glorious throughout the day – an added bonus.

All photos without acknowledgement are mine

PS Unfortunately, I can't manage another field meeting over the next few weekends as I have other commitments until 21/22 October and that's stretching the season a bit. Depends on weather at the end of the month.....fingers crossed!