



New Flora of the Isle of Man Newsletter

www.iomflora.site11.com

Newsletter no. 2, March 2010

With the 2010 survey season nearly upon us now is good time to plan your summer!

Most importantly this newsletter contains all of the up-coming flora events for 2010. There will be a wider range of events this year, from social rambles, to concerted group tetrad recording and the chance to tackle some of the difficult plant groups such as willows and grasses. We look forward to seeing you.

Surveying can start anytime from now onwards. This is a particularly good time to get early bulb records such as late snowdrops. Naturalised crocus are more difficult to identify to species, but feel free to send a voucher specimen to myself or Peter McEvoy to check for you.

This is also the best time to look for Crow Garlic. At this time of year it sticks out of the grass verges about 30cm above the rest of the



vegetation looking like long thread-like grass shoots. If you rub a bit of leaf its garlic smell will soon give it away. Its green flowers appear in June, but are nearly invisible by then. The plant is most abundant on the Bride and Andreas road verges, but can be found in any part of the Island. Once you get your eye in you will start to see it everywhere! AD

Photo competition

Time to start taking photos for the competition! Closing date 30th September. Photos must be properly documented and submitted to PT. Details of the competition will be given on the website.



Mosses and Liverworts of Britain and Ireland, A Field Guide Ian Atherton, Sam Bosanquet, and Mark Llawley (Eds)

If flowering plants are too easy for you, try learning a more difficult group of plants altogether. Mosses and liverworts are abundant on the Isle of Man and are particularly easy to see in winter when little else can be found.

This book is a complete guide with superb photos throughout and a distribution map with good Isle of Man coverage. It is about as user friendly as a complicated subject can get, though still daunting for any beginner.

With over 800 species covered in detail, the book is a massive achievement by the British Bryological Society and is recommended to anyone who enjoys the technical side of plant identification or needs a definitive guide on the subject. See the BBS website for some fantastic images and help with ids: <http://rbg-web2.rbge.org.uk/bbs/bbs.htm>. The two moss photos shown above right are from the BBS website and are not necessarily Manx species.



The Field Guide is available from the BBS, price £24.95, incl. postage. 856 pages, paperback, full colour.

ISBN-13: 978-0956131010

Sphagnum species growing in South Barrule quarry.
AD

2009 — results are in

10579 tetrad records for our first year has to be considered a triumph! Over a quarter of these have been previously unrecorded tetrad records which means that our knowledge of over a third of the Island's tetrads (62 out of 174) is now considerably greater.

Naturally the vast bulk of the records are of common species, but these are important if we are going to produce an atlas. More exciting naturally are the rarer species we have recorded. Indeed it would appear as if some of our 'rare' species

are not so rare after all, with species such as hay scented buckler-fern (*Dryopteris aemula*) and floating club-rush (*Eleogiton flutans*) looking to be somewhat more common than thought. This kind of information is important so that ecologists can concentrate conservation efforts on the genuinely threatened.

As well as important new native finds such as the blunt-flowered rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) and tor grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*) we have new records for non-natives too, such as the climbing snapdragon (*Asarina procumbens*) and greater knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*). We

will be able to see over coming decades if these are here to stay or just over for a visit.

As well as current survey records Joyce Quilliam and myself have been inputting thousands of Larch Garrad's garden escapee records. Naturally crocosmia heads the list but other species such as Welsh poppy (*Meconopsis cambrica*) and Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii*) are among the many species that would appear to have colonised every corner of the Island also.

As our ID skills improve in 2010 we should be able to find even better and more records for the Atlas. AD

Bluebell hunt

Voted Britain's most popular wild flower in a recent Plantlife poll, the bluebell for many people defines springtime. We normally think of bluebells being a woodland plant but in the Isle of Man we can also find them in our hedges and in particular abundance in coastal grassland and steep bracken-covered hillsides.

Identifying a plant as a bluebell is relatively easy. However, as with most things in nature, this picture is not as simple as it first appears.

The Spanish bluebell was introduced as a garden plant and has 'jumped the fence' and hybridised with our native bluebell giving rise to three distinct types of bluebell— native, Spanish and a hybrid.

