

FLORA GROUP NEWSLETTER

HAMPSHIRE
Wildlife
TRUST



WINTER 1994

Dear Flora Group Member

A variety of events were held during the summer of 1994 and if you attended any of them we hope you enjoyed them. As always, ideas for new events are very welcome; if you would like the Committee to arrange anything (or, better still, if YOU would like to organise anything!) please contact Catherine Chatters (Flora Group Secretary) at Ivy Cottage, Ashurst Bridge Road, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 7EA telephone 0703 863920.

A number of events have been arranged for the autumn/winter 1994/5 and details are included in this newsletter. An Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 4th March 1995 at which our guest speaker will be Dr Francis Rose (author of *The Wildflower Key*); final details are yet to be arranged but please make a note of this date in your diary.

Saturday 29th October 1994
New Forest Bogs & Sphagnum (bog moss)
Training Day

Dr M Proctor, an expert in the ecology of fens and bogs, has kindly offered to lead a training day to look at New Forest Bogs and to study Sphagnum in the New Forest on Saturday 29th October 1994. The day will be spent in the Hatchet Pond/Crockford Bridge area where all the common Sphagnum species should be seen. Meet at the carpark at Hatchet at grid reference SU 369017 at 10.30am. Bring packed lunch. A hand lens would be useful to bring along if you have one. Stout boots, wellingtons or even waders may be appropriate.

Thursday 10th November 1994
Talk on "British Orchids"

Simon Moore will be giving a talk titled *British Orchids* at 7.30pm on Thursday 10th November 1994 at Kingsclere Village Club (next to the library on George Street, Kingsclere). All Flora Group members are welcome to attend.

Saturday 12th November 1994
Red-tipped Cudweed (*Filago lutescens*) at Fleet

Chris Hall has agreed to lead another task at Broomhurst Farm, Fleet, at the red-tipped cudweed site. This task will be held on Saturday 12th November 1994 and will start at 10.30am. Meet at grid reference SU 813563 on the B3013, just north of the M3. It would be helpful if those who intend coming could telephone the Wildlife Trust Office (0703 613636) to let Clive Chatters know so that the correct number of tools can be provided. A report on this species is included in this newsletter. It is clear that the work carried out by Flora Group members at this site in recent years has been successful and this winter we plan to continue to tackle the invasive scrub. This cudweed is one of Britain's rarest plants, being confined to a handful of sites in SE England. The plant is listed in the Red Data Book and is specially protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Sunday 22nd January 1995
Holly Cutting, New Forest

The Flora Group will be carrying out more holly cutting in the New Forest pasture woodlands this winter to improve conditions for rare epiphytic lichens. We will be meeting at the car park by the cricket pitch at Busketts Wood (grid reference SU 311111) at 10.30am on Sunday 22nd January 1995. We will be working in Great Stubby Hat (SU 306110) where part of the largest colony of the lichen *Parmelia minarum* in Britain is being threatened by the shade of the holly. Tools will be provided but bring your own if you wish. If you require more information contact Neil Sanderson on 0703 844442.

Sunday 19th February 1995
Sallow coppicing, New Forest

This will be an innovative task intended to restore an extinct population of the nationally threatened mire species slender cotton grass (*Eriophorum gracile*) last

seen here in the 1950s by Dr Francis Rose. We will be meeting at the car park at Wootton Bridge (grid reference SZ 251997) at 10.30am. We will be clearing sallow which has colonised base rich mire thereby shading out the slender cotton grass. We hope this will allow the cotton grass to regenerate from seed. Expect cold weather conditions! Tools will be provided but bring your own if you wish. If you require more information contact Neil Sanderson on 0703 844442.

Sunday 26th February 1995
Man Orchid site at Exton

The man orchids growing on the road verge at Exton have responded extremely well to the work carried out by Flora Group members in recent years. (Refer to article by Graham Roberts in this newsletter). Mick Finnemore, Site Manager of Old Winchester Hill and Beacon Hill NNRS, has offered to arrange another task at Exton this winter. Meet at the carpark at Beacon Hill (grid reference SU 598228) at 10.30am on Sunday 26th February 1995. Tools will be provided but bring gardening gloves if you have them as we will probably have to tackle some vicious brambles!

Saturday 4th March 1995
Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will be held during the morning of Saturday 4th March 1994, probably in Winchester but details of venue have yet to be finalised. After the formal part of the meeting, Dr Francis Rose (author of The Wildflower Key) has kindly agreed to give a talk. In the afternoon we hope to arrange a visit to a site nearby. Full details will be sent to Flora Group members nearer the time but please make a note of this date in your diary now.

REPORTS ON EVENTS

Holly cutting for lichen conservation at Rockram
Wood, New Forest, 16th January 1994

The aim of this well-attended task was to open up the shaded trunks of old beech trees in an ancient pasture woodland to more light by coppicing and pollarding hollies. The stand treated was adjacent to three well-lit beech trees carrying large colonies of the very rare lichen *Parmelia minarum* and it is hoped that the species will eventually colonise the newly opened area of woodland.

An enthusiastic morning of cutting opened up a sizeable area of woodland and part of the afternoon was spent in rather denser, tangled holly to the south west in Shave Wood. Lichen colonisation takes rather a long time so it will be several years before we know if we have been successful. Monitoring visits to Rockram Wood found that the majority of the cut holly had been eaten as winter fodder by the ponies within a few weeks and that by late summer all the new holly pollards supported new growth.

