

SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP

Recording all plants growing wild in Somerset, not just the rarities



Meeting Report

Wednesday 20th July 2022, Bridgwater and Taunton Canal and Northmoor SSSI (VC5)

Leaders: Steve Parker

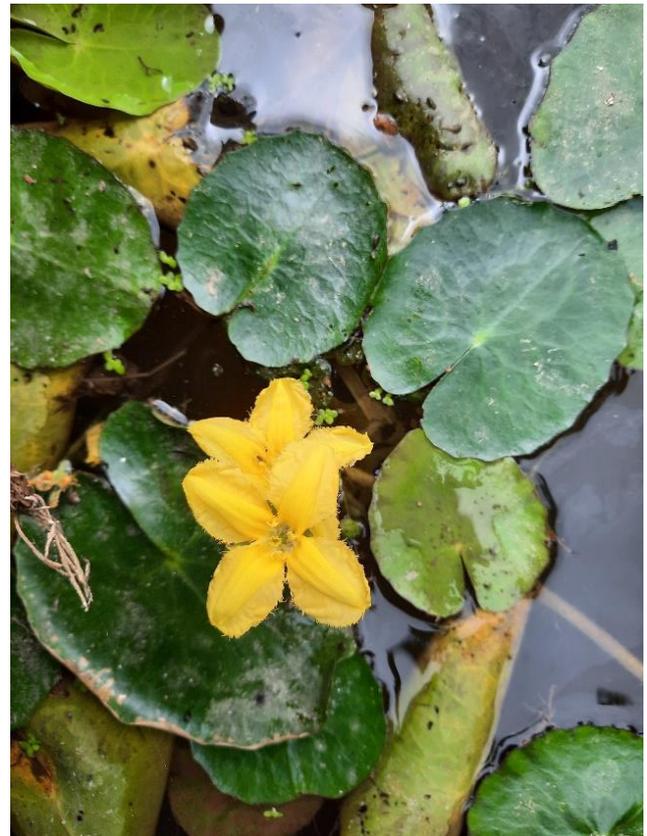
Report: Steve Parker

This meeting was originally planned for 2021 however due to very high temperatures the leader decided to cancel the meeting on health and safety grounds. Since planning the meeting, the area of Northmoor SSSI has been purchased by Natural England and will become part of the new super National Nature Reserves on the Somerset Levels.

The meeting was a on a Wednesday, this may have been the reason that only the leader and John Poingdestre attended the meeting. One target for the meeting was to search the Bridgwater to Taunton Canal for aquatic macrophytes.

Once the canal supported a rich aquatic flora. There are records from the early 2000s for Short-leaved Water-starwort (*Callitriche truncata*). However, the canal has changed, the water quality now appears to be very poor, the canal is full of silt which is frequently disturbed with canal boats and other small craft.

Only a very few plants can be found in the water, most notable is Fringed Water-lily (*Nymphoides peltata*). This plant is a non-native in Somerset but has been recorded in the canal since 1984 when it was recorded by John Poingdestre.



Fringed water-lily Photo © Steve Parker

As John and I discussed the poor condition of the canal a weed boat came by, the driver of the boat chatted to us, telling us that the canal is regularly cut. This operation appeared to create large clouds of silt in the boats wake. Aquatic plants would be stressed and more probably killed by these operations.



Canal with very poor water quality Photo © Steve Parker

Leaving the canal, we paid a brief visit to Northmoor SSSI. Since purchased by Natural England botanical surveys have been carried out by Natural England staff, SRPG and RoAM volunteers and so the vegetation is now better known than it was a few years ago. Lesser Water-plantain (*Baldellia ranunculoides*) has been known on Northmoor since 1987 and John had recorded it as recently as July 2020. We searched for the plant but for some unknown reason it could not be re-found on this visit.

Thanks to John for sharing his knowledge of this area of Somerset.