

Monthly report Wild Flower Group January 2023 for February Forum

We started off the wild flower group walks early on 3rd January 23. This was a first for the Wild Flower Group as we normally start our programme of wild flower walks in April and have a tree identification walk in the February as there is so little to see early in the year. In 2022 Celia and I tried out the New Year Plant Hunt and were pleasantly surprised to find some plants in flower and so thought it worth adding as a group walk.

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) hold the New Year Plant Hunt early in the year and are tracking the changes over time. In the south of England, the numbers of plants seen in flower are much higher than those in the north due to the milder climate.

Ten hardly people met near the Tees in Barnard Castle. The forecast for the day was wet but in the end we were damp but not soaked through. Most of the plants that we saw were around the edge of the town as this is the most sheltered part. We followed the river to Abbey Bridge and returned along the other side.

In all we saw 16 plants in flower which was more than we expected. The previous year Celia and I had spotted 21 plants, we think the difference is due to the very cold spell in the middle of December 22 which has finished off some of the flowers. The BSBI website has an entry for Bishop Auckland, and they found 18 plants in flower.

We saw 2 cormorants and 2 herons as we walked by the river. It was dusk as we finished and as some of us were walking back home a young tawny owl flew over us and watched us from a tree by Parsons Lonnen.

In February we are holding a tree identification workshop and walk on 9th February in conjunction with the North Pennines AONB Partnership, this event is fully booked.

On 1st March 2023 we are meeting at Hayberries Nature reserve at 2.00pm to look at lower plant groups mosses and lichens.