

Somerset Rare Plants Group: Summer Meetings 2022

Important: Advance Booking is essential to ensure any COVID restrictions are complied with and for health and safety of all participants. Also some of the meetings will have restrictions on numbers either due to limitations on parking, site limitations or simply to ensure a good ratio of experts to participants at the meeting. The meeting leaders will have the final decision and responsibility for organisation of the meeting.

Meetings start at 11am except where a 10.30am start is indicated.

Sunday 10th April Orchard Wood Local Wildlife Site (ST249 203), 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 into 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 circumnavigates 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 ST2415 2240 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 (ST2415 2240) then car share to the site. **Leaders: Ellen McDouall 07579 811417, mcdouallem@gmail.com and Ann Fells (07833 148805)**

Saturday 23rd 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. Numbers limited due to size of classroom, so book early to secure your place. 11- 4pm, bring lunch, but coffee/tea provided

Leaders: Liz McDonnell & Steve Parker. Contact Liz: lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com

Saturday 7th 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 Spring Cinquefoil (*Potentilla verna*) & Lesser Centaury (*Centaureum pulchellum*). The grassy bottom is rich in spring ephemerals such as Early Forget-me-not (*Myosotis ramosissima*), Little Mouse-ear (*Cerastium semidecandrum*), Dwarf Mouse-ear (*C. pumilum*) etc. There will also be an opportunity to see Honewort (*Trinia glauca*), Somerset Hair-grass (*Koeleria vallesiana*) and Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*) on the slopes just above the quarry. Please note, these slopes are steep so may not be suitable for all.

Roadside parking is on the south side of the Old Coach Road at (ST413 547) where footpath leads up to quarry. Meet at 11am

Leaders: Liz McDonnell & Andrew Robinson Contact Liz: lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com

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Sunday 22nd 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 (ST233 458) (on OS map at end of Gorpit Lane) **Leaders: Ro FitzGerald ro@lilstock.eclipse.co.uk (01278 741519) or (07546 123492) & Graham Lavender**

Sunday 29th 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 Pale Dog-Violet (*Viola lactea*), 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 Common Dog-violet (*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 18th June 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 Betony (*Betonica officinalis*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Flea Sedge (*Carex pulicaris*) and Pill Sedge (*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 (ST493 683) for roadside parking, then walking to the areas of interest.

Leaders: Liz McDonnell & Margaret Webster. Contact; Liz lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com

Sunday 26th June Large Thyme (*Thymus pulegioides*); Ham Hill, Stoke Sub-Hamdon (VC5)

Large Thyme (*Thymus pulegioides*) has been infrequently recorded in VC5. This meeting is aimed at searching suitable habitat for this uncommon species. The group may divide in to smaller groups to cover a greater area.

Park at Ham Hill car park (ST477 169)

10:30 for 11:00 start

Leaders: Steve Parker 07450 691712 stephenjparker1710@gmail.com

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Sunday 3rd July Simonsbath, to include species rich churchyard and River Barle (VC5)

Simonsbath is at the heart of Exmoor and within SS7739 we will find multiple habitats. The dry stone walls of the village are interesting for ferns and we should see *Cystopteris fragilis* (Brittle Bladder fern). The churchyard adjacent to the parking is species rich and indeed *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh Orchid) appears sporadically at the site. Also adjacent to the car park is a stream, the other side of which is Ashcombe Plantation which has been subject to works and plantings by Exmoor National park and needs recording. There is also the opportunity to record an area of acid loving bog plants beside the nearby River Barle. Meet at Simonsbath Car park at (SS773 394).

Leader: Graham Lavender; grahamlavender@hotmail.com & Liz McDonnell

Saturday 9th July Witch Lodge Fields Local Wildlife Site and adjacent fields NGR (ST252 201), 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 ST2415 2240 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 ST2415 2240 then car share to the site

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

Wednesday 20th July Bridgwater and Taunton Canal and Northmoor SSSI (VC5)

A walk to record a section of the Bridgwater to Taunton canal. Then a small area of Northmoor SSSI which is 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 walk to North Moor SSSI

Leader Steve Parker 07450 691712 stephenjparker1710@gmail.com

Saturday 6th August 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 Sea Storks Bill (*Erodium maritimum*) and Bugloss (*Anchusa arvensis*). We should also see Cheddar Pink (*Dianthus gratianopolitanus*) but not still 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 ST3472 6615, nearest postcode BS22 9YU. Parking limited so car share if possible.

Leaders: Adrian Woodhall & Liz McDonnell Contact Liz: lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com

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Saturday 27th August Backwell Lake and Nailsea (VC6)

The monad ST4769 around the lake and the station is particularly rich and around 400 taxa have been recorded there since 1999. Rough Hawk's Beard (*Crepis biennis*) is long-established there at the only hectad site. After lunch we will consolidate vehicles before moving into Nailsea where we should be able to see the true Black Poplars by the old Tithe Barn and hopefully Copse-bindweed (*Fallopia dumetorum*) not far distant. Meet after 10.30 for an 11am start. Free parking in the Backwell Lake Public Car Park off the west side of Station Road (ST478 694). The car park is 200m north of the Backwell & Nailsea Railway Station with its paying car park. For satnav users the postcode is BS48 1TN will get you to the general area.

Leaders: Clive Lovatt & Liz McDonnell, lizmcdonnell2005@gmail.com

Saturday 17th September Clevedon Moor (VC6)

Clevedon Moor is a typical Somerset Levels area drained by a system of rhyes 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 grapnels 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. Meet at 11am, park in a cul de sac near the motorway bridge at ST424 715 just after the entrance to Clevedon Court on the left side of the B3128 leaving Clevedon

Leaders: Dee Holladay dee.holladay@tiscali.co.uk or 07879 693432 and Pam Millman

Sunday 18th September General Recording in Tintinhull (VC5)

A general recording meeting, the monad has very few recent records. It may be possible to divide into smaller groups to search a larger area. At the end of the meeting a visit to the National Trust, Tintinhull Gardens, for afternoon tea. Free Parking in National Trust car park at (ST502 196); 10:30 for 11:00 start

Leaders: Steve Parker; 07450 691712 stephenjparker1710@gmail.com

Sunday 2nd October Saltford (VC6)

A walk by the River Avon, where we should see Greater Dodder (*Cuscuta europaea*) and Small Teasel (*Dipsacus pilosus*) and other riverine species.

Park and meet at the picnic area/car park in The Shallows (ST68696720). This can get full so please leave time to use alternative parking nearby, e.g. just beyond the railway bridge in Mead Lane (ST6879 6750).

Leaders: Helena Crouch (helenacrouch@sky.com) or 01761 410731 and Fred Rumsey

Sunday 30th October Bath (VC6)

Our now traditional final field meeting to coincide with the Wild Flower Society's "Last Week Hunt", aiming to see how many species we can find in flower. We should see some interesting species, especially by the river and canal.

Meet by the riverside (ST7485 6442) on the north side of the river, west of Churchill Bridge and south of Avon Street car park. Parking is expensive in Bath but the P&R buses run on Sundays now.

Leaders: Helena Crouch (helenacrouch@sky.com) or 01761 410731 and Fred Rumsey