

COMMUNITY WILDLIFE PLANT GROUP REPORT 2024

These events took place within the areas of the Camlad, Rea Valley and Upper Onny Wildlife Groups and were open to anyone interested in plants, whether a complete beginner, an experienced botanist or somewhere in between. A leaflet was produced with the help of Cassy Clayton from Natural England. These were distributed as hard copies and electronically and the events were advertised through the various Community wildlife groups and the Shropshire Hills National Landscapes.

Species Action Plans (SAPs) have been **produced by Natural England and the Stepping Stones Project for 12 species that rely on particular habitat types that we are trying to connect across the landscape.** Following on from that we concentrated on the 3 plant species in that plan; Cowberry, Devils bit scabious, Mountain pansy and also Marsh violet as the food plant of Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary butterfly.

Our first walk of the year in April was to visit the wood pasture called **Old Moores wood** near Linley.

This is a hillside area of ancient oaks which were revealed some 10 years ago upon felling after having been hidden in a Spruce plantation for 50 years. Some had died due to being shaded out but many survived and form a remarkable and unusual habitat.

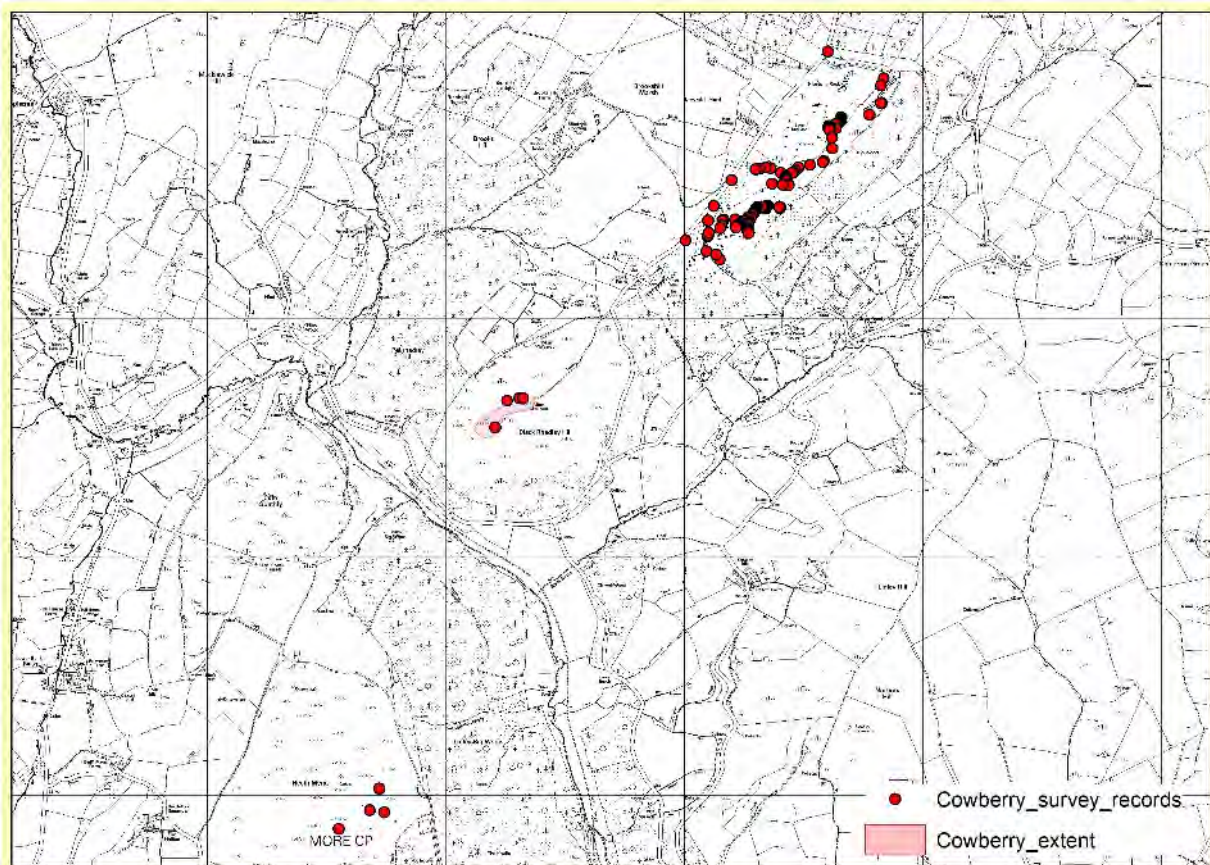


In the middle of May the group spent the day mapping Cowberry on Nipstone and the Rock. On several other days volunteers found and mapped Cowberry on Black Rhadley and Heath Mynd which was a new site for Cowberry. We searched on Cefn Gunthlow but although we found Heather Bilberry and Crowberry we did not find Cowberry there.

Cowberry



Crowberry



Hope valley SSSI 5th June

Stepping Stones volunteers have been clearing scrub and bracken for the last 2 years. This is a fairly small but species rich grassland site on the side of the Hope valley. A species list was made of 77 species including many axiophytes [indicators of good habitat] such as Dyers greenweed, Twayblade orchid and Quaking grass.

Ritton valley Local wildlife site 13th June

Having walked in from the Bog the group descended into the valley down quite a steep slope to a very species rich site varying from wet rushy areas to dry banks formed from mine spoil, in all giving way to a rich botanical site, with the highlight at the one end being Northern Marsh orchid



Barnes farm Local Wildlife Site 26th June

Since the last visit by the plant group this Local WS has changed hands and the whole of Barnes farm is now owned by the National Trust.

