

FLORA News

HAMPSHIRE
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Newsletter of Hampshire Wildlife Trust's Flora Group

Autumn 1997

Dear Flora Group Member

The Flora Group Committee members hope that you enjoyed the events held earlier this year and we hope to see you at some of the events planned for autumn/winter 1997/8. If you have any ideas for future events, including training sessions, please let Catherine Chatters (Flora Group Secretary) know. Catherine's address and telephone number are given at the end of this newsletter.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 15 November 1997, 2.30pm Atlas 2000 Exhibition Meeting

Flora Group members who are helping with the botanical recording for Atlas 2000 are invited to attend an Exhibition Meeting arranged by Pete Selby, the Atlas 2000 Coordinator for South Hampshire. Pete describes the meeting as an excuse for people to "get together and talk plants". It will be held at 2.30pm on Saturday 15 November 1997 in the Bishopstoke Community Centre (opposite St Mary's Church) in Church Road, Bishopstoke. Pete intends that there will be a number of exhibits on display presenting the results of research, problem plants, new specimens etc. If you wish to add an exhibit of your own, please contact Pete in advance on 01703 644368. The database of plants created for Atlas 2000 in 1997 will be available and you may view the distributions currently recorded for these species. Please drop in for an hour or stay as long as you like; Pete emphasises that plenty of tea will be laid on! There will be a small charge of £2 which will cover the cost of the hall and the administration of the Atlas 2000 project locally.

Sunday 23 November 1997, 10.30am

Red-tipped cudweed *Filago lutescens* Leader - Chris Hall

Come along and once again help conserve one of Britain's rarest wild plants by digging over a grassy road verge. We will spend a morning working with garden forks and mattocks. Meet at the entrance to Broomhurst Farm off the B3013 North of Fleet (grid reference SU 812563) at 10.30am.

Sunday 14 December 1997, 10.30am

Holly cutting in the New Forest Leader - Neil Sanderson

The holly cutting carried out in the New Forest by Flora Group members in recent years has been successful. Two trees supporting new populations of the lichen *Parmelia minarum* have been discovered and the work has benefited previously suppressed populations of this lichen on two other trees. Neil Sanderson is keen for Flora Group members to continue with this valuable work and will be leading a half-day coppicing and pollarding holly with bowsaws and loppers to improve conditions for rare epiphytic lichens. Meet at the Busketts Wood cricket pitch car park (grid reference SU 311111) at 10.30am. It would be helpful if you could let us know whether you are coming so that we can have the correct number of tools available; please leave a message with Tara at the Trust office on 01703 613636/613737.

Sunday 25 January 1998, 10am Scrub clearance in the New Forest Leader - Neil Sanderson

Work undertaken in the New Forest by Flora Group members in 1995 and 1996 has

benefited a number of restricted species such as bog sedge *Carex limosa* as reported in the Spring 1996 edition of the Flora Group newsletter. Neil has offered to lead a half-day task with the aim of clearing scrub from base-rich patches in the valley mires to benefit species such as *Carex limosa* and slender cotton grass *Eriophorum gracile*. Meet at the car park at Wootton Bridge (grid reference SZ 251997) at 10am. Expect cold weather and wet conditions underfoot.

Tools will be provided but bring your own if you wish. If you require more information, please contact Neil Sanderson on 01703 844442.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Progress Report on Atlas 2000 in South Hampshire

The project is progressing well and is ahead of its targets in VC11. Much field surveying has been carried out in South Hampshire and many of the 10km squares being surveyed have over 500 species recorded. Since most records are reported to 1km square accuracy there are many thousands of records. At present nearly 85,000 records are stored, covering 1454 species, subspecies and aggregates. As might be expected the squares along the coast are proving the most diverse but even further north, away from the coast and the major rivers, very diverse areas are being found.

This year the base data have been gathered and the first submission of data made to the central recorder for the project at the Biological Research Centre at Monks Wood. The submission includes the data for all the Hectads which have over 500 species

recorded for them. A further four squares will be submitted next year. For those squares where over 500 species have already been recorded, the approach will change to a more targeted search so that the species not yet found will be looked for.

However, all this field surveying should be supplemented from past records so I appeal to those of you who have records in their notebooks and who would be willing to transcribe them on to cards to contact me; I can then find particular areas, for which you have records, which have not yet been covered.

