

Hampshire Purslane

In August 1991 a dozen Flora Group members met at Hatchet Pond in the New Forest to look at one of Hampshire's great rarities the Hampshire Purslane Ludwigia palustris. This plant is confined to the south of the New Forest in the wild in Britain, yet where it is found it is often abundant. Having familiarised ourselves with the plant the Group split up to search various historic localities to provide a census of the species in 1991. Most of the historic sites still support the plant and a number of "new" localities were discovered. These surveys together with the excellent studies of Paul Bowman and Alison Bolton are revealing the plant as a healthy and vigorous component of New Forest wetlands.

We still await the return of some of the survey forms. Botanists with stamped addressed envelopes, full of records, please put them in the post - you know who you are!

Heath Lobelia

The conservation work carried out by Group members in February 1991 has proved to be a great success. The lobelia (Lobelia urens) responded well to clearance work with 120 flowering spikes showing in August. The estate who own the site on the Hampshire/Dorset border have sought the HWT's advice on the long term management of the site. We are planning to arrange further work on 16th February 1992.

Hairy Mallow

The much publicised appearance of the Hairy Mallow (Althea hirsuta) in 1990 was followed by a rather disappointing 1991. Only three seedlings were found after a careful search; none of these seedlings went on to flower or set seed. This tiny site will be tickled with a pickaxe this winter to create increased areas of bare ground to encourage germination.

Purple Broomrape

A survey by HWT on the Isle of Wight on behalf of Southern Water has revealed a new population of the Purple or Yarrow Broomrape (Orobanche purpurea). The colony was discovered on the edge of a waste water treatment plant (i.e. sewage works) by Dr. Colin Pope. Despite rather enthusiastic mowing of the grassland throughout the summer, a few plants flowered and set seed. We are now helping Southern Water review their management of the site and look forward to the colony's reappearance next year.

Small Fleabane

The Small Fleabane (Pulicaria vulgaris) and Penny Royal Mint (Mentha pulegium) surveys of 1990 proved to be very successful. The Small Fleabane report was summarised for Watsonia and the Penny Royal information is being fed into the BSBI scarce plants project.

The 1990 survey has inspired resurveys of some Small Fleabane sites. Geoffrey Field, a Group member from New Milton, has revisited many of the sites and recounted the populations. Since 1990 the population has increased by up to 300%. A totally new population comprising 5000 plants was also found by Mr. Field in a farmyard.

We hope resurveys and monitoring of sites will reveal the population dynamics of these rare specialist Hampshire species. Such information will be invaluable in understanding the conservation needs of the species in relation to long term trends and short term population fluctuation.

Red-tipped Cudweed

The Hampshire colony of Red-tipped Cudweed (Filago apiculata syn lutescens) responded very well to clearance work undertaken a few years ago. Since that clearance, gorse has grown up and suppressed the flowering of the Cudweed.

This Cudweed is one of Britain's rarest plants being confined to a handful of sites in SE England. The plant is listed in the Red Data Book and is specially protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

The preferred habitat of the species is well-drained bare soil. The Hampshire site is a rather new road verge on the outskirts of Fleet. The Group has arranged a work party on 19th January 1992 to clear and burn up invading scrub. We hope to do the work within 3 or 4 hours and make the most of a dark winter weekend. Meet at 10.30 am at grid reference SU 813 563 on the B 3013 just north of the M3, from where we will go on to the site. Tools and safety equipment will be provided. It would be helpful if those who intend coming could telephone the HWT office to let Clive Chatters know in order that the correct amount of tools can be provided.

Holly coppicing and Pollarding in Busketts Wood

Traditionally holly was periodically coppiced or pollarded in the New Forest pasture woodlands to provide browse to feed deer and ponies. The decline in this practice has resulted in a thickening holly shrub layer within the woods which is shading out both the ground flora and the rare lichen species. In Busketts Wood at least one colony of the scarce lichen (*Lobaria pulmonaria*) may have already been lost to shade and another in Little Stubby Hat is threatened by dense young holly. We will be cutting the holly around this colony to save it and to open up nearby trees to allow future colonisation. Meet at the car park by the Cricket pitch at Busketts Wood (SU 311112) at 10 am on 12th January 1992. Some tools will be provided but bring a bow saw if you possess one.

Summer 1992

We are currently thinking about what to do during Summer 1992. A number of ideas have been suggested including:-

- * A fern identification day
- * A survey of a privately owned grazed heath with an emphasis on identifying species and habitat types.
- * A visit to Basingstoke Canal to see the aquatic flora.
- * A survey of fens around Basingstoke.
- * A survey of Marsh Gentian populations in the New Forest.
- * A survey of Yarrow Broomrape populations in Hampshire and on the Isle of Wight.

If you find any of these ideas appealing and would like to help organise them, participate, or have any alternative suggestions, please let us know (telephone Clive Chatters on 0794 830070 in the daytime or Catherine Chatters on 0794 862139 in the evening).

New Blood Wanted!

The Flora Group chairman, Andy Byfield, has had to step down due to having taken up a job in Turkey. Andy has guided the Group with enthusiasm since taking on the chairmanship when the Group was founded. We will miss him and hope he enjoys his work with the Flora and Fauna Preservation Society, talking to the wild bulb diggers in Turkey.

The Flora Group is always on the look out for people to help run our activities and to come up with ideas for surveys, training days or working parties. Our committee structure is very informal, we meet about 3 or 4 times a year, usually in the evening and discuss matters over a meal. If you think you may have something to contribute please let the Secretary (Catherine Chatters) know.

Events in early 1992.

12 January 1992. Holly pollarding and coppicing. 10.00 am. Meet at SU 311 112.

19 January 1992. Red-tipped Cudweed. Meet 10.30 am at SU 813 563.

16 February 1992. Heath Lobelia task. Meet at 10.30 am at SZ 208 952.

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