Most of the LWS has now not been grazed for some years and it is becoming quite rank in places and in need of cutting and grazing. Quite an expedition through alder woodland and head high grasses and rushes. We eventually found the marsh cinquefoil leaves and some of the beautiful carmine coloured flowers.

Slender St Johns wort was growing in profusion amongst the gorse.

Although some plants could not be found from previous surveys it is still a rich site



The Monastery Stiperstones 9th July

For the first time for 20 years there was no grazing as the ponies had been removed

The large amount of goose droppings showed how much one large family of Canada geese could do.



Although the paddock was grazed short it was a sea of Ox eye daisies and on closer examination showed many species including Ladys mantle



The main part of the site was still very rich with DBS just starting to flower This was the first of 2 visits to map DBS one of the SS 12 action plan species.

In 2004 this was probably the best site for Small pearl bordered fritillary butterfly. Now they are only occasionally seen here. The exact reason is not known but we were on the lookout for Marsh violet the food plant of the caterpillar which we found it in reasonable quantities.

Many other plants of interest were found such as Marsh arrow grass and Lesser skullcap

Stapeley common LWS 17th July

This a large area of common ground comprising many different habitats. With large areas of wet and dry heath. The site is grazed by cattle and sheep.

We were looking at the south eastern corner near the old mine tower adjacent to the A488 as there were records of Devils bit there. Eventually we moved to a small area up toward Mitchells fold stone circle where there were some rich flushes. And found a couple of tiny leaves of DBS.



Grassland Fungi with Marches Meadow Group 5th October

walking from the Bog northwards along the public footpath then across the base of the Stiperstones where there are some of Natural England's fields which are very good for grassland fungi



Ballerina waxcap



Golden spindles

Woodland Fungi Identification, Snailbeach 26th October

After meeting at Snaibeech village hall we made our way up through the spoil heaps which have been colonised with birch and Goat willow

We were fortunate in having the ID skills of Jo Weightman who is the recorder for Hereford fungi group and has many decades of experience.

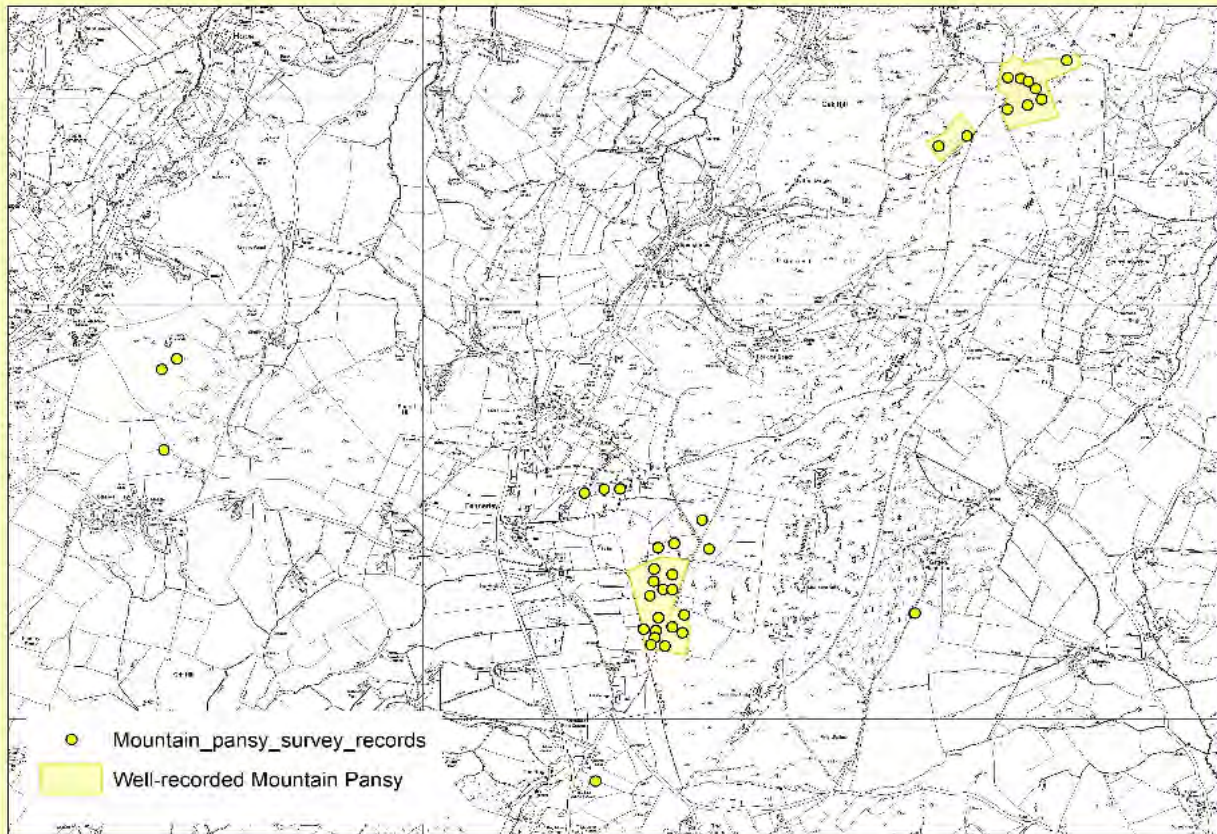
35 species were recorded



Collared earthstar



Girdled knight



A few new Mountain pansy records were collected

Cassy Clayton and myself ran the group together and I am very grateful for her help with organisation and mapping. Also to all those who gave their time and expertise. Most of the surveys lasted all day and in all 29 different people attended the groups and approximately 200 hours of volunteer time was recorded on the survey days and 25 hours at other times, particularly looking for Cowberry and mountain pansy.

I am very grateful for the support from the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Conservation Fund