Please note that there will be an Exhibition Meeting on Saturday 15 November 1997 at Bishopstoke; refer to the forthcoming events section of this newsletter for details.

Finally I would like to thank everyone who has submitted records for the project, particularly those people who have undertaken a whole Hectad. I have at times been overwhelmed by the number of cards sent to me and may not have responded as quickly as I would like. I apologise for this. However, they have all be entered up and everyone involved should be very proud of the contribution they have made to the project.

Pete Selby

Progress Report on Atlas 2000 in North Hampshire

It was a year ago that I undertook the task to collate the plant distribution data for North Hampshire for the Atlas 2000 project. For those of you who are not aware of the project, a brief appraisal might be in order. The project is being run by the Botanical Society of the British Isles with the object of publishing an atlas at the turn of the century showing the distribution by 10 km squares of all the vascular plants in the British Isles. The list of plants was taken as those covered in Stace's New Flora of the British Isles and, as such, includes a larger coverage of garden escapes and hybrids.

The most recent time span for the project is 1987 onwards; records previous to this will be shown by another symbol. Having assembled lists of known species in each of the 18 squares, I have been attempting to obtain recent confirmation of each of them. At the moment about 67% of the species are confirmed across the 18 squares together. It might be expected that we shall never exceed about 90% as some of the species would have become extinct, others were transient casuals and (dare I say it!) some would have been mis-identifications, especially where certain groups were formerly less well understood.

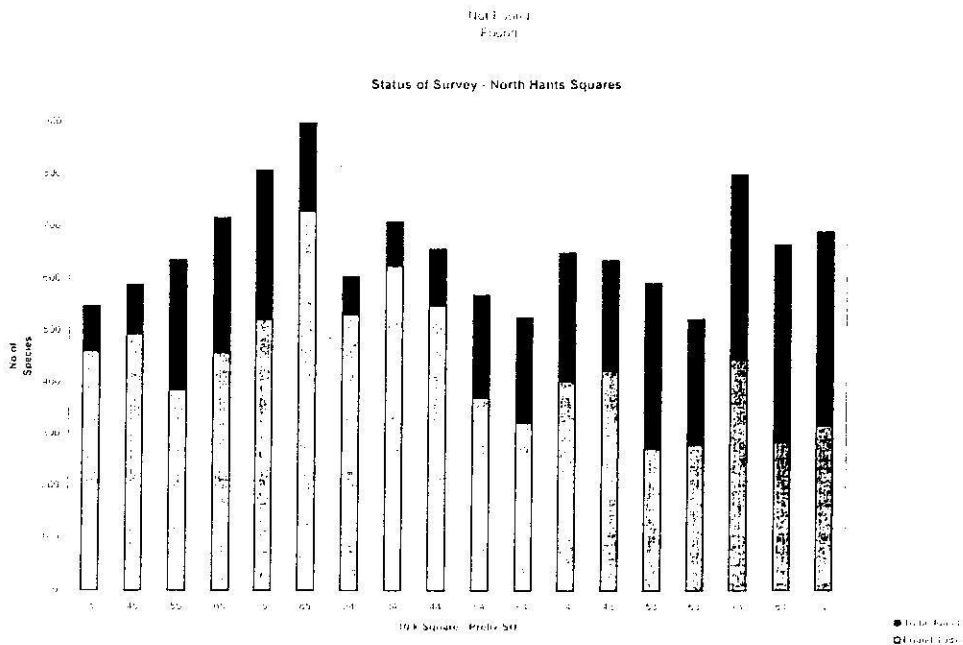
At the time of writing I am confident that I shall be able to submit a master card to the BSBI for 6 of the squares this season, these having been almost completely worked out. The current status of each square is shown on the accompanying graph, but this is before I have received and incorporated most of this year's field work from the splendid team of volunteers who are assisting in this project.

Much of this year has been spent "shovelling in" the commoner species. Now comes the fun bit - tracking down the scarcer ones and the lost rarities. I hope to spend this winter producing troubleshooting lists for each square, arranged by habitat type, ready for next year's fieldwork.

