

RUTLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

BOTANY ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Recorder: *John Rodgers*

This was another year of changeable weather. Earlier in the year it was too hot to go out looking for flowers, and then it was too wet; everything was soaked. We were lucky to have avoided what other parts of the country, and indeed other countries experienced.

We had a total of 409 species of vascular plant recorded by 25 recorders, which included three friends, members of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) who came from Leicester to survey and complete records for various tetrads (2 km grid squares) in VC55 for the New Atlas of British and Irish Flora which BSBI will publish in 2020. Several members of RNHS came on these surveys, which proved very fruitful and educational.



Large-flowered Evening Primrose

The earliest records were of Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) and Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*) in Tunneley Wood on the 17 January and then at Ryhall Heath two weeks later. Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*) was found on the 21 January, Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) on the 19 February and Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*) at Tinwell on the 21st. These would all have been new flowerings. It is difficult to know if the sightings of Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.), Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*) and White Deadnettle (*Lamium album*) also recorded were of flowers which had over-wintered or were newly arising.



Basil Thyme

There were several new or rarely found plants recorded during the year. One was Bullwort (*Ammi majus*), of the family *Apiaceae*, which was last recorded in VC55 in the 1930s. Was this carried in by birds or could it have been in “wildflower mix” used for ‘rewilding’ field margins? Keel-fruited Cornsalad (*Valerianella carinata*) was found near Empingham, a plant for which there are only seven records for VC55 (Jeeves, 2011), the last being near Leicester in 2010.



Sharp-leaved Fluellen

Round-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia spuria*) and then Sharp-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia elatine*) were found near Pickworth, both quite rare, as is Venus’s-looking-glass (*Legousia hybrida*) found in the Empingham area.



Spotted Medick

Spotted Medick was recorded in Ketton, on the south side of the footpath leading down to the railway line on 13 August. This is a scarce plant in Leicestershire and Rutland (4 – 10 records) according to Jeeves (2011), previously recorded from the valleys of the R. Soar and R. Wreake. Finally, a group of members tried to find Purple Milk-vetch (*Astragalus danicus*) near Ketton after a reported sighting but without any luck. Later and nearby some 400 spikes of Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) were counted on the verge, by Foster's Bridge.



Zigzag Clover

As usual there were a number of field meetings during the year. One early meeting was at Pickworth Great Wood where we saw Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) as well as Early Dog-violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*) and Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*). There was a visit to Glaphorn Cow Pasture in May, where there were Early-purple Orchids and Bluebells. The reserve is rather overgrown; perhaps there is no longer grazing there as used to be the case. A fruitful botanical visit was to King's Dyke Reserve at Whittlesea where we found 45 species, amongst them Field Madder

(*Sherardia arvensis*), Hemp-agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), Thyme-leaved Sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*), and Biting Stonecrop (*Sedum acre*).

As always, we are grateful to those who submit records. The number of recorders is growing, which can only be of value to the Society but also to the whole cause of ecology and wildlife preservation.



Quinoa

Reference: Jeeves, M. (2011). *The Flora of Leicestershire and Rutland: Checklist and Rare Plant Register*.

Photographs: Martin Grimes