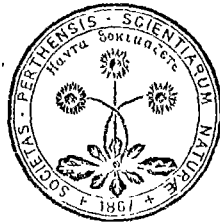


MAY 1984

May 1984
(Field meetings of 1983)

P.S.N.S.
BOTANICAL SECTION



Bulletin Number 8

EDITORIAL

Welcome once again to the Bulletin of the Botanical Section of the Perthshire Society for Natural Science. As you will see from the excursion reports we have had a busy field season, recording plants for the Flora of Perthshire in several new areas and trying to confirm some old records - unfortunately we were not able to find Herb Paris in Nether Glenny, despite our success in rediscovering old sites in 1982. We had a number of meetings with other natural history societies including the PSNS Ornithologists the Botanical Society of the British Isles, the Edinburgh Naturalists and the Rannoch Natural History Society. These were very successful and we will be continuing with this in the coming season. We finished the season off in style with a Fungus Foray (unfortunately not well attended) and a Lichen excursion, in an attempt to cover some of the less well studied groups of plants.

For those unable to get to field meetings, we had an interesting selection of winter lectures, including talks on 'Deeside's Woods and Hills' by Dave Batty - Nature Conservancy Council Warden at Braemar, 'Trees' by Mr Bisset of Dundee University Botanic Garden, 'Plants for Rock Gardens' by Mr Duncan of Branklyn Garden and 'The Breadalbane Plant Survey' by Dr David Chamberlain of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. These culminated in an AGM at which we were entertained by reminiscences of Miss Stewart and Bob Brien. This was a great success, giving as it did, a history of the Botanical Section and the many varied outings it has made and projects undertaken. If any of the longer standing members of the Society would like to share any of their anecdotes, we would love to include a selection in next year's Bulletin. Any contributions should be sent to me at Blaeberry Toll, Dunning.

Helen Stace

EXCURSION REPORTS 1983

Glen Lednock

8 May

This meeting was a joint excursion with the Ornithological Section of the Society, and there was a good turnout from both sections.

Starting from the carpark in Comrie we walked up through the gorge woodland to the Deil's Cauldron waterfall. There were many plants of interest in this stretch including Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*), Slender False-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) and Oak Fern (*Gymnocarpium dryopteris*). A number of woodland birds were seen and heard including a Spotted Flycatcher and Redstart.

We then ascended to Lord Melville's Monument where we had lunch, finding White Climbing Fumitory (*Corydalis claviculata*) on the way up and getting good views of a Kestrel on the cliffs. On our descent we went a short distance up Glen Lednock, passing a clump of good old juniper bushes (*Juniperus communis*), and then returned via Broom Hill. Two Buzzards were spotted and a Tawny Owl disturbed from its nest. The rabbit eaten turf underfoot held several of the 'dwarf' spring plants including Parsley Piert (*Aphanes arvensis*) and Spring Sedge (*Carex caryophyllea*) in full flower.

Our return to Comrie through the Golf Course provided a fitting finish to the day as we were afforded good close up views of a male Capercaillie which had been in residence for the past few weeks.

The day was thoroughly enjoyed by ornithologists and botanists alike, despite the constant indecision about whether to look at your feet for plants, or watch overhead for birds !

Helen Stace

Nether Glenny

15 May

About a dozen people joined this outing and enjoyed a bright dry day. The meeting started at Glenny Cottage and proceeded downstream almost to the A81 road and then upstream to the Pot of Glenny at the top of the ravine. Where access permitted some of the more agile members descended into the ravine, but mostly the sides were too steep and the flow of water too great to enable movement along the bottom of the

ravine for any distance.

The ravine contains mixed woodland with ash, elm, hazel and bird cherry, but there was one stretch of mature conifers near Glenny Cottage. Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*) was by far the most common species seen, with Dogs Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and Wild Hyacinth (*Endymion non-scriptus*) fairly locally distributed. Ferns were well represented, particularly Oak Fern (*Gymnocarpium dryopteris*) which is locally abundant, Beech Fern (*Phegopteris connectilis*) occurring in occasional patches and Hard Shield Fern (*Polystichum aculeatum*) frequent in the rocky areas. Harts Tongue (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*) and Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*) occur in two places. Other plants of note were Woodruff (*Asperula odorata*) and Tall Fescue (*Festuca altissima*).