As part of the Flora project we are keen to see how far the Spanish bluebell has been able to spread and whether the native bluebell is under threat from hybridisation with its Iberian cousin.

What you can do

When you are out and about this Spring, try to identify bluebells using the guide and survey sheet on the website. Photograph or collect voucher specimens of bluebells and submit these together with a grid reference of detailed location to Peter at the new DEFA HQ at St Johns.

If enough records are collected we can plot a map of the distribution of the 3 types of bluebell.

Good luck and happy hunting!



Identification guides

Our website now contains several guides, the latest is 'Identifying hawkweeds and taking voucher specimens' by Linda Moore, go to www.iomflora.sitell.com/

Researching the Herbaria

During February Joyce Quilliam and I, ably assisted by Kate Hawkins and her colleagues at MNH, have started inputting the Museum's herbarium records onto computer. After four intense sessions we are nearly halfway through the catalogued herbarium collection. A further nearly 50% of the collection is in the process of organisation and integration.

The specimens mostly date from the late 19th to early 20th Centuries, and are largely the work of three people; Theophilus Talbot, George Alfred Holt and Cyril Paton.

Most of the specimens are of very common species, but occasionally plants long since thought extinct to the Island are found. One such is the small-flowered buttercup (*Ranunculus parviflorus*) which intriguingly

had a small packet of seeds as part of the specimen. We shall see if we are allowed to take some seeds to find out if they will germinate, who knows this could be an exciting new angle for wildflower conservation to take.

The photo shows a 1942 specimen of a small-flowered buttercup. An arable weed that was last recorded in 1944. A similar high resolution picture of every herbarium specimen is being taken.

We have also applied for a grant from the Botanical Society of the British Isles for funds to spend a week at the London Natural History Museum where there is a significant collection of Isle of Man specimens. AD



British Lichen Society visit to Isle of Man, 23rd – 26th April 2010

For Flora volunteers who feel in need of an extra challenge, how about improving your knowledge of lichens? The British Lichen Society is visiting the Isle of Man for a long weekend, from Friday 23rd to Monday 26th April.

Flora supporters and fellow local naturalists are welcome to join in the BLS site visits and evening get-togethers.

Full day trips are organised to:

- the south coast on Friday 23rd April (Pooilvaish area, the Sound, Meayll Hill and possibly Silverdale Glen/Rushen Abbey);
- the north of the Island on Saturday 24th (the Ayres and Ballaugh Curragh);
- a trip to Laxey and Snaefell via the Manx Electric Railway and Snaefell Mountain Railway, on Sunday 25th;
- a short walk along the sandstone

coast of Peel is scheduled for the morning of Monday 26th for the BLS visitors who have time to spare before travelling home.

On Saturday evening (24th April) there will be a group meal at the Claremont Hotel on Loch Promenade, Douglas. Local naturalists are also welcome to join this social occasion. Please let Kate Hawkins know if you wish to book a place on the meal guest list (see below). The group rate for a three-course meal will be approximately £15.

The BLS is hiring a minibus for the weekend (apart from the Laxey and Snaefell visit) which can probably only just accommodate the visitors, so if you would like to join the group, you will need to make arrangements to bring or share cars. Please contact Kate Hawkins for further details of the excursions, meeting places etc:

Tel. 648000 (daytime)

mobile 07624 342336

e-mail: kate.hawkins@mnh.gov.im

The MNH events programme is now available online at www.gov.im/mnh. Among the events planned are three to mark the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity:

Saturday 8th May, 8.00am start: Kate Hawkins to lead an early morning wildlife watch at the Sound, followed by breakfast at the Sound café. Price £10 per person.

Bank Holiday Monday 31 May, 2.00 – 4.00pm: bug hunting sessions at Laxey Wheel led by Kate Hawkins (normal admission charges apply).



Friday 6th August, 1.00 – 3.00pm: rock pooling sessions for children at Niarbyl. Leader Kate Hawkins. £5 per child.

