

HUNTINGDONSHIRE NEWSLETTER

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Progress With Date Class 4

The BSBI launched the Maps Scheme in 2005 to monitor how well county recorders were getting on with surveying their respective counties in the aftermath of the New Atlas i.e. how much of the county has been resurveyed relative to the previous Atlas date class (Date Class 3). As part of this process, recording is moving onto a decadal system of which we are currently in Date Class 4.

We are now close to the end of the current date class and Huntingdonshire is performing admirably. The county statistics as of March 2009, place us as having achieved 92% re-recording relative to Date Class 3. This compares with a figure of 21% in February 2007. Given this, I must extend thanks to everyone who submitted records in 2008, it is clear that your efforts have helped reap considerable dividends. Please keep up the good work. In addition I must acknowledge all those who have submitted records since 2000. Many of these records were not computerised until last year and, as such, these records have also been critical in achieving the current total.

New County Records

There has been a further notable increase in the number of species recorded for the County (all non-native) since the last newsletter (November 2008). These records will be published in full in due course in *Watsonia* and the Huntingdonshire Fauna and Flora Society Annual Report. However, a summary of these finds is provided below to wet people's appetites.

Hybrid Alder (*Alnus x hybrida*)
Italian Lords-and-ladies (*Arum italicum* ssp. *italicum*)
Great Forget-me-not (*Brunnera macrophylla*)
Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*)
Himalayan Clematis (*Clematis montana*)
Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*)
(*Cornus australis*)
Japanese Red-cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*)
Cut-leaved Teasel (*Dipsacus laciniatus*)
Dragon Arum (*Dracunculus vulgaris*)
Sheep's-fescue (*Festuca ovina* ssp. *hirtula*)
Rock Crane's-bill (*Geranium macrorrhizum*)

Druce's Crane's-bill (*Geranium x oxonianum*)
Six-rowed Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)
Kerria (*Kerria japonica*)
Tartarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*)
Grape-hyacinth (*Muscari neglectum*)
Pink-sorrel (*Oxalis articulata*)
Balsam-poplar (*Populus trichocarpa*)
Downy Currant (*Ribes spicatum*)
Lamb's-ear (*Stachys byzantina*)
Hidcote Comfrey (*Symphytum x hidcotense*)
Pansy (*Viola x wittrockiana*)
Weigelia (*Weigela floribunda*)

See also the photographs below.



Arum italicum ssp. *italicum* at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park



Dipsacus laciniatus at Paxton Pits

Site Lists

I mentioned in the last newsletter that I was working at producing checklists for key sites. This is a project that has taken more time than I initially hoped but a list for Paxton Pits is now available via the webpage.

Novelties

The publication over the winter of the latest volume of Sell & Murrell has provided a key impetus for the discovery and recognition of this month's novelties.

The first was a revelation for me and I am sure that it will be for many others also. It is *Lamium purpureum* var. *incisum* (centre of photo, the picture of one leaf does not really do justice to the jizz of the plant as a whole). The foliage is virtually identical to that of Cut-leaved Dead-nettle (*Lamium hybridum*) but the flowers are larger and showier and like typical Red Dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum* var. *purpureum*) the corolla tube markedly exceeds the calyx (unfortunately I could not get a single *L. hybridum* flower home intact to allow me to photograph it for comparison).

This does rather beg the question – is Cut-leaved Dead-nettle over-recorded? Reassuringly in our area all three taxa can typically be found in close association, so the answer is probably no (at least at the level of the tetrad and above). Based on my experience so far, var. *incisum* seems to be restricted to arable margins while var. *purpureum* can be found in a much wider range of niches.



From left to right: *Lamium hybridum*, *L. purpureum* var. *incisum* and *L. purpureum* var. *purpureum*

The next plant is an introduced, large-leaved, form of Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus* f. *intermedius*). This shrub is believed to originate from Italy and Switzerland but it is proving to be very frequent in Huntingdonshire and adjacent Northamptonshire. Once familiar, bushes of f. *intermedius* can be spotted from a distance. It can be found in urban plantings, rural hedgerows and new woods and even as an introduction into ancient woodland SSSIs.

Forma *intermedius* is relatively straightforward to identify and we should make an effort to document its distribution. It can be distinguished from the native f. *europaeus*

(pink fruit) and f. *leucocarpus* (white fruit) as follows (after Sell & Murrell 2009):

Leaves 4-6 x 1.5-2 cm, lanceolate, elliptical or oblong = f. *europaeus/leucocarpus*

Leaves 6-13 x 2-4 cm, ovate = f. *intermedius*

The cited leaf sizes for f. *intermedius* may be on the conservative size. I have found spindles with larger leaves that are otherwise identical with the description of this taxon and that can be attributed to none of the other taxa listed by Sell & Murrell.



Euonymus europaeus f. *europaeus* (top row) and f. *intermedius* (bottom row)

The final plant this month is a form of Common Ivy (*Hedera helix* ssp. *helix*). Forma *pedata* is popular in cultivation but it can also be found in situations that are distant from habitation, where it is presumably bird sown. So far, I have found a colony in a rural hedgerow at Fenstanton and another colony on the river bank near Portholme.



Hedera helix ssp. *helix* f. *pedata*