

Sunday 1st July, Barr - Tetrad NX 29S

A small group: Angus Hannah, Chris Calvey and me recorded around the beautiful village of Barr on 1st July. After the heat of the previous week it was pleasant to have shade from riparian trees – lime, ash and alder - and breezy conditions.

The main street of Barr runs parallel to a tributary of the Stinchar, just before the confluence. We started botanising on the near bank of the burn as soon as exiting the cars, and Angus in wellingtons recorded to the far bank too. There were a good range of woodland and wetland species as well as garden escapees and other naturalised aliens. The most notable of the last group was rock stonecrop *Sedum forsterianum* – first record for Ayrshire since the 1920s! Other escapees/aliens were creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*, green alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens* and fox-and-cubs *Pilosella aurantiaca*. The most notable wetland species was slender tufted sedge *Carex acuta* first record for Ayrshire since the 1960s. Large bitter-cress *Cardamine amara* was also seen by the river. Tuberous comfrey *Symphytum tuberosum* was one of the most abundant woodland species.

This riparian habitat continued by the B-road east of the village, becoming less accessible. North of the road was a band of broadleaves and a verge rich in woodland species. We added hazel and hawthorn to our shrub list and *Rosa x dumalis* – the hybrid of dog-rose *R. canina* and northern dog-rose *R. vosagiaca*, the only rose we saw all day. Woodland ground flora included wood sedge *Carex sylvatica*, remote sedge *C. remota*, false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, hairy brome *Bromopsis ramosa* (growing out of a dead ash!) - **photo**, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, slender St John's wort *Hypericum pulchrum*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and wild strawberry *Fragaria vesca*, all ancient woodland indicators. It was surprising to see ripe strawberries through dog's mercury leaves (**photo**).



Left - wild strawberries and dog's mercury; right - hairy brome on a dead ash

Once we reached the east end of the square we returned to where we started, to lunch on picnic benches under the trees. Afterwards we had access to toilets in the community hall opposite. Barr is a great place to botanise!

We continued downstream and saw people swimming in the pool between the confluence and bridge over the Stinchar. From verges of bridge and main road to north we added some interesting species including white ramping fumitory *Fumaria capreolata* with large sepals toothed near base (the first record for hectad and only the 4th or 5th record for Ayrshire) and Des Etang's St John's wort *H. x desetangsii* the hybrid between perforate St John's wort *H. perforatum* and imperforate *H. maculatum*. It has two weak and two strong ridges on the stem. This was on a small bank of yellow flowers, the other species being yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* (**photo**). The bank was below a plantation wood west of the road.



Left – white ramping fumitory; right Des Etang's St John's wort and yellow pimpernel

We made a foray up into that woodland where we added a few more species such as bugle *Ajuga reptans* and pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*. Back on the road at the end of the wood we took a public footpath upwards through extensive rich circum-neutral meadows, colourful with species such as ragged robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre* and common spotted orchids *Dactylorhiza fuchsiae* among the rushes. We added more sedges to our already long list: including pale sedge *C. pallescens*, with crimped bract (**photo**), flea sedge *C. pulicaris*, and spring sedge *C. caryophyllaea*. We tried out the new eyebright *Euphrasia* book, which Angus had recently received, and two specimens, from different microhabitats, both keyed out as *E. artica*.

Higher up we reached more acid ground with typical acid grassland herbs, plus purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea*, mat grass *Nardus stricta* and some wet heath species notably heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*. Then as we were nearing the west end of the monad and not adding new species, and time was getting on and Angus had to get back to Bute, we returned downhill, crossing again the wonderful damp meadowland (**photo**).



Left: pale sedge with crimped bracts, dark backdrop kindly provided by Chris!
 Right: Angus and Chris descending through the rich colourful meadows round beautiful Barr.

In that monad (**NS 2794**) we had recorded nearly 140 species without walking far, a result of rich varied habitats plus the expertise of Angus. While Chris ferried Angus northwards, I visited some easily accessible bog in the NW monad of the tetrad (**NS 2695**) and added a few more species including common cotton grass *Eriophorum vaginatum*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, bog bean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, marsh arrow grass *Triglochin palustris* and unexpectedly heath fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia borealis* growing out of a hummock of *Sphagnum capillifolium* (**photo**). A nice end to an excellent day!



Heath fragrant orchid on the bog