

## Kirkcudbright Botany Group meeting Mabie Forest 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023

This was the first full recording meeting of the spring, and despite a rather poor weather forecast, we were blessed with a lovely sunny day. Mabie Forest is managed by Forestry and Land Scotland, and permission had been obtained from Bill Coombes, Regional Environment Advisor, who is keen to have our records. Bill and his team have created some excellent wildlife habitats amongst the commercial forestry at Mabie, including ponds and areas of broadleaved woodland.

Our intention had been to survey the Butterfly Conservation reserve, but a check earlier in the week showed that the woodland flora there was not yet well developed, so we chose instead to start at Dalshinnie Loch and the adjacent pools in NX9370. Indeed, so varied and interesting were the habitats here that we spent the whole day covering this one monad, with a list of over 100 species recorded.

Our first stop was the small pond by the locked gate where Bob found some tiny *Lemna* leaves, later confirmed by David as Least Duckweed *Lemna minuta* and only the third VC record for this plant. There was also a lot of *Chara* here, probably *C.virgata*, but a specimen will need to be checked by the BSBI referee.

We then moved on to the loch itself. This is surrounded by largely deciduous woodland of birch, oak, ash and alder, and is approached from the main track along a boardwalk, crossing an area of fen and seepages. The new leaves of Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Common Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Marsh Hawk's-beard *Crepis paludosa* and Water Avens *Geum rivale* were already showing, and there were a number of tantalizing sedges, all still in vegetative growth, which we could not yet identify with any certainty and will require another look in May or June. The woodland ground flora included Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and Remote Sedge *Carex remota*.



As we reached the viewing platform overlooking the open water of the loch, Bob was into the water in a trice, collecting specimens of Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius* and Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*. At the loch edge there were floating mats of Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and, where this graded into the woodland, a stand of Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale*.



Bob showed us a number of mosses and liverworts, including the beautiful deep-red moss *Bryum alpinum* growing on damp, unshaded ground at the margin of a small spring-fed pond upstream of the loch. It was not recorded in the bryophyte excursion to this monad by the local BBS group in April 2012 and it appears to be a new hectad record. It is commonest in upland districts of north and west Britain. Bob's list of bryophytes is included at the end of this report.

After lunch we left the loch and walked up the open gorse-covered hillside above. In flower at the edge of the path we found Coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara*, Dog Violet *Viola riviniana*, Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*, Hairy Wood-rush *Luzula pilosa* and the first flowering heads of Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. As we stopped to look at the leaves of Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, a different *Potentilla* growing nearby caught our eye (see photo below). It had a rosette of basal leaves with 5 leaflets and robust developing runners with leaves of 3-4 leaflets. We concluded that this was either Trailing Tormentil *P. anglica* or the sterile Hybrid Cinquefoil *P. x mixta*, which can only reliably be distinguished on fertility, so will need checking again later in the summer.



Trailing Tormentil *Potentilla anglica* or Hybrid Cinquefoil *P. x mixta*

The Tower Road track had some interesting flushes along the edge containing Common Yellow-sedge *Carex demissa* and Flea Sedge *Carex pulicaris*, while Green-ribbed Sedge *Carex binervis* found in the drier acid grassland, had its first flowering spikes just emerging. These brought our tally of sedge species to nine.

In addition to the plants, we saw a peacock butterfly and the bird list totalled 14 species, most notably good numbers of newly arrived Willow Warblers.

We all agreed that this area of Mabie Forest had proved to be extremely interesting and well worth a follow-up visit in May/June to check for additional species, in particular sedges and aquatics.

Bob's list of bryophytes is below. They are mostly common and widespread in Britain and none, apart from *Bryum alpinum*, is worthy of special comment. He says that it contains only a small selection of the species known to occur at the

site and they were chosen solely to illustrate to the other participants something of the beauty and diversity of these fascinating plants.

<i>Frullania tamarisci</i>	liverwort (leafy)
<i>Lepidozia reptans</i>	liverwort (leafy)
<i>Lophocolea bidentata</i>	liverwort (leafy)
<i>Nowellia curvifolia</i>	liverwort (leafy)
<i>Pellia epiphylla</i>	liverwort (thallose)
<i>Sphagnum palustre</i>	moss
<i>Bryum alpinum</i>	moss (acrocarp)
<i>Dicranum scoparium</i>	moss (acrocarp)
<i>Fissidens sp.</i>	moss (acrocarp)
<i>Mnium hornum</i>	moss (acrocarp)
<i>Polytrichum commune</i>	moss (acrocarp)
<i>Hookeria lucens</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Hylocomium splendens</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Hypnum jutlandicum</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Plagiothecium undulatum</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Pleurozium schreberi</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Pseudoscleropodium purum</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Rhytidiadelphus loreus</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus</i>	moss (pleurocarp)
<i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>	moss (pleurocarp)

Sarah White 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023

