

Somerset Rare Plants Group: Summer Meetings 2020

*Please email or ring the leader before each meeting to say you are coming. This helps with planning and can be useful if there are changes to the programme. Parking is sometimes limited so **please lift share where possible**. Please bring your GPS/Mobile phone if you have one. Meetings usually start at 11am except where a 10.30 start is indicated (6 June; Dunster Beach, 7 June; North Hill, 6 Aug; Blue Anchor, 15 Aug; Aquatic Plants Workshop).*

Sunday 5th April Orchard Wood Local Wildlife Site (NGR ST249203, 27 hectares), Netherclay, near Corfe (VC5)

This Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is a mosaic of broadleaved and coniferous woodland located on a hill above Netherclay in the Blackdown Hills and split down the middle by two squares – ST2420 and ST2520. The wood is owned and managed by the Forestry Commission and is an Ancient Woodland Site. A prehistoric hillfort enclosure, only discovered in 2001, is located towards the top of the hill. Broadleaved woodland dominates the lower slopes and hilltop with coniferous woodland sandwiched in between – the coniferous areas were originally planted between the late 1940s and late 1960s. Soils are clayey, circum-neutral to the north and slightly base-rich to the south. Species of interest previously recorded are Wild Service tree, Small-leaved Lime, Spurge Laurel, Ploughman's Spikenard, Wild Madder and Brown Hairstreak. In adjacent woods, White Helleborine and Lesser Butterfly Orchid were recorded in the 1970s as well as White Admiral and Wood White. The site has not had a detailed survey since 1996 therefore the visit will help Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) update their records on Local Wildlife Sites in the county and determine whether the site still meets LWS criteria.

The lower slopes of the hill are steep and slippery but once past them the ride that circum-navigates the hill is relatively easy going; a number of smaller tracks are present with varying ease of access.

The Forestry Commission will provide us with a gate key so we will be able to park on tracks near the wood. However there is not a lot of room so we will meet on Old Corfe Road, between Corfe and the M5 at grid reference ST24152240 on the east side of the main road and car share from there. It's recommended not to leave valuables in cars parked on Old Corfe Road.

Parking at ST24152240 then car share to the site.

Leaders: Ellen McDouall (07579 811417, mcdouallem@gmail.com) and Ann Fells (07833 148805)

Saturday 18th April Beginners/Improvers Plant Identification Workshop

Meet at the Avalon Marshes Centre, Westhay BA6 9TT for an indoor workshop looking at how to begin to identify plants and how to progress further. We will look at suitable books, the use of different types of identification keys and there will be an opportunity to try it all out with plants brought in. There may also be time to go out to look at plants growing in situ. Bring a hand-lens, a notebook and any of the books that you use for learning. There will be plenty of opportunity for improvers too, so bring in your bugbears and groups that you need more help with.

11- 4pm, bring lunch, but coffee/tea provided

**Leaders: Liz McDonnell & Steve Parker. Contact Liz 01934 712649 or 07732 689703
lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com**

Saturday 25th April Middle Hope, North Somerset (VC6)

Meeting to explore the less well-known eastern end of the Middle Hope SSSI, for species-rich calcareous grassland, scrub and saltmarsh habitats. Species especially to search for, which have not been recorded for many years, include *Erodium maritimum* and *Anchusa arvensis*. We should also see *Dianthus gratianopolitanus* (but not yet in flower) which was first found in this part of the site in 2013. Meet at 11am in the small car park (fork right before Woodspring Priory) at ST34726615, nearest postcode BS22 9YU. Parking limited so car share if possible.

**Leaders: Adrian Woodhall & Liz McDonnell Contact Liz 01934 712649 or 07732 689703
lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com**

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Sunday 10th May Cross Quarry, near Axbridge VC6

This is a meeting in a disused limestone quarry cut into the hillside of the Crook Peak area of the Mendips. It has a species-rich limestone flora on the cliff edges with *Potentilla tabernaemontani* & *Centaureum pulchellum*. The grassy bottom is rich in spring ephemerals such as *Myosotis ramosissima*, *Cerastium semidecandrum*, *C. pumilum* etc. There will also be an opportunity to see *Trinia glauca*, *Koeleria vallesiana* and *Filago vulgaris* on the slopes just above the quarry.