Mike Wildish

Flora Locale

Flora Locale is a new initiative of Plantlife, the Nature Conservation Bureau and the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management set up following concerns that non-native plants are being used in ecological restoration schemes. For example, alien wildflowers are regularly seen growing in the wild in newly seeded grassland which has used contaminated seed imported from abroad. Recently the British Red Data species pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium* has been found in several places in the countryside where grass seed has been sown, growing alongside alien species such as Californian lobelia *Downingia elegans*, American winter cress *Barbarea verna* and the fodder variety of bird's foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* var *sativus*. In the South Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area none of the grassland creation schemes funded by the European Union's agri-environment programme have used British native-origin seed. Some of the plants being used are alien and potentially invasive to the country concerned, whilst the mass use of imported genotypes may place at risk local varieties of flowers, grasses and trees.



Flora Locale aims to encourage garden centres, seed houses and nurseries to grow and supply wildflowers, trees and shrubs that have been sourced from indigenous plant communities in the territories within which they will be planted; to develop an independent source-certification scheme for native plants; to encourage best practice by developing technical guidance for growers and to encourage public bodies to introduce policies that will require only native-origin plants to be used for ecological restoration and habitat creation schemes paid for with public funds.

Flora Locale would like to receive reports of specific cases where non native-origin plants have been used in nature conservation schemes. Specimens and photographs would be welcomed. Their best record yet is a monstrous 1.5 metre tall *Galium verum* specimen collected from a Derbyshire road verge. If you have any such records, please send them to Sue Everett, Flora Locale Co-ordinator, 36 Kingfisher Court, Hambridge Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5SJ, telephone 01635 550380. Flora Locale's newsletter "Flora Watch" (issue No 1, Autumn 1997) can be obtained from Sue at the above address.

Seed Collecting

The Royal Botanic Gardens has asked our help in collecting seeds for the Millennium Seed Bank currently being built at Wakehurst Place in Sussex. The seed bank aims to hold seeds of all Britain's wild vascular plants in cold storage for the future. We have been asked to help collect seeds of 800 relatively common species. We hope that nature reserves with strong populations of these species can be used. The Royal Botanic Gardens offers an incentive of £40 per collection to help cover volunteers' time and expenses. Early in 1998 we hope to arrange some training days for volunteer seed collectors. If you are interested in helping with the seed collecting please let Patrick Cloughley at the Trust office know.

Clive Chatters

Native Black Poplars

We have recently received a map showing the distribution of native black poplar *Populus nigra* ssp *betulifolia* in the Wiltshire part of the Avon Valley. A black poplar tree has been recorded from the Dorset part of the Avon Valley near Christchurch. The Wiltshire trees are distributed down the Valley to the county boundary at Downton. It is difficult to believe that this tree is wholly absent from the Hampshire part of the Valley.

The historic landscape of the Valley between Fordingbridge and Christchurch is very open with few trees. However the Valley north of Fordingbridge offers suitable poplar habitats. It is surprisingly easy to overlook a plant over 10m tall. Those familiar with the tree may like to keep a special eye on this part of the Valley.

Clive Chatters

Discovery of Greater Yellow-Rattle

The south-east "corner" of Portsmouth is rather uninspiring to the casual visitor. The rough grasslands of the Eastney Peninsula however are the largest block of terrestrial habitat on Portsea Island and include some excellent shingle and sand habitats. Recent records from the area include little robin *Geranium purpureum* ssp. *forsteri*, Nottingham catchfly *Silene nutans* and the clover *Trifolium suffocatum*. Much of the land has been disturbed in recent years and is undergoing natural recolonisation. In one such area Delf Smith has found a strong population of greater yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus angustifolius*. This is one of Britain's rarest plants and is listed in the Red Data Book and is specially protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act. This record, the first since 1906, has been confirmed by Paul Bowman. The Trust is now discussing with the landowners and the City Council how the many interests of the Peninsula can be cared for.

Clive Chatters

Long-stalked Orache *Atriplex longipes*

We were delighted last year to hear of good news from Paul Bowman who, as the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) Recorder for South Hampshire, has received a record for long-stalked orache which had been found by Paul Stanley. Long-stalked orache is a species of upper salt marshes and has never before been recorded in Hampshire. The species was found on the estuary of a New Forest river amongst common reed and other tall vegetation. Because this habitat suffers very little interference we are optimistic that the species will remain there without conservation intervention. It is wonderful to be able to report on the discovery rather than the extinction of a species in this county and congratulations are due to the botanist who discovered it.

