

Ceratocapnos claviculata (L.) Lidén, Climbing Corydalis in Wyre Forest

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Climbing Corydalis, Wyre Forest

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In 2017 I discovered a native woodland plant, Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocapnos claviculata*) apparently not previously recorded for the Forest. It's now unusual for this to happen, so adding a new species to the Wyre Forest list makes a pleasant change as more often we hear of losses to the native flora.

The location where the plants were found was woodland at Postensplain, formerly a dense conifer plantation that was clear-felled and then, to prevent conifer regeneration, it was grazed by pigs for several years. The WFSG visited the area in 2015 but no plants were noted at the time. In my visit on 17th September 2017 several large clumps were found and numerous smaller plants scattered over a area of 0.5 ha. All plants were flowering well and may spread further until the area stabilizes following the disturbance from grazing.

Climbing Corydalis is perhaps better known under the name of *Corydalis claviculata* (L.) DC. It is a scrambling delicate plant with weak tendrils, creeping over the ground, hardly attractive, with pale cream-yellow flowers in a lax raceme. It is the only British member of the genus *Ceratocapnos* (Stace 1997). It is a native species typically found in sandy woods or heathland, often in damp peaty areas. It is not rare in Britain listed as 'Least Concern' (Cheffings & Farrell 2005) and appears to maintain a stable or increasing population. Britain does have a large proportion of the global population, therefore like bluebell it is an important species. The plant is an indicator axiophyte identifying woodland and heathland habitats important for nature conservation. (Voss 2017).

Where the Wyre plants came from is difficult to say.



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Perhaps a few plants had survived in an open patch in the conifers or along a ride edge, or could it be from buried seed in the soil? We may never know. Climbing *Corydalis* is found locally on the sandy soils such as Kinver Edge and Habberley Valley, and in a few places near Bewdley, but no records are known for the main Wyre Forest woodland.

An ecological account for Shropshire is given by Sinker et al. (1985): "Open woodland and edges of dry peat mosses, persisting in grassland on previously wooded sites, on dry to damp sandy or peaty soils, phosphate and nitrogen poor, base poor, acid, usually sheltered and half shaded to shaded but tolerates some exposure to sun. Poor competitor but sometimes abundant in disturbed parts of recently cleared plantations or woods, scrambling over tree stumps."

It will be interesting to monitor the plant's population and extent in future years to see if it can persist within the woodland as the plant communities mature.

References

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Viscum album L. Mistletoe. An unusual host species at Far Forest

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Mistletoe is quite common around the Wyre Forest area but uncommon within the actual woodland. Over the years it has been recorded on various host trees including most typically apple *Malus* sp. especially in the old orchards around the forest, but also on wild apple in the woods. Planted lime *Tilia europaea* and hawthorn *Crataegus* spp. are often festooned, more uncommonly on poplar *Populus* spp., Rowan *Sorbus acuparia* or rarely Acacia *Robinia pseudoacacia*. I remember once seeing willow *Salix* spp. with Mistletoe. It was recorded on oak *Quercus* spp. by Jannion Steele Elliott (1871-1942) near Dowles Manor on one of the twin oaks, sadly now just one oak and with no Mistletoe.

On 4th December 2017 I found a large clump of Mistletoe growing on Hazel *Corylus avellana* along a old lane at Far Forest, Worcestershire. It was in the hedgerow and mixed with other shrub and tree species making it difficult to tell exactly what it was growing on. A careful check revealed it was on an old Hazel coppice forming part of the hedge. I can't ever recall seeing Mistletoe growing on Hazel before. There are reports of it occurring on various unusual hosts and Hazel has been reported before so this is not new, but certainly it must be quite uncommon especially for the Wyre Forest area. If anyone knows differently, the author awaits your reports!



Mistletoe on Hazel, Wyre Forest

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