Roadside parking is on the south side of Old Coach Road at ST413547 where footpath leads up to quarry. Meet at 11am

**Leaders: Liz McDonnell & Andrew Robinson Contact Liz 01934 712649 or 07732 689703
lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com**

**Saturday 16th May Loxley Wood (VC6)
11am-4pm**

Loxley Wood is a mixed broadleaved Ancient Woodland Site which was planted with conifers (Larch and Norway Spruce) in 1967 when most of the ancient woodland broadleaved trees (mostly oak) were felled. The site was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1999 and thinning of conifers began in 2002 to restore the broadleaved woodland. It now has a mixed canopy of mostly Ash, with some Oak, Field Maple, and Willow, with a Hazel, Spindle and Dogwood understorey. 50% of the conifers have been retained. The Woodland Trust have a few records from 2017, but the majority of vascular plant records are from the 1990s before the removal of much of the conifers. This would have opened the woodland to deer (Muntjac are now in the wood as well as Roe). More recently, Ash dieback has affected the canopy and the Woodland Trust will be undertaking a ¼ thin of the Ash in the winter of 2019/20. The purpose of this visit is to collect a species list for the site.

Meet at the car park at the entrance to the wood at the main gate (ST40603766). Booking is essential as parking is limited to around 6 cars with neat parking so we will need to lift share. There is some additional parking on the A39 in laybys (ST4045637567) and also along Wood Lane (ST4068537789).

Leaders: Cath Shellswell (cath_shellswell@yahoo.co.uk) and Paul Allen (Woodland Trust reserve Manager)

Sunday 24th May Stolford; Workshop on Clovers (Trifolium) (VC5)

There are eleven clover species recorded here, all within a few hundred yards of the car park! We should see *Trifolium squamosum*, *T. fragiferum*, *T. medium*, *T. ornithopodioides*, *T. scabrum* and *T. striatum* at the first location, providing an ideal opportunity to concentrate on both floral and vegetative characters and key out the different species. A short distance away *T. dubium*, *T. micranthum*, *T. pratense*, *T. repens* and *T. arvense* can be added to the list. There are also rarities such as *Ranunculus sardous* (Hairy Buttercup) and the threatened coastal specialist *Alopecurus bulbosus* to be seen in abundance. This site is one of VC5's finest examples of sub-maritime and saline grassland and the meeting will give a good opportunity to enjoy this rare habitat.

Meet at Stolford car Park ST233458 (on OS map at end of Gorpit Lane)

Leaders: Ro FitzGerald ro@lilstock.eclipse.co.uk (01278 741519) & Graham Lavender

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Sunday 31st May Langford Heathfield (VC5)

This reserve, Somerset Wildlife Trust's second largest, is a mixture of ancient and secondary woodland, scrub and heathland. There are a variety of sedges here, an area of Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*) and some Western Gorse (*Ulex galii*). Our route may take in some of the woodland gullies, or goyles, which are very steep-sided with difficult paths into them, but there will be flatter alternatives in every case. There are also areas which are wet for most of the year. Adders have sometimes been seen but ticks are far more prevalent. If the ponies, which are part of the grazing management, have arrived there may also be stiles into their fenced areas.

The target of this meeting is firstly to record *Viola lactea* (Pale Dog-Violet), a very rare plant in Somerset, which highlights the importance of monitoring this site. The second objective is to distinguish between the species and its rare hybrid with *V. riviniana* and to record that hybrid. *Viola riviniana* x *lactea* was first recorded at this site in 1923 by W D Miller.

The route may take in other species about whose distribution the SWT would like more information, or which are a focus for the SRPG this year.

Meet in the lay-by by the Jubilee Seat on the Wiveliscombe Road at ST1067 2266 .

Please inform the leaders if you are intending to come, in case there are not enough parking spaces in the layby. Other parking is possible a short distance away.

Leaders: Christine Loudon christineloudon@hotmail.com & Linda Everton

Saturday 6 June Dunster Beach (Vc5) SRPG/WFS

This locality is famous for its rarities as well as its beautiful channel-shore position, but some plants still need more surveying and updating of records. Target species will include a number of interesting clovers, *Crassula tillaea* (Mossy Stonecrop) and *Hypochaeris glabra* (Smooth Cat's-ear). Records exist for two uncommon grasses; *Vulpia fasciculata* (Dune Fescue) and *V. ciliata* ssp *ambigua* (Bearded Fescue) and these need confirmation.

Meet at the Beach Car Park ST 003 445 at 10.30. This is a pay-and-display, so car share if this is a concern. There are toilets and a refreshment kiosk. Walking will be slow and easy as many of the targets are small and scattered! Please contact Ro as soon as possible as places may be rationed!

Leaders Ro FitzGerald ro@lilstock.eclipse.co.uk (01278 741519) & Graham Lavender.