Patrick Cloughley

Broad-leaved cudweed *Filago pyramidata*

Last year (1996) Paul Stanley discovered a colony of broad-leaved cudweed in a sand pit a few miles east of Southampton. This plant had not previously been seen in Hampshire since 1974 so we were delighted to see it back after a twenty-two year absence. It is a Red Data Book plant and is specially protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. It is an annual which requires open ground in which to set seed and germinate and these conditions, free of fertilisers and pesticides, are obviously found at this location. The plant appeared again this year and was monitored by John Rowe. The owners of the site are interested in their curious weed and their current management is sympathetic to its future success. The discovery of this cudweed, the long stalked orache and the greater yellow-rattle raises the question as to how many more rare and protected species there are out there blooming unseen.

Clive Chatters and Patrick Cloughley

Other Interesting Finds

The grass *Gaudinia fragilis* has been found by John Rowe at Hounsdown on the edge of the New Forest.

The toadflax cross *Linaria x dominii* has been recorded by Vera Scott at Milford-on-Sea.

Richard Reeves has found a new site near Ashurst of marsh gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe* the New Forest.

Ian Ralphs has found the similar species distant sedge *Carex distans* and tawny sedge *Carex hostiana* growing together in the same meadow by Langstone Harbour. This is unusual because the two species are rarely found together. The first is typical of coastal pastures whereas the second is characteristic of unimproved traditionally managed hay meadows, grassy heaths and bogs.

A new population of the nationally rare "scrambled egg" lichen *Fulgensia fulgens* has been discovered on the West Wight Cliffs by Colin Pope. Unlike the main Island colony this new site is on Barton Sands.

A very substantial population of yellow bartsia *Parentucellia viscosa* has been found in a donkey paddock at Wootton on the Isle of Wight by Colin Pope.

A good population of basil thyme *Clinopodium acinos* has been found in old chalk pits at Brading by Anne Campbell and is the first modern record for the Isle of Wight.

Records from gardens in 1997

Mary Flatt is still interested in receiving records of interesting plants found in gardens. Please continue to send them to her at Chalk Cottage, Soames Lane, Ropley, Alresford, Hampshire SO24 0ER. The following records have been received recently:-

Broad leaved helleborine *Epipactis heleborine* and autumn lady's tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* in a garden at Milford-on-Sea reported by Elizabeth Young. The latter species of orchid is reported by Miss Young to be in most of the gardens that have old turf in the area and is commonly known as Milford Orchid.

Least yellow-sorrel *Oxalis exilis* has been reported in large quantities on gravel paths in the above garden. In Southampton procumbent yellow-sorrel *O. corniculata* is the commoner species (pers. comm. Paul Bowman).

A single very tall specimen of great mullein *Verbascum thapsus* has been recorded from a garden in Alresford by Mrs A Butcher. The plant had a leafy stem six feet tall topped by a further three feet of flowering spike and was still extending when the record was sent in.

The alien umbellifer bullwort *Ammi majus* has appeared in a potato patch which until recently was a chicken run in Catherine and Clive Chatters' garden on the edge of Totton. The record has been confirmed by Mervyn Southam.

Field Cow-wheat

The field cow-wheat has been receiving some unwanted attention over the last few years. Two "new" populations have appeared, one at Knighton on the Isle of Wight and one at Portsdown on the mainland. Both of these populations have now been shown to be the result of deliberate unauthorised introductions of seed.

The field cow-wheat is protected by law. It is illegal to collect its seed or dig it up without a licence. Even with a licence it is necessary to have the permission of the landowner to gather seeds and to introduce them elsewhere.

As well as being illegal the establishment of these new populations is pointless in terms

of nature conservation. Rare plants only have a "meaning" if they have a history of belonging to a site, or colonising by their own efforts. Stray introduced populations of rare plants can confuse our understanding of the biology of native species and their conservation needs. They certainly can divert effort away from more important things.

Clive Chatters

PLANS FOR SUMMER 1998

A number of events are already being arranged for next summer.

John Moon has kindly offered to lead a trip to Bransbury Common in the Test Valley on Sunday 12 June 1998. More details will be given in the spring newsletter next year.

The BSBI is arranging a weekend of recording on the Isle of Wight from 26-28 June 1998 and Flora Group members have been invited to join in. More details will be provided next spring.

Mike Wildish has kindly agreed to lead a grasses, sedges and rushes training day on Sunday 5 July 1998. See the spring newsletter for more details.

The Trust's project work on Species and Habitat Conservation is supported by World Wide Fund for Nature (UK)



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