Above the Pot of Glenny the burn runs through open grassland. On the west side of the river there were occasional Sloe and Juniper, one of the latter being infected with the orange fungus (*Gymnosporangium juniperi*). Several flushes beside the stream had Goldilocks (*Ranunculus auricomus*).

One of the main reasons for visiting this glen was to look for Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*). This was mentioned as occurring in "Glenny Glen" by the Revs Graham in their "Sketches of Perthshire" in 1812, but had not been seen since then. Though this is always a difficult plant to find it was the impression of those present that it probably no longer occurs here; the ravine itself is mostly too sheer for sufficient soil to develop, and where it is not so steep grazing animals have been able to descend onto any suitable areas.

To make up for not finding Herb Paris, those present then proceeded to Kippenraik Glen, one of the few known sites for Herb Paris in Perthshire, and saw some fine specimens, several in full flower.

Nick Stewart

Tomdachoille Shingle Island 5 June

This excursion was arranged as part of the first Scottish Recorder's Conference of the Botanical Society of the British Isles. As a result we joined an impressive array of 19 VC Recorders. The weather blessed us with only the

second sunny afternoon in months and everyone enjoyed a delightful afternoon's botanising amongst carpets of cowslips (*Primula veris*) beside the River Tummel.

Such pleasures apart, the aim of the excursion was to add to the rather scant previous records for Tomdachoille 'Island', a shingle bank deposited by the Tummel since the early 19th century and now partly joined to the 'mainland' (much to the relief of some excursion members!). Its relationship to the river channel at various dates caused (and is still causing) debate as to its VC allegiance, but this did not dampen the enthusiasm of recorders.

The Perthshire shingle islands are characterised by a wide variety of habitats and consequently diverse species of plants. Tomdachoille was no exception, a total of 368 species (including previous records) now being recorded in habitats ranging from unimproved grassland (predominant) to woodland, open shingle, backwaters and flushes.

The most interesting finds were the hybrid between Primrose and Cowslip (*Primula veris x vulgaris*), Birds' Nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*), Shady Horsetail (*Equisetum pratense*), Mountain Melick (*Melica nutans*), Goldilocks (*Ranunculus auricomus*) and Stone Bramble (*Rubus saxatilis*) in the woodland, Meadow Saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*), Hairy Oat (*Avenula pubescens*), Wood Vetch (*Vicia sylvatica*), Trailing Tormentil (*Potentilla anglica*) and Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*) in the grassland and Hoary Whitlow Grass (*Draba incana*) and Slender Cudweed (*Filago minima*) on the more open shingle and sand deposits.

Our thanks are due to the Botanical Society of the British Isles for arranging the visit, the owners of the Island, The Duke of Atholl, for permission to visit the area, and to Mr Stewart for so kindly tolerating so many cars littering his farm.

Ros Smith

Tay Estuary Boat Trip

12 June

Following the tradition of the past few years the Botanical Section once again embarked on a boat trip, this year on the Tay Queen, sailing from Broughty Ferry Pier to Perth Harbour.

19 members and friends gathered for this year's trip which

was enjoyed by all. Grateful thanks are due to Mr Freddie French who has so ably organised this excursion and those of the previous years - we are all grateful for the wonderful opportunity these trips afford to take a leisurely and informative view of the Perthshire countryside from a new angle. Sadly since our sail on the Tay Queen, we have heard that the boat has been put up for sale as the enterprise was making a loss. Lets hope the new owner(s) are able to keep this boat in service.

Helen Stace

Balnaguard Glen/Loch of Lowes and Campsie Linn 9 July

This was a joint meeting of the parent body with the Edinburgh Naturalists Society which was diverted from the advertised excursion at Balnaguard to the Loch of Lowes and the Campsie stretch of the River Tay, under the general leadership of Miss Rhoda Fothergill.