Sunday 7 June North Hill, Minehead (Vc5) SRPG/WFS

This is a wonderful locality giving spectacular views of the Exmoor coast. Target plants will include a number of interesting annual clovers; *Filago germanica* (syn. *F. vulgaris*) which is rare in this area, and Dodder (*Cuscuta epithymum*). Upright Chickweed (*Moenchia erecta*), an uncommon and inconspicuous species, is believed to be present in quantity and this early summer date should make an accurate estimate of the population possible.

Two parking places are marked on the OS Explorer map OL9. Go to the second, at SS 954 475, WNW of the top end of Moor Wood. **Meet at 10.30.** Walking will be easy. Please contact Ro as soon as possible as places may be rationed!

Leaders Ro FitzGerald ro@lilstock.eclipse.co.uk (01278 741519) & Graham Lavender

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Saturday 4th July Witch Lodge Fields Local Wildlife Site and adjacent fields (NGR ST252201, 13 hectares). Netherclay, north of Staple Fitzpaine (VC5)

This Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and adjacent land is a series of fields, owned by the Forestry Commission, with a rather varied history over the past two centuries. In the 1820s woodland and arable occupied the southern part of the site, with orchard and meadow in the north but the whole site was meadows in the 1940s. More recently conifers were planted in small blocks but most of these were cleared in the early 2000s. A small stream, with tufa deposits and flanked by broadleaved woodland, runs south to north through the fields and is fed by a smaller watercourse crossing the fields east to west

The vegetation communities of the meadows are predominantly of a slightly base-rich character; species recorded include Common Milkwort, Yellow-wort, Yellow rattle, Wild Parsnip, Dyer's Greenweed, Hoary Plantain, Cowslip and Pyramidal Orchid. Damper areas also occur with species such as Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage, Common Fleabane, Sneezewort, Devil's-bit Scabious and Angelica. A population of Duke of Burgundy fritillaries was present on the site but became extinct in 1980; a re-introduction shortly after was successful. The site has not had a detailed survey since 2003 therefore the visit will help Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) update their records on Local Wildlife Sites in the county and determine whether the site still meets LWS criteria – the survey of the additional fields will determine if the LWS boundaries need amending.

The site is gently sloping and fairly easy access.

The Forestry Commission will provide us with a gate key so we will be able to park on tracks near the fields. However there is not a lot of room so we will meet on Old Corfe Road, between Corfe and the M5 at grid reference ST24152240 on the east side of the main road and car share from there. It's recommended not to leave valuables in cars parked on Old Corfe Road.

Parking at ST24152240 then car share to the site

Leaders: Ellen McDouall (07579 811417, mcdouallem@gmail.com) and Ann Fells (07833 148805)

Saturday 18th July Backwell, Church Town, North Somerset (VC6)

A meeting in the Cheston Combe area to visit the work of the Backwell Environment Trust who manage woodlands, grassland and a small area of remnant heath. Species here will include *Betonica officinalis*, *Erica cinerea*, *Carex pulicaris* and *Carex pilulifera*. There will also be an opportunity to visit an area of excavated limestone pavement.

Meet at 11am at St Andrew's Church, in Church Lane BS48 3JJ (ST493683) for roadside parking, then walking to the areas of interest.

Leaders: Liz McDonnell & Margaret Webster Contact Liz 01934 712649 or 07732 689703

lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com

Wednesday 22nd July Northmoor SSSI

An under-recorded site which should have a good number of aquatic taxa. Please book as numbers limited to 15.

Meet at Maunsel Lock canal carpark at ST307 298 then car share to North Moor SSSI

Leader Steve Parker 07876 146112 stephenjparker1710@gmail.com

Thursday 6th August Blue Anchor coastal walk (VC5)

Joint meeting with SWT's Brilliant Coast project. From Blue Anchor to Warren Bay looking at the geology, rich flora on the Jurassic grassland cliff tops and plants and animals of the splash and intertidal zones.

Meet at 10.30 (note earlier time) at the slipway on the eastern end of Blue Anchor Sea Front (ST032435 postcode TA24 6JR). Free parking at the designated space along the promenade. Finish at 3.30pm. Number limited and booking is essential. Due to the challenging beach conditions, this event is not suitable for anyone with reduced mobility. **Book with Liz 07732 689703**

lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com by 23rd July.

