

Recording in Co. Down in 2010

Monthly field meetings were organised in support of the first year of recording for the proposed Flora of Co. Down and to make records under the new date-class. The meetings were initially well supported, but had few attendees during the later part of the year. As well as the new date class, this has been the first year of recording after an extensive revision of classification, nomenclature and identification keys, as described in the third edition of Stace - something I am sure we will all become accustomed to in the near future. Thank you to those who sent me their records.

In mid-April the scheduled walk along the coastal path west of Bangor relocated *Scilla verna* (Spring Squill), though in much reduced numbers, possibly because of the landscaping of a golf course.

Rostrevor oak wood was visited in early May and *Melica uniflora* (Wood Melick) and *Luzula pilosa* (Hairy Wood-rush) were re-found.

Delamont Country Park near Killyleagh was visited in mid-June, and yielded a number of planted species including *Salix pentandra* (Bay Willow). A remnant of semi-natural woodland contained *Veronica montana* (Wood Speedwell), but the most surprising find was *Spirodela polyrhiza* (Greater Duckweed) growing in a cattle trough. The park shows signs of considerable management by Downpatrick council including use of strimmers and herbicides, even on the stone walls of the old garden to remove ferns. It was therefore unsurprising that the single plant of *Allium ameloprasum* var. *babingtonii* (Wild Leek) was not re-found at its 1997 station next to the Lough.

Inula helenium (Elecampane) was by the car park at Lough Money near Downpatrick in mid-August. A number of samples of aquatics were taken and later identified as *Littorella uniflora* (Shoreweed), *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort), *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Spiked Water-milfoil) and *Potamogeton gramineus* (Various-leaved Pondweed). Close to the track to the old quarry were *Hypericum humifusum* (Trailing St John's-wort) and *Agrimonia procera* (Fragrant Agrimony). The quarry face held *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum* (Black Spleenwort), *A. trichomanes* ssp. *quadrialeans* (Maidenhair Spleenwort) and *A. scolopendrium* (Hart's-tongue).

In the third week of August, I walked up the Banns Road to the north cliffs on Slieve Muck. At the lower end of the Banns Road, on-going agricultural improvement including the removal of stones from fields, use of fertilisers and herbicides and introduction of 'horseyculture' had impacted diversity, but leaving the development behind, the normal flora of the Mourne appeared. *Rhynchospora alba* (White Beak-sedge) and *Agrostis vinealis* (Brown Bent) were found by the track close to the Miners Hole River. There is a path marked on the map onto the slopes between Slieve Muck and Carn Mountain, but it's almost all overgrown, so I followed the river, repeatedly flushing a *Cinclus cinclus* (Dipper). The north cliffs on Slieve Muck were followed, but the midges were very unpleasant and obviously hadn't been fed in August, so at the first opportunity, I headed onto the top into a breeze. *Saussurea alpina* (Alpine Saw-wort) was not seen and I also missed *Cystopteris fragilis* (Brittle Bladder-fern) and *Rubus saxatilis* (Stone Bramble) re-found by David McNeill in 2006. *Huperzia selago* (Fir Clubmoss), *Diphasiastrum alpinum* (Alpine Clubmoss), *Phegopteris connectilis* (Beech Fern), *Sedum rosea* (Roseroot), *Solidago virgaurea* (Goldenrod), *Empetrum nigrum* (Crowberry) and *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (Cowberry) were seen. I walked across the heavily grazed top of Slieve Muck and onto the steep south west boulder slope where Paul Hackney and I had found a second Co. Down location for *Asplenium trichomanes* ssp. *trichomanes*

(Maidenhair Spleenwort) in 2002. I searched around the site and found *Athyrium filix-femina* (Lady-fern), *Blechnum spicant* (Hard-fern), *Polypodium vulgare* (Polypody) and flowering *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (Cowberry) as well as the *Asplenium trichomanes* ssp. *trichomanes*.

In mid-August Margaret Marshall and I recorded at Annalong. After visiting the harbour, we walked north along the coastal path. This was wide and covered the zone where upper shore plants would be expected, and there was little in the adjacent fields, so it wasn't very productive and we turned round and walked south out of Annalong along the path. Again the council had put in a wide path, but there were areas where boulders on the shore had been covered with waste mixed with sand and further on a rocky shore with remnants of a salt marsh. *Lepidium coronopus* (Swine-cress), *L. didymum* (Lesser Swine-cress), *Carpobrotus edulis* (Hottentot-fig), *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp. *maritimus* (Sea Radish) and *R. raphanistrum* ssp. *raphanistrum* (Wild Radish) were noted. While going back to the cars, we looked at the waste ground between a playing field and the sea where *Oenothera glazioviana* (Large-flowered Evening-primrose) was growing and discussed the use of a putative *Rosa rugosa* x *spinosissima* hybrid to deter locals from venturing close to a drainage ditch by an estate. By the car park, in a walled garden, now let to run wild, the council had planted *Humulus lupulus* (Hop). Disappointingly, the scent of this garden form was rather weak. Interestingly, I had a letter and photograph from a member of the public wanting to know the identity of a plant that he'd found in Annalong in the summer; it was a garden throw-out, *Dierama pulcherrima* (not in Stace!).

Graham Day
February 2011