This winter we will be cutting more holly, this time to open up *Parmelia minarum* colonies which are actually dying back due to shade. These show a very rapid response.

Neil Sanderson

Man Orchid site, White Lane, Exton.

I counted 5 good-sized man orchids in flower along White Lane, Exton, on 12th June 1994. All were on the grassy bank on the east side of the lane where scrub had been cleared by the Hampshire Flora Group work party on 21st November 1993. Other downland herbs, including cowslip, wild thyme and small scabious, were also benefitting from the increased light. I was pleased to note that most of the cut stumps, which had been treated with Amcide, had died. I think this is most encouraging and hope that the Flora Group will be able to undertake further scrub clearance this winter.

Graham C.M. Roberts

Tower Mustard (*Arabis glabra*) at Kingsley

On 16th April 1994 the Hampshire Flora Group joined Plantlife under the guidance of Dr Tim Rich in a scrub clearance task at Mears Kingsley Quarry as part of the Plantlife "Back from the Brink" project to save the tower mustard (*Arabis glabra*).

There was a good turn out of helpers and the scrub was cleared and burnt in one and a half hours and approximately 30 endangered *Arabis glabra* were discovered. We owe the discovery of *Arabis glabra* at Mears Kingsley Quarry to Lady Anne Brewis who came to see the scrub clearance in progress.

Joan Cocksedge

Umbellifer evening at Gosport, 15th June 1994

During June 1993, Mervyn Southam led a fascinating training day on Umbellifers for Flora Group members and invited guests to his garden in Gosport the

following summer. Nine members accepted his invitation and had a wonderful evening in this extraordinary garden. Mervyn's garden is unusual as it is full of hundreds of different Umbellifers from all over the world. He had labelled all those which were visible at the time of our visit and had produced an impressive list of 95 different plants which could be seen during the visit. The plants came from places as wide ranging as the Pyrenees, Romania, the Himalayas, Falklands, Calabria, Japan, Cyprus, Crete, Turkey, Ukraine, Majorca, China, Sierra Nevada, Madiera, the Canaries and India.

I was impressed by the diversity of form and colour exhibited by these plants. For example, *Astrodaucus orientalis* has grey foliage and pinky coloured stems, whilst *Heptaptera colladonoides* had yellow flowers and distinct wings on the seeds. There were a number of prostrate plants eg *Bolax trifurcata* and *pimpinella saxifraga prostrata* which had very dark leaves. Some plants were quite a surprise; for example *Eryngium yuccifolium* which looked quite different from other *Eryngiums* which I had seen.

Mr and Mrs Southam moved to their present house 7 years ago and created part of the Umbellifer garden from the remains of an old aviary. Using the concrete base of the aviary, together with pieces of rock, they have created a rockery which provides the perfect habitat for species usually found on rocky screes in more natural surroundings.

Mr and Mrs Southam made us most welcome and everybody appreciated the generous offerings of home-made cakes and scones.

Catherine Chatters

Red-tipped cudweed (*Filago lutescens*)

Hampshire has been host to at least 17 sites for red-tipped cudweed *Filago lutescens* since botanical recording began but only one is certainly extant. This rare annual is a plant of sandy arable fields, though it is sometimes also found in other sandy or gravelly habitats where competition from other species is low, such as dry heathland, paths and tracks, sand pits and railways. Sites are typically on dry, well-drained soils of low fertility. The cudweed also has a high light requirement.

F. lutescens is currently being studied for Plantlife by Tim Rich as part of the "Back from the Brink" project. Research by Tim has revealed that the species formerly occurred in 24 vice counties, but that in 1993 only 11 colonies remained, all in the South East and most supporting only small populations. Surrey has the most.

The single Hampshire site was discovered in 1980 by Lady Anne Brewis on a roadside verge near Fleet. Since 1986 there has been management of the site in some years, to control gorse, bramble and perennial grasses. Annual management during autumn or early winter is necessary to maintain the population at above 100 plants. (There were fewer than 10 originally).

Observations at Fleet suggest there is a small late summer germination, but that most seeds germinate in the warm conditions of late spring or early summer (mid May to late June). Plants develop rapidly and begin flowering by late June. Peak flowering is during July and many plants are dead by mid August. In suitable years some flowering may occur in the autumn. (The site is a sheltered hollow in which a very warm micro-climate may develop. The cudweed may behave differently in a typical arable field).

It was at first puzzling how *F. lutescens* came to be on a road embankment not constructed until 1969. The answer probably lies with the M3. There are a number of old records for Winchfield, the earliest from 1885 and the most recent in 1939, all apparently in sandy fields around the former common of Shapley Heath. the motorway cuts through the hill on which Shapley Heath was situated, which must have generated a considerable quantity of spoil. It is at least possible that some of this was used to construct the embankment which carried the B3013 over the motorway near Fleet. *F. lutescens* has appeared in two places 400 metres apart on this embankment after soil disturbance, which begs the question of how many more *Filago* seeds may be lying dormant around Hampshire.

Maximum counts of *Filago lutescens* each summer at the site near Fleet and of *Scleranthus annuus* (which has become a scarce plant in Hampshire) at the same site. No prizes for guessing in which winters the site was managed!

	<u><i>Filago lutescens</i></u>	<u><i>Scleranthus annuus</i></u>
1980	"a few"	"a few"
1986	1	"small numbers"
1987	10	9
1988	38	19
1989	4	6
1990	5	5
1991	2	5
1992	178	14
1993	114	8
1994	135	31

Chris Hall