

stumps were found and these produced *Tetraphis pellucida* with numerous gemma cups, *Lepidozia reptans*, and *Cephalozia bicuspidata*. A luxuriant patch of *Dicranum* suggested *Dicranum majus* but was in fact just very nice *Dicranum scoparium*. When we reached the arable field just before the parking area we stopped, and looked briefly at the patches of moss on the loose soil. A sample taken

at this time, subsequently turned out to be *Bryum sauteri* when determined microscopically.

It had been a good day out, enjoyed by all, and a total of 62 bryophytes (17 liverworts and 45 mosses), was excellent considering that the ghyll stream was in near flood. My special thanks to David Streeter for his help and assistance.

Southern Group

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Snelsmore Common SSSI, Newbury, Berkshire (v.-c. 22). 14th January 2007.

Snelsmore Common is well known by many bryologists, and several BBS members have recorded there over the years. It was the first site that the Southern Group visited back in November 1991 so this was a welcome return visit for Jeff Bates who had recorded there on that occasion, along with Alan Crundwell and others.

Snelsmore Common is a rich mosaic of diverse habitats from valley mire and lowland wet heath to birch woodland, open dry gravelly heath and remnant ancient woodland. Resident Exmoor ponies and visiting Dexter cattle now graze the site, and monthly work parties do the rest in keeping gorse and birch under control.

There was a conservation work party on the day of our visit, and they were having fried parsnips and jacket potatoes over a fire for lunch. We had been advised food wasn't normally allowed on site because of the ponies; but we had special dispensation to eat our packed lunches, so despite being

tempted to defect to their group for the day, we soldiered on and diligently planned for a covert lunch out of sight of the ponies. They could obviously tell the time though, and appeared from nowhere; pestering us endlessly the minute we sat down to eat.

The valley mires are the obvious attraction of the SSSI and a dozen species of *Sphagnum* have been recorded there over time. We too succumbed to 'the magic of the mire' for part of the day, and found ten: *S. capillifolium*, *S. papillosum*, *S. fallax*, *S. palustre*, *S. fimbriatum*, *S. cuspidatum*, *S. compactum*, *S. magellanicum*, *S. subnitens* and *S. denticulatum*. We didn't find the previously recorded *S. flexuosum* or *S. tenellum*.

Other pleasures of the mires, apart from getting side-tracked into finding the rare fungus *Poro-nia punctata* on wet horse dung (alas it was too fresh for any *Splachnum*) were a few waxy thalli of *Aneura pinguis*, large amounts of *Aulacomnium palustre* and occasional stems of *Calliergon stramineum* amongst the *Sphagnum*. At the smaller end of the scale and with close searching, we uncovered

a few patches of the liverworts *Calypogeia sphagnicola*, *C. fissa*, *Cephalozia connivens*, and *Lophozia* sp. (possibly *ventricosa*) (no perianths) which lay hidden at the bases of 'bad-hair-day' tussocks of *Molinia*. We mused over Jeff's feeling that the upper end of the main bog seems drier now than he remembers it 15 years ago.

In addition to the mires, our aim was to seek out mosses and liverworts of the heath, streamlines and woodland. The heath had us pausing over a small patch of *Polytrichum strictum* (*alpestre*), *Dicranum bonjeanii* and *Pleurozium schreberi*. The dominant moss though was *Dicranum scoparium*, which did a good job in cheering up the bleak winter heath with its bright-green silky tufts of combed leaves standing out brilliantly against the matt chocolate-brown of the peat.

The steeply banked streamline was running well after all the recent rain, and we were in the right kind of habitat for refinding *Hookeria lucsens*, apparently seen on the 1991 visit. Indeed we set ourselves the challenge of finding it before lunch but the banks didn't seem wet enough to my mind

and we failed in our quest.

The mixed birch woodland supports rather few epiphytes, but amongst them were *Microlejeunea ulicina* and large colonies of *Platygyrium repens* both on willow, *Bryum subelegans* on elder, and a good patch of *Ulota phyllantha* on oak. We were surprised to find some tufts of *Cryphaea heteromalla* also on an oak, but surmised that the young branches of this small oak were possibly not as acidic as the bark on older oaks. *Leucobryum glaucum* occurred in a modest expanse in one strip of birch woodland and in smaller cushions in other places. Whilst reconnoitring the site I came across a small patch of *Plagiothecium undulatum* and a few tufts of *Climacium dendroides* in a small area of seasonally wet pine/birch woodland.

In summary, a diverse and interesting reserve with hours of fun to be had on a crisp winter's day when your fingers are twitching for a bit of mossing.

I am indebted to Keith Tomey, the Countryside Ranger for permission to record at Snelsmore Common.

Society business

Future meetings of the society

Spring field meeting 2007, Northamptonshire, 12-18 April

Joint local secretaries: Rachel Carter, 6 Church View, Wootton, Northampton NN4 7LJ; tel: 01604 761 894; Joan James, 3 Finedon Hall, Mackworth Drive, Finedon, Wellingborough NN9 5NL; tel: 01933 681044; joint e-mail address: BBSspring2007@googlemail.com.

The headquarters for the meeting will be Moulton

College, which is located just to the north of Northampton. We have reserved 30 en-suite single bedrooms. B&B costs £24 per night. Please e-mail or phone as soon as possible, if you would like to attend the meeting. Evening meals (£5) and packed lunches (£5) are available.

The college website (www.moulton.ac.uk) provides maps and information about accessibility by road and rail. If you do not have Internet access and would like information about the location of,