The party from Edinburgh was taken around the Loch of Lowes, a Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve, by the warden Maurice Drummond. After lunching the bus brought the party to Campsie where they were met by Dr Ros Smith. She acted as leader for the walk up river from Campsie Linn to Stobhall Castle grounds and chapel which were open to the party for the afternoon by kind permission of Lord Perth.

Margaret MacDonald and Anne Mathers, being the sole attenders from P.S.N.S. Botany Section, were late in arriving after checking that no P.S.N.S. parent body members had gone to Balnaguard. Having missed the main party, they carried out a short survey of part of the river bank from Campsie Linn down to the weir.

It was a very hot day - ideal for a riverside excursion and it was most unfortunate that more P.S.N.S. members had not supported it - a joint meeting in June might perhaps have found more people free to support it.

Anne Mathers

Mullinavadie

24 July

The purpose of the meeting was to investigate some areas of limestone in an under recorded part of Perthshire. We were joined by several members of the Rannoch Natural History Society and together explored the area which well justified

our hopes for interesting plants.

A string of limestone outcrops protruded through the peat. A number of interesting plants grew on the limestone and associated calcareous grassland, including Kidney-vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), Quaking grass (*Briza media*), Hair Sedge (*Carex capillaris*), Frog orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*), Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) and Rockrose (*Helianthemum chamaecistus*).

Calcareous flushes in the surrounding peat also included many good plants, particularly sedges - no less than eighteen species of sedge being found during the course of the day. We were particularly pleased to find Scottish asphodel (*Tofieldia pusilla*) and a dragonfly (*Cordulegaster boltonii*) which allowed itself to be photographed at rest by several members of the party.

The drier peaty areas were also of interest with Intermediate Wintergreen (*Pyrola media*) in one area. Finally a small wooded gorge provided several new species including Green Spleenwort (*Asplenium viride*) and Stone bramble (*Rubus saxatilis*).

All in all this was a very interesting day botanically and we enjoyed the company of the local naturalists.

Nick Stewart and
Helen Stace

John Rohrbach's Herb Garden, Comrie 10 August

9 members, 7 from the botany section and 2 from the parent body of P.S.N.S. gathered at Gould Cottage on a glorious evening to be entertained with herbal teas and home baking as an introduction to the fascinating world of herbs and their manifold uses.

As the main purpose for which the plants are grown by the Rohrbaachs is to provide homeopathic veterinary medicines, the emphasis was on the use of herbal remedies for animal ailments but rather naturally his audience tended to ask questions directed to the human animal.

After being given roots from two types of iris, which Mr Rohrbach had split up ready for those interested in them, members were supplied with information about the 'Herbalist' magazine, and more refreshments. At approximately 9.45 p.m.

the evening was concluded with a vote of thanks to the Rohrbachs.

Herbs used from their garden include Mints, Rue, Liquorice, Thymes, Fenugreek, Rosemary, Sage, Lavender and Lovage.

Anne Mathers

Pass of Killiecrankie Fungus Foray

23 October

This year was fairly mixed from the mycological point of view. The dry summer extended well into the autumn and considerably delayed the start of the fungi season, particularly to the east of the Tay-Tummel-Garry line where it was a very bad year for fungi. However, the wet weather in October partly made up for the proceeding months and the late arrival of any heavy frosts extended the fungi season. Thus, although this Foray was relatively late in the year, some 79 different fungi were seen.

The day was dull and damp but even so the turnout was disappointing (three including the leader). The morning and early afternoon were spent between the Visitor Centre and Soldier's Leap, the rest of the time being spent on the west side of the valley near Garry Bridge. A good variety of woodland habitats were looked at from acid birch wood to base-rich mixed woodland and including one or two areas of conifers. Much of interest was seen including the Wood Hedgehog (*Lycoperdon echinatum*) a puffball known from only two or three other places in Scotland. Another of particular interest was a yellow russula (*Russula solaris*) a rare species of beech woodland.

