

**Journal
of the
HARDY ORCHID SOCIETY**



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The Hardy Orchid Society

Our aim is to promote interest in the study of Native European Orchids and those from similar temperate climates throughout the world. We cover such varied aspects as field study, cultivation and propagation, photography, taxonomy and systematics, and practical conservation. We welcome articles relating to any of these subjects, which will be considered for publication by the editorial committee. Please send your submissions to the Editor, and please structure your text according to the "Advice to Authors" (see website www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk, January 2004 Journal, Members' Handbook or contact the Editor). Views expressed in journal articles are those of their author(s) and may not reflect those of HOS.

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Front Cover Photograph

Ophrys lacaitae by Robert Thompson - see article on the Central Apennines of Italy on page 22.

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Editorial Note

This *JHOS* carries some articles with a conservation focus, something that the Committee are keen to promote within the Society. The major travel article again features the orchidological delights of Italy with more of Robert Thompson's super photography. Whilst with Italy, do note the trip advert from our other regular Italy contributor Paul Harcourt Davies, who will be back in the next issue of *JHOS*. As well as Richard Mielcarek's piece on varied flowers on the same *Ophrys* spike, a similar observation for *O. apifera* var. *botteronii* from early in July 2011 was sent in by Robert Kempster.

Chairman's Note

Celia Wright

As we come to the end of another year, it's time to look back and also forwards. I'll start with our meetings as they are an important part of the Society's activities, much enjoyed by those who are able to attend. I wrote in October of the excellent meeting at St Chad's in September and we plan to return to that venue in 2012. The meeting at Capel Manor at the end of October also provided an enjoyable programme from which I, for one, learned a lot. I should do better with growing my *Calanthes* in future and I think a number of members have decided to try growing some

Australian hardy orchids. The venue was less successful than we had hoped, particularly the poor visibility of the screen in the lectures. For this reason, we shall not return to Capel Manor in 2012 but will instead have both spring and autumn meetings at Kidlington. I will be looking for a suitable autumn venue further south for 2013, aiming for somewhere nearer to our original Wisley venue. All ideas would be welcome – soon please, as bookings often have to be made more than a year in advance. As we plan these meetings, I am as always looking for suggestions for speakers, so do get in touch with me if you're willing to talk or know someone else who might. I also appreciate suggestions of topics for meetings, so please let me have your suggestions for these as well and I'll try to find a suitable speaker.

As usual, we shall have our annual Plant Show at the AGM at Kidlington in April. I'd like to encourage as many members as possible to enter plants. Don't be worried if you've never shown a plant before; there are classes for beginners, so you don't have to put your plant up against those of the expert growers. We also have a non-competitive class for those who would like simply to show plants they have grown without competing. Entries in this class have added considerably to everyone's enjoyment of the Show in recent years, so do take part if you can. I will end by thanking you all for your help and support in 2011 and wish you a good 2012, with plenty of orchids to enjoy.



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Meetings in 2012

Sunday April 22nd: AGM and Spring Meeting at Kidlington
Saturday September 15th: Northern Meeting at St Chad's, Leeds
Sunday November 18th: Autumn Southern Meeting at Kidlington

Photographic Competition 2011

Class 1. A wide area view (landscape or habitat) showing orchids in their natural environment, print size up to 7x5 inches (11 entries)

- 1st Alan Blackman - *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (France)
- 2nd Tony Hughes - *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Austria)
- 3rd Diana Hughes - *Serapias* sp. (Turkey)

Class 2. A group of at least three orchid plants. These can be all the same species/hybrids or a mixed group, print size up to 7x5 inches (12 entries)

- 1st Patrick Marks - *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Corfu)
- 2nd Walter Kemp - *Orchis anatolica* (Chios)
- 3rd David Pearce - *Epipactis atrorubens* (Durham)

Class 3. A single orchid plant, usually the single stem arising from one tuber, print size up to 7x5 inches (see Rule 9) (12 entries)

- 1st David Pearce - *Anacamptis morio* (Sussex)
- 2nd Walter Kemp - *Orchis anatolica* (Chios)
- 3rd Hilary Pickersgill - *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Lancashire)

Class 4. A close-up of an orchid, print size up to 7x5 inches (see Rule 8) (17 entries)

- 1st Tony Hughes - *Orchis italica* (Turkey)
- 2nd Walter Kemp - *Limodorum abortivum* (Chios)
- 3rd Alan Gendle - *Ophrys heldreichii* (Greece)

