

# Warwickshire Flora Group

## Newsletter No. 20      December 2020

It may seem a little strange that we are sending out another Newsletter only a month after the previous one, but as we had so many replies to the last one, I thought it would a good idea to keep you in the picture.

As far as field meetings are concerned, you will be pleased to know that both the BSBI and Wild Flower Society and putting together full programmes for 2021 and the Flora Group are planning to do the same. We will just have to wait for the changes in the Government's guidance on meeting outside in groups before we go ahead.

### BSBI YOUTUBE CHANNEL.

If you didn't manage to connect with the BSBI Annual Exhibition Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November, all of the lectures are now available on the BSBI youtube channel. The recent Scottish Botanists Conference talks can also be found there, including a hair-raising report of a trip to St. Kilda and an interesting (to me anyway) Introduction to Lichen ID. The youtube channel is simple to access, just put "BSBI youtube" into your search engine and then follow the link for "videos" and a huge number of resources become instantly available. You do not need to be a BSBI member to view them.

There are webinars (another of those special 2020 words!), where you can spend an hour with Mark Duffell comparing Winter Twigs or learn some Conifer ID with Matt Parratt, which may well inspire you to go out and do some winter botany. The BSBI Irish Grasslands Project has also contributed online workshops on Stoneworts and Aquatic Plants, beginner classes on Grass and Sedge Identification and two intermediate sessions on Vegetative Grass ID. Instead of just watching the inevitable Christmas repeats in the weeks to come, please try some of them out and give your brain a bit of a workout. There are plenty more to explore.

### BSBI NEW YEAR PLANT HUNT 2021 IS GOING AHEAD.

This will take place between Friday 1st and Monday 4th January 2021 and the recording app. will be made available on [www.bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt](http://www.bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt) from December 31st. Full details can also be found there with no need to send records to us as they are automatically added to the BSBI database. The current government's regulations mean that there will be no organised Warwickshire meeting this year, however, this does not stop you from carrying out your own hunt. Happy hunting!

### FAKE NEWS

We recently received a rather odd record of *Hordeum brachyanthemum* from a planning report from a proposed development near Knowle. The ecologist, who was obviously not a grass expert, either used an American phone app. or looked up the Latin name for Meadow Barley on his phone. When you do this, your search engine (which if you use Microsoft may also be American), will probably take you to the Wikipedia entry for *Hordeum brachyanthemum* (American) Meadow Barley. This is a common species along the western coast of the USA to Alaska and the Kamchatka Peninsular, with an outlier in Newfoundland, but more importantly, **it has never been seen in the UK**. Just remember, you can't always believe what it says on your phone or at least read it carefully. The ecologist has not been named to save embarrassment. The Meadow Barley we see in Warwickshire is *Hordeum secalinum*.

## NEW AND INTERESTING SPECIES



*Cardamine occulta*. Photo by Bastiaan Brak.

It may not look any different from common Wavy Bittercress from a distance, but this is *Cardamine occulta*, a new species for the county, which Bastiaan Brak found in Warwick Road, Stratford-upon-Avon on 22 November. It is very similar to *C. flexuosa* and differs only in the details of the hairs on the upper leaf surfaces and base of the stem and from the shape of the lobes at the end of the middle stem leaves. It is not in Stace, but it is included in a key on the Manual of the Alien Plants of Belgium website. If you want to see more of Bastiaan's pictures go to the Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland Facebook page where he originally posted them and where Tim Rich replied with a positive ID. It is native to Eastern Asia and may well become invasive. Please look out for it in towns.

We spent a very muddy Sunday morning at the Leam Valley with John Stephen, the volunteer warden of the reserve, who showed us a large, upright specimen of *Cyrtomium fortunei* (Fortunes's Holly-fern) that was growing in woodland (SP3368765285), very close to the *Scilla sardensis* that was seen there last year. Photos were sent to Fred Rumsey who replied from his iPhone at 6.30 in the morning! This is the third county record and the best specimen so far. A popular, but not very hardy houseplant from Eastern Asia, the fern was a long way away from gardens and in a fairly inaccessible area of the wood, so was unlikely to have been planted. Leam Valley is an interesting site with a healthy mixture of exotic planted trees, native species plus garden escapes from the nearby allotments and houses. We will be organizing a visit there in the summer with John.



*Cyrtomium fortunei* Photo J. Walton

John and Monika Walton found the second record of *Bidens ferulifolia* (Fern-leaved Beggarticks) on the car park of The Gate Inn, Nether Whitacre. Although a Bidens, looking at it you can see it has little in common with Beggarticks, Nodding or Trifid Bur-marigold that are fairly common aquatic marginals. Fern-leaved Beggarticks is commonly grown as bedding plant for hanging baskets but it seeds freely and is a true perennial.

Nik Aspey has been busy trying to refind some of the alien species that were seen a few years ago in the Warwickshire part of Birmingham. The best finds were the only Warwickshire patch of *X Crataemespilus grandiflorus* (Haw-medlar) was still growing in a hedge in Bleak Hall Park, Short Heath (originally seen by James Partridge and Mike Poulton in 2008) and a second county record of *Guiziotia abyssinica* (Niger), spotted at Edgbaston Reservoir. Many people put out Niger seeds to attract Goldfinches to their gardens and it is surprising that it is not a common weed.

## EXTINCT OR NOT?

We spent a day in the summer surveying Clowes Wood and were disappointed not to find any *Viola palustris* (Marsh Violet) or *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern) in the boggy area. There have also been no sightings of *Cirsium dissectum* (Meadow Thistle) from the whole of the county for a while and we fear it is now extinct. *Dactylorhiza maculata* (Heath Spotted-Orchid) also seems to have gone from Shadowbrook Meadows and Brook Meadow. If you have seen any of these plants, or taken photos of any of them during the last three years, can you please contact us, John and Monika Walton on 01827 712455 or [jomowalton@gmail.com](mailto:jomowalton@gmail.com)