**Botany Annual Report 2024**

Nationally, 2024 was one of the warmest and wettest on record with several severe storms in parts of the country, but fortunately Rutland escaped the worst of this. It’s not easy to see if any of this had effects on the plant life in the county. The usual flowering plants were reported from the usual areas and there were one or two more unusual records too but we don’t record a sufficient quantity of plants in order to make proper assessments of change, though over time we could probably show some differences in frequency.

In 2024 we received 956 records provided by 18 recorders, a total helped along by records from Leicestershire colleagues. Three particular finds during the year stand out. Undoubtedly the best was **Greater Butterfly Orchid** ( *Platanthera chlorantha*) at Bloody Oaks Quarry. This is the first time the plant has been recorded in Rutland since 2016. Later **Bur Chervil** ( *Anthriscus caucalis )* was found in Oakham Churchyard, and Steve Woodward found **Blue Pimpernel** (*Anagalis* *monelli* )in a field near Clipsham Quarry. **Scarlet Pimperne**l ( *Anagallis arvensis* ) occurs in a blue form but this plant is a distinct relative. The petals have to be examined microscopically in order to be sure of the identification. Steve also discovered **Mediterranean Nettle** ( *Urtica membranacea )* growing as a pavement weed in Oakham.

The year began with a New Year Plant hunt in Ketton Quarry. We found 5 species in flower, but these were overshadowed by some nice finds of fungi and lichen. Launde Wood was visited in April, with **Bluebells** (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta)* in bloom and the usual **Orchids** and **Cuckoo flower**  ( *Cardamine pratensis* ) were showing well in Merry’s Meadows, though there were fewer **Green-winged Orchids** ( *Orchis morio* ) than in 2023. A bioblitz took place in Oakham in June led by Russell Parry and Lindsay Heald and a total of 171 species were found, among them **Sanicle**, ( *Sanicula europea )* **Peach-leaved Bellflower** (*Campanula persicifolia)* and **Knotted Hedge** **Parsley** ( *Torilis nodosa).* Finally a well attended visit to Swaddywell yielded **Ladies** **Autumn Tresses** (*Spiranthes spiralis )* and much **Common** ( *Centaurium eerythraea )*and **Lesser** *(C pulchellum )* **Centuary** and **Yellow-wort** *( Blackstonia perfoliata ).* Sarah Lambert, who led the visit, suggested that this proliferation might be due to the wet spring.

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Compiled and written by RNHS Botanical recorder John Rodgers