

Warwickshire Flora Group

Newsletter No. 15 November 2018.

NEW AND INTERESTING RECORDS

NEW ALIENS.

As usual the majority of new species found in the county are from horticultural origin.

In April a few plants of *Trigstama uniflorum* (Star-flower) were seen spreading across the pavement of Chetwynd Drive, Whitestone and in May a bush of *Berberis aggregata* was discovered near the Anchor Pub, Caldecote. Identifying this gave referee Mark Duffell a bit of a challenge as there are over 100 species of similar looking *Berberis* in cultivation to choose from.

Di Napier found some *Camelina sativa* (Gold of Pleasure) in Kineton in May and a further colony was seen by John and Val Roberts at Hodnell Manor in August. In the past this yellow crucifer was a common weed of Flax fields, but is now sown as cover and seed for gamebirds. Di's record was the first one since 1939.

The Flora Group survey of Leamington Hastings in June added the handsome, scarlet climber *Eccremocarpus scaber* (Chilean Glory Flower) to the county list. As it was found at the back of the churchyard in an area that had not been planted it is likely to be a seedling.



Photo David Long.

The most exciting find of the season must be David Long's *Gamochaeta pennsylvanica* (Pennsylvania cudweed). This was seen growing in a pavement crack outside Kwikfit in Rugby Town Centre on 30 September. It was only the eighth record for Great Britain and as none of the local botanists had seen it before. It took about three weeks of e mailing photos before we found anybody who could identify it. It can be found in Stace 3 as *Gnaphalium purpureum*, (with an illustration), and there is still some debate as to its correct name.

The Derbyshire Vice-county Recorder, Alan Willmot, was out sightseeing in Coventry in September, when he came across a small *Cyrtomium sp.* (Holly Fern) growing at the base of a wall in St. Mary's Guildhall. His photo, plus a frond that we collected a few days later, were sent to BSBI fern referee Fred Rumsey, but he was unable to determine it to species as the plant was only about 10 cms across and had not developed any spores.

Monika and John Walton found the second county record of *Dittrichia graveolens* (Stink-aster) in September, while in stationary traffic on the north bound carriageway of the A46. It is a small, shrubby, aromatic, yellow-flowered fleabane that should be looked for along major roads in Autumn.

SOME GOOD NATIVE RECORDS

In September John and Monika found a few plants of *Rumex palustris* (Marsh Dock) at Draycote Water, this is the first time it has been seen since Brian Laney discovered it there in 2010.

After an unsuccessful visit to look for *Elatine hexandra* (Six-stamened Waterwort) at Olton Reservoir with Brian Laney in September, we were pleased to find that *Melampyrum pratense* (Common Cow-wheat) was still surviving on the edge of two urban woodlands at Palmers Rough, Solihull where it had not been seen for seven years.

BSBI ATLAS 2020

It is that time of year again. This is a good time to send in your 2018 records as we are not quite so busy.

Thanks to hard work from everybody, and especially John and Val Roberts, we have only a handful of tetrads left with less than 100 species in them. If you are worried about how and what to send in, please phone us on 01827 712455, rather than writing a long e mail.

BOTANICAL TALKS AT LOCAL NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETIES

Sadly I have only been able to find one talk of any botanic interest this year.

Thu 6 Jan, Eastern Turkey Steppes and Mountains, John Roberts at Warwick NHS.

For venue details and timing please consult the excellent Warwick NHS website.

Moses supposes his Roses are.....? (Probably a hybrid.)

On Saturday 4th August, Anna Dudley, Jackie Hardy joined John and Monika on a Rose Identification Day with the BSBI Rose referee Roger Maskew at Castlemorton Common in Worcestershire. We were well prepared having attended an indoor workshop at Warwick Herbarium on 31 July where we worked our way through named specimens, learning the important characteristics to look at and trying out Roger's new Rose key that had been published in BSBI News a while ago.

A weather-resistant group including John Clift, Steve Wright and Anna braved very wet weather at Ufton Fields NR on the 26 August to go on a Rose Hunt. To do this, the one thing you need to remember is not to collect the flowers. You need a length of mature stem with prickles, a section with full-sized leaves and a large spray with developed hips. This can be a prickly business and labelling and keeping material separate is not easy in the pouring rain.

Before this meeting we had sent a parcel of assorted Roses to Roger and were very disappointed that he was unable to name any of them. Apparently the ordinary Warwickshire hedgerow rose is notoriously promiscuous and is a bit of a mongrol, with a complex mixture of characteristics that can baffle even the greatest expert. This was sad as John Clift had been busy collecting a carload of specimens from around Leamington. To get quality species, Roger Maskew suggested that we try sites on limestone, and at Ufton and at Bishop's Hill and Stockton in September we did much better.

At Ufton we managed *Rosa rubiginosa* (Sweet Briar), *R. squarrosa*, *R. stylosa* (Short-styled Field-rose) (2nd county record since 1990), *R. x dumalis*, *R. rubiginosa* (f.) *x canina* (*R. nitidula*) (2nd county record, only previous record from Solihull in 1871).

Bishop's Hill produced *R. squarrosa* and *R. canina x squarrosa* and Stockton cutting *R. stylosa* (3rd county record since 1990).

Warwickshire Roses have been well recorded in the past and it was good to produce some modern records in spite of the extra work it entailed. It is something to concentrate on in the autumn when many ordinary plants are past their best.



Cytomium sp. St. Mary's Guildhall, Coventry. Photo J. Walton

TRAINING COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

The 2019 programme of the **Field Studies Council** have just been published (www.field-studies-council.org). It runs residential courses on natural history throughout the country. The **University of Leicester** also has a selection of courses in Plant Identification, including one for Beginners. (Search for University of Leicester Adult Programme).

The **Wildlife Trust of Bedfordshire, Cambridge and Northants** is holding workshops on various natural history subjects including Fenland Vegetation, Sedges and Stoneworts. (Try www.wildlifebcn.org/get-involved/training-workshops).

NEW RESOURCES

We attended this year's Recorders' Conference at Preston Montford where we had an opportunity to use the new **John Poland, Field Key to Winter Twigs**. This has a much wider selection of species than the Aidgap key and includes many aliens. There are excellent drawings and an appendix with many helpful photos. Although, we initially had difficulty finding stipule scars (an important couplet in the key), I am sure this will become a valuable addition to the bookshelf.

While attending the BSBI Field Meeting at Rutland Water I was introduced to **Cucaera** (www.cucaera.co.uk) a free and legal way of printing out Ordnance Survey maps that is easy to use and is ideal for surveying. If you haven't yet found it, I can also recommend the **British Wild Flowers website** (www.british-wild-flowers.co.uk) which is of high quality and even includes photos of "nastys" such as Cotoneasters, rare aliens and even a few Hybrid Willows.

THIS YEAR'S BSBI NEW YEAR PLANT HUNT WILL BE HELD IN SOLIHULL on NEW YEARS DAY 2019. More details to follow.