

## Dumfriesshire and Lanarkshire Botany Groups at Gana Hill on Sunday 21 July 2024

The two groups had planned to meet at the watershed above 500m in the Lowther Hills where the two vice counties meet. This relatively remote location requires some effort to reach and there were relatively few detailed records for the squares along the watershed.

One group coming from the north were kindly given permission by the landowner Buccleuch Estate to drive up the track from Kirkhope above Dear Reservoir to just beyond Daerhead. This made the climb up to the watershed more achievable. The second group coming from the south were kindly allowed to park at Mitchellsacks Farm by the farm manager. This shortened the walk up to the mountain bothy at Burleywag from where the climb up to the watershed could be undertaken in about an hour. Both groups set off with the intention of meeting up at the watershed at 11:30. In the end six of us met up and undertook joint recording in both vice counties. On the hill ground four monads were recorded in Dumfriesshire and five in Lanarkshire. There was also a party who recorded a further five monads around the reservoir.



*Alpine Bistort Earncraig*

As well as basic monad recording another aim was to refind and possibly extend the distribution of previously recorded alpine species.

On the slopes of Earncraig Hill we found that there are extensive flushes with **Alpine Meadow-rue** *Thalictrum alpinum* in both vice counties. These flushes also have **Scottish Eyebright** *Euphrasia scottica* and **Lesser Clubmoss** *Selaginella selaginoides*. **Pyrenean Scurvygrass** *Cochelaria pyrenaica* was on the Lanarkshire side.

On the rocks at about 600m on Earncraig Hill the most interesting things were **Mountain Male-fern** *Dryopteris oreades*, **Fir Clubmoss** *Huperzia selago* and **Alpine Bistort** *Bistorta vivipara* the latter a new Hectad record for Dumfriesshire. The rocks may be worth further exploration.

After lunch we checked out the Dear Hass square. **Alpine Meadow-rue** was found again in flushes on the slope down from Gana Shank in Dumfriesshire. Across the boundary there was a good population of **Cloudberry** *Rubus chamaemorus* on peat and **Pale Forget-me-not** *Myosotis stolonifera* and **Starry Saxifrage** *Micranthes stellaris* in the Crow Burn.

Gana Hill at 668m is a Donald. It was the main prominence on the day. The steep slopes on its north side have flushes and one significant craig. Crow Craig was where a number of montane

species were found by Keith Watson in 1997. Here we were able to refind **Alpine bistort**, **Mountain Male-fern**, **Northern Bedstraw** *Galium boreale*, **Fir Clubmoss**, **Starry Saxifrage**, **Pale Forget-me-not**, **Alpine Saw-wort** *Saussurea alpina*, **Alpine Meadow-Rue** and **Globeflower** *Trollius europaeus*. The **Alpine Saw-wort** is a very small isolated population and like similar small populations of **Roseroot** *Rhodiola rosea* and **Velvet-headed Hawkweed** *Hieracium centripetale* sit precariously here between larger populations in the Moffat Hills and the Galloway Hills.

After these highlights the groups parted company and started to head back to their start points. In Dumfriesshire recording in Whitespot Hill square gave us records for **Mountain Male-fern**, **Alpine Meadow-rue** and **Limestone Bedstraw** *Galium sternerii* on and around the Campbell Craigs. On the way past Burleywag Bothy we were able to check the fine growth of **Rustyback Fern** *Asplenium Ceterarch* on the walls and the resilient **Good-King-Henry** *Blitum bonus-henricus* in the old garden by the bothy.



*The combined Dumfriesshire and Lanarkshire botanists at the Daer Hass watershed with Daer Reservoir in the distance.*

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