The Pass of Killiecrankie is particularly rich for fungi because it has a number of distinctly southern species mixed with a more typical northern flora. Some examples from those seen on this outing were False Death-Cap (*Amanita citrina*), Poor Man's Beefsteak (*Fitbulina hepatica*) and the above mentioned Wood Hedgehog which are all much more common south of the Border. By contrast *Lactarius chrysorheus*, a milk-cap with yellow milk is a species of montane oakwoods.

I would like to thank Dr Alan Silverside who came all the way from Paisley to lead this foray. His knowledge and patience to impart this knowledge was much appreciated by those present. I hope that the interesting finds at least partly made up for the poor attendance.

Nick Stewart

A good turn out of members and two guests - Mrs Agnes Walker a botanist from Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum and Mr David Mardon, the National Trust Warden for Ben Lawers - 15 in all attended the final field meeting, which was lead by Dr Pauline Topham.

The main pathway and nature trail were followed and the types of lichen to be found on tree bark, tree stumps, damp earth and rock surfaces - bare or moss covered were surveyed with a wealth of information for identification features from Dr Topham. Although windy, the morning stayed dry so that between 10.30 a.m. and 1 p.m. the main areas for study were completed. After lunching in the lea of the east side, the final survey of the outlook tower was carried out before returning to the museum to sort out specimens and complete identification. By kind permission of Mr Michael Taylor, the museum microscopes and library copies of standard text books and older works were available for use in the identification of species.

The meeting dispersed at 4 p.m. with grateful thanks to the leader and to Michael Taylor for the trouble they took to make the day so successful.

As a footnote, it is to be recorded that in addition to the main survey for lichens, two flowering plant sites were also recorded - Broad Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) found for the first time on the SW facing slopes above Barnhill, and Purple Milk-Vetch (*Astragalus danicus*) on the cliff edges between the table and look out tower.

Anne Mathers

NATURE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL NEWS

Progress on renotification of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest has been rapid with 59 now finally notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Letters are due to go out to owners and occupiers of the remaining 40 Sites shortly after you get this Bulletin. So far reaction from owners has been very good and with very few claims for financial compensation for not being able to carry out management which would be damaging to the Sites.

An interesting local development recently has been the formation of a Farming, Forestry and Wildlife Advisory Group

(FFWAG). Similar Groups have been formed over the last years in England and Wales and are essentially groups of farmers formed to discuss problems of wildlife, agriculture and forestry to advise other farmers on how to enhance the wildlife interest of their farms, whilst still of course maintaining economic production. FFWAG's will of course need, in addition to farmers, wildlife experts such as Section members, to help identify interesting areas on farms and make management recommendations.

Ros Smith
Assistant Regional Officer
Perth and Kinross District

More Hops

Following notes in the two previous issues of the Bulletin, I have been sent a further two localities for hops as follows

Freddie French's note about hops sent me along the road at the first opportunity to check my local site. Still there and flourishing ! But too early yet to say whether it is male or female. I'll let you know when it flowers (it proved to be a female. Ed.) The map reference is NN 895 211 on the NW side of the Southwood Road just at the Y-junction with the Madderty Road and a little south of Wester Dolleries. It is growing in the hedge for about 20 yards, with a very small mixed, almost garden type shelter block on the inside, but beyond that is a park with ewes and lambs (no inns nearby !).

Bill Gauld 23 May 1983

There are a small amount of hops growing at the roadside among brambles at the side of the Coupar Angus - Blairgowrie Road. As the site is not near a building, it can only be assumed that this is a case of an escape from cultivation. (Map reference No 205 414).

Freddie French
8 March 1984

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to all the people who have kept the section going over the last year, especially Bill Gauld, our Chairman, Freddie French, our tireless Treasurer !, Ann Mathers, our Secretary, who so ably organised our winter

programme and Nick Stewart who arranged the field meetings. Thanks also to Perth Museum for producing the Bulletin, particularly Muriel Farquhar and Michael Taylor for typing, assembling and despatching.

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