Class 5. A wide area view (landscape or habitat) showing orchids in their natural environment, print size up to A4 (10 entries)

- 1st Tony Hughes - *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Austria)
- 2nd Patrick Marks - *Dactylorhiza purpurella* (Durness)
- 3rd Tom Turner - *Orchis anthropophora* (Surrey)

Class 6. A group of at least three orchid plants. These can be all the same species/hybrids or a mixed group, print size up to A4 (10 entries)

- 1st Alan Gendle - *Dactylorhiza* ×*venusta* (Cumbria)
- 2nd Karen Gregory - *Orchis purpurea* (France)
- 3rd Eric Gendle - *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (South Gare, Cleveland)

Class 7. A single orchid plant, usually the single stem arising from one tuber, print size up to A4 (see Rule 9) (15 entries)

- 1st Nigel Johnson - *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* (Outer Hebrides)
- 2nd Gillian Elsom - *Spiranthes spiralis* (New Forest)
- 3rd David Pearce - *Pseudorchis albida* (Scotland)

Class 8. A close-up of an orchid, print size up to A4 (see Rule 8) (16 entries)

- 1st Nigel Johnson - *Spiranthes cernua* (cultivated plant)
- 2nd Tony Hughes - *Ophrys minoa* (Turkey)
- 3rd Eleanor Coate - *Ophrys insectifera* (Sussex)

Class 9. A wide area view (landscape or habitat) showing orchids in their natural environment, maximum size 1400 pixels wide and 1050 pixels high in jpeg form (21 entries)

- 1st Graham Giles - *Orchis italica* (Greece)
- 2nd Patrick Marks - *Dactylorhiza maculata* (Sutherland)
- 3rd David Frost - (Ingleborough)

Class 10. A group of at least three orchid plants. These can be all the same species/hybrids or a mixed group, maximum size 1400 pixels wide and 1050 pixels high in jpeg form (20 entries)

- 1st Graham Giles - *Orchis ustulata* (Kent)
- 2nd Alan Pearson - *Spiranthes spiralis* (Karpathos, Greece)
- 3rd Mike Lutener - *Dactylorhiza majalis* (France)

Class 11. A single orchid plant, usually the single stem arising from one tuber (see Rule 9), maximum size 1400 pixels wide and 1050 pixels high in jpeg form (21 entries)

- 1st Graham Giles - *Epipactis purpurea* var. *rosea* (Buckinghamshire)
- 2nd David Pearce - *Epipactis atrorubens* (Durham)
- 3rd Alan Bousfield - *Epipactis atrorubens* (Yorkshire)

Class 12. A close-up of an orchid (see Rule 8), maximum size 1400 pixels wide and 1050 pixels high in jpeg form (31 entries)

- 1st Colin Scrutton - *Epipogium aphyllum* (Germany)
- 2nd Mike Lutener - *Orchis tridentata* (France)
- 3rd David Hughes - *Orchis militaris* (France)

Class 13. Novice Class, any hardy orchid print, size up to A4 (see Rule 10) (8 entries)

- 1st Karen Gregory - *Ophrys scolopax* (France)
- 2nd Walter Kemp - *Neottia nidus-avis* (France)
- 3rd Hilary Pickersgill - *Ophrys apifera* var. *trollii* (Buckinghamshire)

Maren Talbot Trophy awarded to Colin Scrutton for his Class 12 winning entry

Our Thanks to the Competition Judge, Peter Brandham

The following three pages feature first placed winning images. Photographs are identified by a number, the first of which indicates the relevant class.







Field Meetings 2012 Malcolm Brownsword

The 2012 programme of field meetings commences on 28 April with a visit to Purbeck. Basic details of nine meetings can be seen below. As always, only HOS members are eligible to attend. Membership numbers should be supplied to the local field meeting leader when applying to attend. Numbers are limited to a maximum of 15 unless otherwise stated. Members are responsible for their own safety and must ensure that they are suitably equipped for the conditions to be encountered. Packed lunches are usually required. Occasionally a leader may change the date of a field trip at the last minute due to earlier or later than expected flowering, in which case appropriate warning will be given. It is the Society's policy, where appropriate, for leaders to ask members to make a donation (£3 per person is suggested) to organisations such as Wildlife Trusts allowing access to their property. **It is important that orchids and orchid sites are not damaged by HOS members.**

For full details, and to book a place, please contact the appropriate local leader by e-mail. For those not on e-mail, write to Malcolm Brownsword, 14, Manor Close, West Hagbourne, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 0NQ. There is usually a great demand for places, so to avoid disappointment, book early. Contact Malcolm Brownsword if you have a general query (malcolm.brownsword@tesco.net), and particularly if you are willing to lead a field trip in the future.

Saturday 28th April: Purbeck. A stiff coastal walk on Dorset's Isle of Purbeck to see *Ophrys sphegodes* and other early-flowering orchids.
Contact David Hughes davidcchughes@talktalk.net

Sunday 20th May: Derbyshire Dales, to see vast numbers of Early Purple Orchids, and a few of the white form, in spectacular scenery. Also other interesting plants and general wildlife. Contact Cathryn Frost cathryn.frost@w3z.co.uk

Sunday 27th May: Shropshire, near Oswestry, to visit an ancient hay meadow with 6 species of orchid, notably Frog Orchid as well as many other plants, followed by a visit in the afternoon to a nearby nature reserve. Led by Marylyn and Malcolm Howard.

Contact the field meetings co-ordinator malcolm.brownsword@tesco.net

Wednesday 30th May: Suffolk, for a private visit to the East Anglian Military Orchid site plus another location for early flowering fen habitat *Dactylorhiza*.
Contact Mike Gasson moorend@globalnet.co.uk

Saturday 23rd June: East Kent to see Lizard Orchid, *Ophrys fuciflora*, *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and other rare plants.
Contact Alan Blackman alanophrys@aol.com

Sunday 8th July: Oxfordshire: near Abingdon to visit a flooded gravel pit to see thousands of Marsh Helleborines and a few Chalk Fragrant Orchids as well as commoner orchid species, then a nearby fen for Southern Marsh and Pugsley's Marsh Orchids as well as more Chalk Fragrant Orchids. There are also day-flying Scarlet Tiger moths here, as well as bog plants such as sundew. Wellies essential. Contact Malcolm Brownsword malcolm.brownsword@tesco.net

Wednesday 25th July: Grasmere, Cumbria for Bog Orchid. This involves walking to an altitude of about 800 feet above Grasmere. Contact Alan Gendle alan@gendle.plus.com

Sunday 29th July: Buckinghamshire, near High Wycombe, to see Violet Helleborine, including the *rosea* form. This field trip will be an afternoon one, and is limited to 10 members. Wasps are frequently seen pollinating them in this area. Contact Malcolm Brownsword malcolm.brownsword@tesco.net

Sunday 5th August: Near Bridgend, Glamorgan, to see late-flowering helleborines such as *Epipactis helleborine* and its *neerlandica* variety, and *Epipactis phyllanthes* and its *cambrensis* variety. There is also the possibility of seeing the three late-flowering varieties of *Epipactis palustris*: *ochroleuca*, *albiflora* and *ericetorum*. Contact Mike Clark mj-dgclarkwildlife@hotmail.co.uk

A Glimpse in an Orchidological Mirror Book Review by Richard Bateman



Magyarország orchideáinak atlasza [Orchid Atlas of Hungary] by Attila V. Molnár (2011), Kossuth Kiadó, Budapest. Hardback. ISBN 978-963-09-6694-8. 504 pp. RRP £40.00 [estimated].

The quality of the best of the orchid books published in recent years has set the bar so high that it can now be reached only by an olympic pole-vaulter. I would place within that lofty category this superb new book cataloguing the orchid flora of Hungary. Reminiscent of the excellent orchid flora of France and the Low Countries edited by Bournérias & Prat (2005) but a little larger in page size (approaching A4), Attila Molnár's lavishly illustrated labour of love scores highly on both content and presentation.

Although the bulk of the text is ostensibly a conventional systematic account of the orchid species found in Hungary, the species accounts are lavishly illustrated and supported by much scientific detail. The main conclusion I could draw was that,

despite the intervening 1500 km, the orchid floras of the British Isles and Hungary are strikingly similar; much the same spectrum of species occupy much the same habitats and even flower in much the same periods. The parallels between the British and Hungarian orchid floras even extend as far as shared extirpations, both countries having lost *Spiranthes aestivalis* in the mid-20th Century. Admittedly, Hungary can lay claim to a dozen more species than are recognised in the UK, though this inflated figure is aided by several locally distributed *Epipactis* species that require deeper scientific exploration. The most notable Hungarian additions are *Limodorum abortivum*, *Traunsteinera globosa*, *Orchis pallens*, *Himantoglossum adriaticum*, *H. caprinum*, *Anacamptis palustris s.l.*, *A. coriophora* and *Ophrys oestriifera* (*O. fuciflora* with overgrown horns!).

The extensive Hungarian text discussing each species is suffixed with a short German abstract and a Hungary-focused mini-bibliography. Each individual treatment includes quantitative diagrams summarising soil pH and flowering time, and at least one elegant full-page portrait. Considered together with the habitat descriptions, the detailed distribution maps (resembling those found in the equivalent UK plant atlas) offer a useful guide to anyone planning an orchid-hunting trip to Hungary. Most species are concentrated within striking distance of Budapest, in the partly limestone uplands of the Inner Western Carpathians – hills that are aligned WSW–ENE and constitute the geographic backbone of the country.

Even more impressive is the ‘introductory’ portion of the book, which overlaps considerably in style and content with not only Bournérias & Prat’s (2005) French flora but also Kretzschmar *et al.*’s (2006) monograph of *Orchis s.l.* and the more recent macrophotographic treatise on European orchid genera by Claessens & Kleynen (2011). Benefiting from contributions provided by no less than three-dozen national / international experts, the first 185 pages of the Hungarian Atlas are devoted to a series of well-researched chapters that could be collectively titled ‘everything you wanted to know about orchids but were afraid to ask’. Beginning with ‘What is an orchid?’, every conceivable topic is covered; examples include hybridisation, morphological variants (terata as well as colour morphs), flower development, pollination, mycorrhizae, life histories and population dynamics, flowering period, habitat preference and habitat change. Several topics are supported by aggregate plates of many images that allow ready comparison of features as unusual as vegetative rosettes, seeds, and even mature and senescent seed capsules.

And these specialist sections are no mere summaries of old knowledge. For example, rather than simply (if laudably) using modern circumscriptions of genera such as *Orchis*, the concepts underlying phylogeny reconstruction and taxonomic circumscriptions are carefully explained before detailing their consequences for understanding of the Hungarian orchid flora. The associated specialist bibliographies are comprehensive, combining publications that are poorly known outside Hungary

with broader international literature. The value of these chapters is further enhanced by the large amount of unpublished information that is presented, including for example recent research on Hungary's interesting populations of *Himantoglossum*. Some of this novelty has been provided by the aforementioned experts, but much originates from Molnár's famously deep commitment to European orchid studies.

Although the net result is (probably!) an enormously useful compendium of information of a relevance that extends well beyond the borders of Hungary, it is unfortunate that the distinct and distant Hungarian language is especially opaque to the eye of a typical English-speaker. Nonetheless, I found that painstakingly scanning passages of text and pasting them into Google Translate generated remarkably intelligible results. Admittedly, the intelligibility of the text would have been assisted by routine use of Linnean binomials rather than Hungarian colloquial names; these demand time-consuming cross-referencing that could easily have been avoided. Given these linguistic challenges, it is fortunate that the book is so well illustrated, the production quality being only slightly undermined by colour imbalances in a few images and the suboptimal aesthetics of the cover.

The one key issue that remains obscure is how an enthusiast can easily obtain this appealing book. It is advertised within Hungary for a sum equivalent to £31 – an astonishingly good price for a hardback of this size, production quality and, above all, usefulness. But precisely how us foreigners can purchase the book without suffering fiscally punitive conversion and postal charges is not yet clear to me.

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Orchid Meadow

Website: www.orchidmeadow.co.uk

e-mail: Anthony.heys@sky.com

Herbivore Pressure on Orchid Populations – Nippers Re-visited David Johnson

Mike Gasson has raised the issue of the tremendous pressure put on our native orchid populations by browsing herbivores in his last two Editorial Notes (*JHOS* 8 [3] 75 and *JHOS* 8 [4] 111). Mike referred back to one of the HOS field trips led in Kent by Alan Blackman in 2007 (*JHOS* 4 [4] 139), when Alan was forced to abandon his intended visit to a particularly fine *Orchis purpurea* site in East Kent because all the flowers had been eaten off; he considered this to be the work of Muntjac deer. Speculation arose as to the actual culprits and Derek Larter, who knew the site well, mused whether the “Nippers” could be badgers or birds (*JHOS* 5 [1] 23). