The British Bryological Society visit to the Wyre Forest - Sunday 23rd April 2023

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The British Bryological Society (BBS) decided to run a weekend meeting in a reasonably accessible UK location to allow those who find it difficult to get away for any length of time to have some experience of a National Meeting. Worcestershire was thought to be a possible location for the weekend and, following consultation with the bryophyte vice-county recorder for VC37 Worcestershire, a weekend of field meetings was planned.

The weekend, based at the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust headquarters at Lower Smite Farm was well attended. On the Friday afternoon the BBS group recorded the mosses and liverworts found in the urban habitat of central Worcester. Stone work and masonry around Worcester cathedral and its environs, along the bank of the River Severn and also on brickwork and paths alongside the canal was explored. On the Saturday one group recorded bryophytes in the riparian habitat along the banks of the River Severn and River Teme whilst another group explored Crews Hill and Blackhouse Wood.

On the Sunday, the BBS descended on the Wyre Forest to record along Bell Brook and in the surrounding woodland. The leaders were Ann Hill, Mark Lawley, Rosemary Winnall and Philippa Thompson (BBS meetings secretary). In total there were seventeen recorders: a mix of beginners, improvers and national experts.



Bell Brook valley Graham Hill

The day started at Uncllys Farm by the kind invitation of John and Linda Iles. Rosemary Winnall, gave a short introduction to the biodiversity of the Wyre, and then the group strung out along the Bell Brook and were happily occupied for the whole morning. As usual, the bryologists did not move as quickly as planned and by lunchtime only a short stretch of Bell Brook had been investigated. Eventually, 92 mosses and 26 liverworts were recorded to give a total number of 118 bryophytes found growing along Bell Brook, see Table 1.

Four mosses of particular local interest with less than ten records in the vice-county were:

- ***Archidium alternifolium*** Clay Earth-moss (7 vice-county records to date – found in Wyre on disturbed soil along tracks);
- ***Heterocladium heteropterum var. flaccidum*** Slender Tamarisk-moss (3 vice-county records to date from Knowles Mill, Dowles Brook and Park Brook). This is a very slender moss that forms thin wiry patches on heavily shaded, mildly basic rocks;
- ***Heterocladium heteropterum var. heteropterum*** Wry-leaved Tamarisk-moss (6 vice-county records to date from Knowles Mill and Seckley Ravine). Dark green patches found on damp, acid to mildly basic rocks; and
- ***Sphagnum inundatum*** Lesser Cow-horn Bog-moss (4 vice-county records to date; previously recorded in Dowles Brook valley, Great Bog, Hartlebury Common and the Clent Hills. This record was found along the track back to Uncllys Farm).

Six liverworts of particular local interest with less than ten records in the vice-county were:

- ***Bazzania trilobata*** Greater Whipwort (8 vice-county records to date: previously recorded along Dowles Brook and Park Brook. *Bazzania trilobata* is a striking plant with large three-toothed leaves curling down on either side of the stem);
- ***Calypogeia muelleriana*** Mueller's Pouchwort (7 vice-county records to date; previously recorded in Wyre on base-poor substrate along Baveney Brook, Dowles Brook, Knowles Coppice and Hitterhill Coppice);
- ***Frullania tamarisci*** Tamarisk Scalewort (9 vice-county records to date; previously recorded in Wyre on shaded rocks and trees along Dowles Brook and Park Brook);

Table 1: Mosses and Liverworts recorded in acid woodland and stream habitats along Bell Brook on 23rd April 2023 by recorders from the British Bryological Society.

MOSSES		
Amblystegium serpens var. serpens	*Fissidens pusillus*	*Platyhypnidium riparioides*
Archidium alternifolium	*Fissidens taxifolius*	*Pleuridium acuminatum*
Atrichum undulatum var. undulatum	*Funaria hygrometrica*	*Pleuridium subulatum*
Barbula unguiculata	*Grimmia pulvinata*	*Pleurozium schreberi*
Brachythecium rivulare	*Heterocladium heteropterum var. flaccidum*	*Pohlia wahlenbergii var. wahlenbergii*
Brachythecium rutabulum	*Heterocladium heteropterum var. heteropterum*	*Polytrichum formosum*
Bryum argenteum	*Homalothecium sericeum*	*Polytrichum juniperinum*
Bryum capillare	*Hookeria lucens*	*Pseudocrossidium hornschuchianum*
Bryum dichotomum	*Hygroamblystegium tenax*	*Pseudocrossidium revolutum*
Bryum radiculosum	*Hygrohypnum luridum*	*Pseudoscleropodium purum*
Calliergonella cuspidata	*Hypnum cupressiforme var. cupressiforme*	*Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans*
Calliergonella lindbergii	*Hypnum cupressiforme var. resupinatum*	*Rhizomnium punctatum*
Campylopus flexuosus	*Hypnum jutlandicum*	*Rhynchostegium confertum*
Campylopus introflexus	*Isothecium alopecuroides*	*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*
Campylopus pyriformis	*Isothecium myosuroides*	*Schistidium crassipilum*
Ceratodon purpureus	*Kindbergia praelonga*	*Sciuro-hypnum plumosum*
Cratoneuron filicinum	*Leskea polycarpa*	*Sphagnum inundatum*
Cryphaea heteromalla	*Leucobryum glaucum*	*Streblotrichum convolutum var. commutatum*
Ctenidium molluscum var. molluscum	*Lewinskya affinis*	*Streblotrichum convolutum var. convolutum*
Dichodontium pellucidum	*Mnium hornum*	*Syntrichia latifolia*
Dicranella heteromalla	*Orthodontium lineare*	*Syntrichia montana var. montana*
Dicranoweisia cirrata	*Orthotrichum anomalum*	*Syntrichia ruralis var. ruralis*
Dicranum majus	*Orthotrichum diaphanum*	*Tetraphis pellucida*
Dicranum scoparium	*Oxyrrhynchium hians*	*Thamnobryum alopecurum*
Didymodon luridus	*Palustriella commutata*	*Thuidium tamariscinum*
Didymodon nicholsonii	*Plagiomnium rostratum*	*Tortula muralis*
Didymodon vinealis	*Plagiomnium undulatum*	*Tortula truncata*
Eurhynchium striatum	*Plagiothecium denticulatum var. denticulatum*	*Trichostomum crispulum*
Fissidens adianthoides	*Plagiothecium nemorale*	*Ulota bruchii*
Fissidens bryoides var. bryoides	*Plagiothecium succulentum*	*Zygodon conoideus var. conoideus*
Fissidens dubius	*Plagiothecium undulatum*	

LIVERWORTS
Bazzania trilobata
Calypogeia arguta
Calypogeia fissa
Calypogeia muelleriana
Cephalozia bicuspidata
Cephalozia curvifolia
Chiloscyphus polyanthos
Conocephalum conicum
Diplophyllum albicans
Frullania dilatata
Frullania tamarisci
Jungermannia atrovirens
Jungermannia pumila
Lejeunea lamacerina
Lepidozia reptans
Lophocolea bidentata
Lophocolea heterophylla
Metzgeria furcata
Orthocaulis attenuatus
Pellia endiviifolia
Pellia epiphylla
Plagiochila asplenioides
Plagiochila porelloides
Radula complanata
Saccogyna viticulosa
Scapania undulata

- ***Jungermannia pumila*** Dwarf Flapwort (4 vice-county records to date from Park Brook, the Great Bog and on a north-facing bank down to Dowles Brook. This small to medium sized liverwort is common in the north and west of the country and there is no climatic reason why it is absent from much of southern England: it is probably overlooked);
- ***Orthocaulis attenuatus*** Trunk Pawwort (7 vice-county records to date. The liverwort used to be known as ***Barbilophozia attenuata***. The plant was previously recorded in Hitterhill Coppice by the BBS in 2004); and
- ***Scapania undulata*** Water Earwort (9 vice-county records to date. An aquatic liverwort previously recorded in Dowles Brook, Park Brook and Seckley Ravine).

Of particular interest was a bryophilous fungus found growing at the base of an oak tree on a cushion of *Leucobryum glaucum*. A sample of the microfungi was collected and posted to George Grieff for expert advice (George keeps a herbarium of bryophilous fungi found in Britain and Ireland). It was confirmed that the plant had masses of rhizoids atop female shoots bearing sterile archegonia, along with the same kind of fungal mycelium. There were no fungal reproductive structures although the plant was producing new lateral shoots that will eventually replace the infected ones.

After lunch the BBS went to Lodge Hill farm with the intention of recording the bryophytes growing on the ant hills. The large mounds created by the ants can support a typical suite of bryophytes. The recording had only just started when, at 15:00, within a few minutes of arriving in the meadow, everyone's mobile phones began to emit a loud alarm and vibrate as the Government conducted a trial of its Emergency Alerts system. This technological diversion, with its associated discussion, was followed abruptly by a sudden torrential downpour. Very few mosses had been recorded prior to all the diversions, see Table 2.

Table 2: Mosses recorded on ant hills in Lodge Hill farm meadow, Wyre Forest on 23rd April 2023 by recorders from the British Bryological Society.

Taxon Name	Common Name
Barbula unguiculata	Bird's-claw Beard-moss
Bryum rubens	Crimson-tuber Thread-moss
Pleuridium subulatum	Awl-leaved Earth-moss
Weissia brachycarpa var. obliqua	Oblique-mouthed Beardless-moss
Weissia controversa var. controversa	Green-tufted Stubble-moss

However, the pace of recording had fallen off by this stage and the rain pulled a natural curtain over proceedings and brought an end to a very enjoyable weekend. It was time for everyone to make their way back to the cars and to set off for home.

Wyre Forest Study Group



Ant hills in Lodge Hill Meadow Graham Hill



Hookeria lucens Claire Halpin



Leucobryum with fungi Ann Hill



Physcomitrium pyriforme Claire Halpin



Pleurozium schreberi Ann Hill