



THE DUBLIN NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB

Club Newsletter

Spring 2023

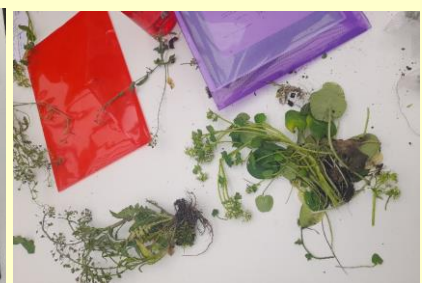
Dear Members,

In addition to our programme of field outings and online presentations, spring 2023 heralded the welcome return of monthly workshops. These are held on the first Saturday of each month in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin by permission of the Director.

You may enjoy these abstracts if you were unable to attend a particular event.

Workshops.

February topics included evergreen horsetails, *Equisetum variegatum* and *E. hyemale* and their hybrids, the mosses of the built environment, photography equipment, some past and recent publications and the new DNFC poster 'The Flora of Old Walls and Bridges'. In March members examined the three Irish *Polypodium* species, *P. vulgare*, *P. interjectum* and *P. cambricum*. The cones, winter buds and characteristic needle arrangements of the nineteen species of conifers that reproduce in Ireland were shown. Pressed examples of six different *Taraxacum* sections were exhibited and the techniques required to prepare good quality pressed specimens were demonstrated. Specimens of *Erophila verna* agg. and other genera of early flowering white crucifers e.g. *Arabadopsis*, *Cochlearia*, *Capsella* and *Cardamine* were examined during the April workshop, fruit structure is an important identification character. Sepal shape and size were among the characters used to identify *Fumaria capreolata*, *F. purpurea* and *F. muralis*. Further examples of *Taraxacum* were shown. A review of the publication Lough Carra, by Chris & Lynda Huxley (2015) was presented.



Crucifer identification workshop (lft,rt), April. Six *Taraxacum* sections (c), March.

Photographs S. Hanley

Field meetings.

The new year began with a joint outing with the Irish Bryology group to Mount Lucas Wind Farm and an exploration of bryophytes on fen habitats and regenerating bog. Intrepid DNFC members braved wet conditions when they investigated the bryophytes on Carlingford Mountain. In February members enjoyed better weather on a rockpool trip to Portmarnock. The peacock worm *Sabella pavonina*, the breadcrumb sponge *Halichondria panicea*, the snakelocks anemone *Anemonia viridis* and the sea potato *Echinocardium cordatum* were found.



The peacock worm, breadcrumb sponge and sea potato at Portmarnock.

Photographs L. Higgins

During March members learned about the history and development of Leixlip Spa and viewed some of the vegetation beside Louisa Bridge by the Royal Canal. At Poolbeg turnstones, sanderling, guillemot, black guillemot, adult and juvenile shag were easily observed as they gathered at high tide by the Great South Wall.



Outings to Louisa Bridge and the Great South Wall.

Photographs S. Hanley

In April, two mid-week outings took place, these were led by two TCD student members and our Honorary Vice President. The outings highlighted the more identifiable species which occur naturally around the city centre. Early flowering species *Scilla verna*,

Cersatium semidecandrum, *Rosa spinosissima*, *Ranunculus bulbosus*, *Silene uniflora*, *Vicia sativa* and *Medicago arabica* were amongst the plants recorded during the trip to the Murrough in mid-April. The last outing of spring took place at the Devil's Glen in Wicklow. *Abies procera* (Noble fir), *Abies grandis* (Giant fir), *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots pine), *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas fir), *Castanea sativa* (Sweet chestnut), *Tsuga heterophylla* (Western hemlock), *Picea sitchensis* (Sitka spruce) and *Cupressus lawsoniana* (Lawson's cypress) were among the trees found in this mixed woodland. Some introduced species *T. heterophylla*, *P. sitchensis*, *P. menziesii* and *A. grandis* had produced seedlings. The curved needles of *A. procera*, beech-like tips of *P. menziesii* and glands on the underside of *C. lawsoniana* were useful identifying features.



Scilla verna, *Ranunculus bulbosus* and *Silene uniflora* at the Murrough.

Photographs S. Hanley

Online presentations

In her presentation 'Some experiences of a long time Botanist' Sylvia Reynolds described many of the interesting native and alien plants records she collected in the past four decades. These contributed to her publications *A catalogue of alien plants in Ireland* (2002) and *The Flora of County Limerick* (2012).

The current series ended with two presentations 'Pollinators, farms, science and policy' and 'Biodiversity Data – putting knowledge to good purpose'. These outlined some ongoing research projects and conservation initiatives and investigated how biological records may be used to help protect and conserve sites of ecological importance.