Leaders: Jeanne Webb, Mark Ward, Simon Leach & Liz McDonnell

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Saturday 15 August Aquatic Plants Workshop

Want help with your Pondweeds, Hornworts and Water-Starworts? This is an opportunity to become more familiar with the variety of plants found in the ditches on the Somerset Levels. Microscopes and identification guides will be available and expert tuition from Nick. Most of the session will be indoor instruction with freshly collected specimens, but there may be an opportunity to sample ditches on the NNR in the afternoon if time allows. **Meet at 10.30** at the Avalon Marshes Centre meeting room. Coffee & tea will be available, but bring a packed lunch. We aim to finish by 4pm. Numbers may be limited, so contact Liz McDonnell (email & tel. no at bottom of programme) to book your place.

Leader: Nick Stewart

Sunday 30th August Nailsea (VC6)

Being the 4th anniversary of when Liz McDonnell and I chanced upon *Fallopia dumetorum* (Copse-bindweed) at Nailsea, it seemed a good idea to take you all to see it – if it is still there, it certainly was in 2018. There's also some true Black Poplars by the old Tithe Barn to admire.

Meet at 11.00 in the free car park by Backwell Lake (ST478694) which is 200m north of the Backwell & Nailsea Station. We will consolidate vehicles before moving into Nailsea or wherever the best plants and/or least recorded areas by then seem to be. The monad around the station and car park is particularly rich and *Crepis biennis* (Rough Hawk's Beard) is long-established here. Nailsea hasn't at the time of writing been scoured to my satisfaction for gutter weeds and garden escapes so there's plenty of choice. The meeting will be open to BNS Botany Section members.

Leader: Clive Lovatt. Advance notice by email to clivemlovatt@gmail.com or text to 07851 433920 welcome but not essential.

12th September Clevedon Moor

Clevedon Moor is a typical Somerset Levels area drained by a system of rhyne and crossed by a river, the Land Yeo, which flows from Congresbury out to the Severn at Clevedon Pill. Walking is mainly river and rhyne-side so please bring grappnels and other fishing aids! Insect life abounds - you have been warned. A wide selection of water plants such as Unbranched Bur-reed (*Sparganium emersum*) Arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*), Fringed Water-lily (*Nymphoides peltata*), Soft Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum submersum*) and a selection of *Lemna* spp will be seen. Finish in the Clevedon Craft Centre Cafe.

Park in a cul de sac near the motorway bridge at ST424715 just after the entrance to Clevedon Court on the left side of the B3128 leaving Clevedon.

Contact dee.holladay@tiscali.co.uk or on 07879 693432.

Leaders: Pam Millman and Dee Holladay

Sunday 20th September Fern Workshop Priddy Mineries/Stockhill (VC6)

A meeting to introduce a wide range of the ferns of Somerset, from the easily identified to the challenging. The mineries and adjacent plantations support diverse habitats and have an excellent range of species. We expect to see several species and hybrids of Horsetail (*Equisetum*), many common ferns and some less common species such as Limestone Fern (*Gymnocarpium robertianum*), Brittle Bladder-fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*) and Lemon-scented Fern (*Oreopteris limbosperma*). Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*) may still just be visible. For those seeking a challenge we should have the opportunity to demonstrate the differences between the main segregates of the Scaly Male-fern group (*Dryopteris affinis* agg.) and look for the Buckler-fern hybrid (*D. x deweveri*).

Meet at 11 am at Stockhill car park ST548513.

Leaders: Fred Rumsey f.rumsey@nhm.ac.uk (07971405802) & Helena Crouch

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Pop-up Meetings

A trial of a new format of meetings, not to replace the existing program, but as a supplement. The purpose of Pop-up meetings is to encourage more local groups and undoubtedly we will learn from the results of this year. Two areas for Pop-up meetings are planned.

Firstly; to progress the work on "The Flora of Taunton", Simon will have meetings throughout the year. He asks that you email him your interest and you will get an email of expected date and place of meeting within seven days of the proposed meeting date.

Contact Simon Leach at simonleach@phonecoop.coop.

I will be doing the same on Exmoor and given the vagaries of the weather, particularly on higher moorland, details of meetings will be by group email within 7 days of proposed meeting date. If people wish to email interest early please do so.

In 2020 I have a plan to seek out old records over the year and will welcome members to join me. For the Exmoor Pop-ups, starting in May we will search for Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*), through July looking for Eyebrights (*Euphrasia* spp.) ending with Cranberries (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*) in August/September. Not an exhaustive list but you get the idea. Please be advised that many of the sites we visit will be remote, with steep sections and mires.

Contact Graham Lavender email grahamlavender@hotmail.com.

Contacts: Liz McDonnell: 01934 712649 or 07732 689703 lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com
Helena Crouch: 01761 410731 or 07773 037001 helenacrouch@sky.com
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