

Warwickshire Botanical Report 2011

WARWICKSHIRE FLORA GROUP REPORT NO. 2

MAY 2012

First county records for 2011

The following species were seen for the first time in VC 38 during 2011:

- Bearded Iris (*Iris germanica*) was discovered by Jon Bowley when surveying in Stretton Croft close to the Leicester border near Hinckley in September
- A fully mature Garden Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*) was spotted growing on waste ground near the centre of Nuneaton by John and Monika Walton in September
- Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine* var. *monotropoides*). John Harris found a rare ghostly white variety without chlorophyll growing at Hartshill Hayes. It is probably a FCR but varieties are not always recorded.
- Brian Laney found some Early Meadow Grass (*Poa infirma*) in the car park of the eastbound M40 Warwick Services in March.
- Pickerel Weed (*Pontederia cordata*). Brian Laney discovered this North American aquatic in Borrowpit Lake during the Warwickshire Flora Group visit to DM Kineton in August.
- The pretty yellow rockery plant Kamchatka Stonecrop (*Sedum kamtschaticum*) from Eastern Asia was found growing at Snitterfield Bushes on 21 July 2011 by John and Val Roberts.
- Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) A self-sown seedling was noted on the WFG visit to Oversley Wood. Planted trees are not included on the official county list but seedlings and suckers are accepted.



Garden Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*)



Broad-leaved Helleborine
(*Epipactis helleborine* var. *monotropoides*)

Warwickshire Flora Group Surveys

2011 saw the re-emergence of the Warwickshire Flora Group and many botanists joined in the twelve field meetings to survey plants across the county.

The first meeting at **Middleton Lakes** produced a list of 105 fairly common species but also added a new species of rust fungus *Puccinia albescens* to the county that was observed growing on Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*).

The identification of a clump of immature Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*) spotted growing by the path by Steve Woodward in **Arley Wood** in May was confirmed on a later visit when a large area of Purple-Moor Grass (*Molinia carulea*) was also seen. Phil Parr led the morning visit to **Ashlawn Railway Cutting** where the highlight was to rediscover Common Broomrape (*Orobanche minor*), not seen there since 1997. In the afternoon the group surveyed **Mr. Allan's Wet Meadow** where some female plants of Marsh Valerian (*Valeriana dioica*) were found growing. **Ettington Cutting** held a variety of attractive colour forms of Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) as well as a large healthy patch of Large Thyme (*Thymus pulegioides*) at one of only three sites for it in the county. The elegant, creamy flowers of the Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum pyrenaicum*) growing in **Loxley Church Meadow** were still very impressive although possibly of garden origin.



Early Meadow-grass (*Poa infirma*)



Common Broomrape (*Orobanche minor*)

A second visit to **Middleton Lakes** concentrated on an area known as "The Spoil Heap". This area had been leveled at the end of 2010 and contained two rare casuals, Rough Marsh Mallow (*Malva setigera*), a second modern county record and Tall Rocket (*Sisymbrium altissimum*) which had not been seen in the county since 1989. **Claybrookes Marsh** produced two species of Cudweed – Small and Common (*Filago minima* and *F. vulgaris*) and a range of rare grasses. The dry sunny weather made 2011 a "Filago" year with thirteen records in all, well above the average, including an area at Baddesley Common where *F. vulgaris* was dominant for nearly 50 yards.

The visit to **DM Kineton** in August was the WFG's most productive survey to date and covered a range of different habitats. We were pointed in the right direction by Bill Pearson who was pleased to see some botanists taking an interest after an absence of recording there for some years. Corn Parsley (*Petroselinum segetum*), a species declared extinct in the county (last record 1950) was seen by Brian Laney growing on a grassy bund with Knotted Hedge-Parsley (*Torilis nodosa*) nearby, a species now only found at Burton Dassett Hills a few miles away (Di Napier 2011). In 2012 the WFG will be returning at an earlier time to see these plants in flower rather than in seed.

The final trip of the year to **Middleton Lakes** concentrated on water plants. Golden Dock (*Rumex maritima*) had moved to a new fresh muddy area (nearly, but not quite escaping over the border into Staffordshire!), and Mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*) was re-found. This is an insignificant but Nationally Scarce plant found for the first time in 2009, but not seen in 2010.

The first rather inept use of the Walton's cheap Mark 1 homemade grapnel (hand fork, £1.50 and washing line) also allowed three common species of Potamogeton to be added to the Middleton list. Steven Falk led a September meeting to **Oversley Wood** where Fragrant Agrimony (*Agrimonia procera*), Warwickshire's largest Wild Service Tree (*Sorbus torminalis*) and the site for the county's only colony of Narrow-leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) were all pointed out.

Two Very Special Places

In May, Ron Hill the warden of **Clowes Wood** (a Warwickshire Wildlife Trust site) guided the WFG around this gem of a reserve. Ron's knowledge of the whereabouts of the important plants of the wood shows how important a well-informed warden is to conservation and management at any fragile wildlife site. The mosaic of ancient woodland, heathland and wet meadow produced a very impressive list of rarities.

Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex laevigata*)

Pale Sedge (*C. pallescens*)

Pill Sedge (*C. pilulifera*)

Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*)

Lily-of-the Valley (*Convallaria majus*)

Heath Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*)

Wood Horsetail (*Equisetum sylvatica*)

Bitter Vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*)

Heath Rush (*Juncus multiflorus*)

Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*)

Lemon-scented Fern (*Oreopteris limbosperma*)

Goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*)

Marsh Violet (*Viola palustris*)

Elongated Sedge (*C. elongata*) which had its only Warwickshire record at Clowes Wood used to grow on a piece of wood in the middle of one of the wet woodland ponds. This piece of wood has now completely rotted and in spite of careful searching this plant seems to have disappeared.



Lemon-scented Fern (*Oreopteris limbosperma*)



Heath Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*)

Ian Trueman and Peter Coxhead were the guides at **Sutton Park**. If you do not know the site it is a unique slice of upland bog and heathland just a few miles from the centre of Birmingham and Warwickshire's only National Nature Reserve.

We spent time visiting the two major "hotspots" near Little Bracebridge Pool and Longmoor Pool. Ian and Peter, who have been surveying the plants of the park for many years, showed us a huge variety of species many of which have their only Warwickshire site in the reserve. The list below is of the most notable:

Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*)

Yellow Sedge (*Carex demissa*)

Dioecious Sedge (*C. dioica*)

Star Sedge (*C. echinata*)

Tawny Sedge (*C. hostiana*)

Common Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*)

Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*)

Common Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum unguiculatum*)

Fine-leaved sheep's Fescue (*Festuca filiformis*)

Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*)

Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*)

Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*)

Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*)

Ivy-leaved Water-Crowfoot (*Ranunculus hederaceus*)

Round-leaved Water-Crowfoot (*R. omiophyllus*)

Cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*)

The WFG were also shown two unusual trees, a planted example of a rare native of the Avon Gorge, Round-leaved Whitebeam (*Sorbus eminens*) and Heart-leaved Willow (*Salix eriocephala*) a native of North America that has a liking for British bogs.

Ian and Peter encouraged the group return, not just to photograph the specialities, but to visit the remainder of the park where there is still much to be discovered.

Out and about

Di Napier and **Graham Thompson** joined JW and MW for the Bioblitz held by the Wildlife Trust at Brandon Marsh in June adding many new records to the site list, the most important being Knotted Clover (*Trifolium striatum*) and some extra sedges. **Jane Sells** passed on to JW and MW a specimen of Fan-leaved Water-crowfoot (*R. circinatus*) from Brandon Marsh that had been collected by Jim Rushforth. Jane also sent in an impressive plant list from Birdingbury Fields Meadow which included a record for Common Broomrape plus the second modern county record from 2008 for Early Marsh-Orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*).



Knotted Clover (*Trifolium striatum*)



Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*)

Brian Laney was granted permission to survey the Meriden Sand and Gravel Quarry in August. Less than a mile from the Balsall Common roundabout site that featured in last year's Report, this site proved to be nearly as rich. Grey Sedge (*Carex divulsa*), confirmed by Paul Stanley, was seen on a grassy slope overlooking the lake. The site list boasted a trio of Cudweeds that included a colony of over 1,000 plants of the Nationally Endangered Heath Cudweed (*Gnaphalium sylvaticum*) as well as the two species of *Filago* mentioned above. Annual Knawel (*Scleranthus annua*) was also reported alongside three rarely recorded casuals Pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*), Leopard's-bane (*Doronicum paeleianches*) and Guernsey Fleabane (*Conyza sumatrensis*).

Those of you who prefer to do their botany in the warmth of the summer months can learn much the hardy Brian Laney who found the sixth county site for Water Purslane (*Lythrum portula*) at Ryton Woods in November and the fifth modern site for Blinks (*Montia fontana*) in the car park of Blooms Garden Centre near Dunchurch in December.

John and Val Roberts joined JW and MW to look for one of the BSBI's Threatened Plants Project species, Spreading Hedge-parsley (*Torilis arvensis*) in September at Walton Hall. At first, disappointed that the field margins where it was expected had already been ploughed up, some careful searching found a few dead and uprooted plants along both by the footpath and right against the fence. Luckily members of the Apiaceae have distinctive fruits which allowed identification. Strawberry Clover (*Trifolium fragiferum*) was spotted nearby. The WFG will be spending a day there in 2012, hopefully before the fields are ploughed. .

Jon Bowley found two rarities at Lighthorne Quarry in June: Blunt-flowered Rush (*J. subnodulosus*) and Whorl-grass (*Catabrosa aquatica*) both species with less than five modern sites in the county. He also found the third county record for Hairlike Pondweed (*Potamogeton trichoides*) at Kilsby Lane Meadow.

Di Napier had the second modern record of Dense-Flowered Fumitory (*Fumaria densiflora*) from the school field at Kineton Primary School in June. After reading Steven Falk's book, new WFG member **Dorothy Evans** e mailed to say that she had found a colony of Lesser Chickweed (*Stellaria pallida*) growing on her drive. A visiting botanist friend from Swanage had identified it for her and had also spotted a patch of Common Ramping Fumitory (*F. muralis*) on waste ground on the corner of her road in Emscote, Warwick.

A Bit More News from the North

- At the WFG Sutton Park meeting Ian Trueman handed over a specimen of Lesser Chickweed that had been collected in Greville Street, Birmingham. It is now in the herbarium at Warwick Museum.
- Fifty or more spikes of Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*) were reported from Coton Lakes by Ron Thomas beside a popular path to a bird hide. Toothwort is a rather sporadic flowerer which may explain why it had not been noticed previously. Ron also supplied records from Baddesley Common for Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) and Cross-leaved Heath which appear to becoming much rarer at their main stronghold of Sutton Park possibly due to the recent drier summers.
- A handsome white-flowered spike of Moth Mullein (*Verbascum blattaria*) was seen at Pooley Country Park by the warden Keith Higginson and Twiggy Mullein (*V. virgatum*) was found nearby.



Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*)



Moth Mullein (*Verbascum blattaria*)

- John and Monika found Railway Pit (a separate part of Alvecote Pools SSSI) by accident. Monika personally discovered an impenetrable area of Greater Tussock Sedge (*C. paniculata*) with four-foot deep gullies between the tussocks that were very difficult to get out of. One plant of Parsley Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe lachenalii*) was seen growing in the wetter area alongside acid lovers such as Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*) and Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*). The *Oenanthe* had not been seen since 1995 when Maurice Arnold found it growing near Tubular Water-dropwort (*O. fistulosa*).

Photos by John Harris, Keith Higginson, Brian Laney, Di Napier & John Walton.

John and Monika Walton May 2012