KH

LOOK OUT FOR:

Pale Dog Violet

Viola lactea

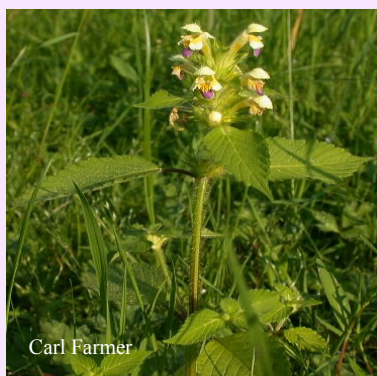
We know from the Manx Museum's Herbarium that this once grew around Groudle Bay as there are three perfectly preserved specimens collected in 1883. Perhaps collecting these three plants sent them extinct or perhaps they are still there but no-one has looked for it since. If anyone is in the Groudle area in May or June look in dry, sunny, short or bare vegetation for this species. AD



Wikipedia

Large Flowered Hemp Nettle

Galeopsis speciosa



Carl Farmer

This species is on the Island and it may even be fairly common in places, but we currently do not have any tetrad records for it.

It is a distinctive cornfield annual weed that prefers damper sites such as peat and clay soils and is considered a particular pest in potatoes. More recent sightings have been in the East of the Island. AD

The Blue Plunderer

Lebia cyanocephala

A rare beetle now only recorded on one heathland in Surrey, but with very old records for the Port Erin and Maughold areas. Its larvae are parasites of a small green leaf beetle (*Chrysolina hyperici*) that only feed on St Johns-worts. If you see the blue plunderer or even leaf beetles feeding on a St Johns-wort let Kate Hawkins know. (tel. 648000; kate.hawkins@mnh.gov.im). KH



Our new Website

Peter McEvoy has done an excellent job setting up our New Flora website. Peter says he very much welcomes any of your contributions: your botanising experiences, identification guides, or links to

other useful websites and your comments. We will shortly be adding names of volunteers to the site, so please let us know if you do not want your name listed. Use the website, make it your homepage, and contribute if you can!

New Flora of the Isle of Man



<http://www.ionflora.sitell.com/>

Events Programme for 2010

April	Fri 2 nd morning	Willow catkins, buds and shoots: identification	10am-12pm , Knockaloe Classroom, followed by an excursion after a lunch break. Led by Liz Charter
April	23 rd -26 th weekend	British Lichen Society visit	See page 3.
May	Thurs 6 th evening	Lesser twayblades, mines and spoil	7pm, Cross Vein/Snuff the Wind SC2678, led by Aline Thomas.
May	Sat 22 nd morning	Ramsey tetrad SC49M for 'International Biodiversity Day' Everyone welcome	A tetrad bash, led by Andree. 11am, Mooragh car park, off Mooragh promenade, SC451954. Bring food to share for a picnic.
June	Thurs 17 th evening	Arable weeds	7pm, a farm in the north, TBA
June	Sat 26 th 10am-5pm	Wildflower identification CE course led by Linda Moore and PT	For details contact Helen Kneale 250901 Continuing Education Co-ordinator, Centre for Manx Studies Helen.Kneale@liv.ac.uk
June	Sat 27 th morning	Ayres Gravel Pits tetrad NX40M	11am, location details to follow. Led by Linda Moore, BSBI Recorder for VC71
July	Fri/Sun 9 th /11 th	Flora training weekend	Details to enrollers, see website.
July	Sat 24 th morning	Dandelions etc workshop	Details TBA . Classroom session with specimens, bring your own problems!
July		Creglea, Dalby	TBA

Please let us know if you intend to come to the Flora events listed above,
if possible a week before the event.

An email to one of the working group or a text to Andree 434251. Many thanks.

Forthcoming **TBA**: A tetrad bash on Colden SC38M and a wildflower expedition to the Calf

BE SAFE

Yes, I know you are all grown ups and don't need any lessons in common sense but do please read the enclosed health and safety information. I don't want to scare anyone but to make you aware of the potential dangers that are out there.

If no-one is available for you to tell: when you are going, where to and when you expect to return, I am happy to offer my services on 434251, please remember to tell me when you get back or I will be sending the emergency services on a wild goose chase!

AD

This newsletter was written and produced by members of the New Flora of the Isle of Man Working Group, who are:

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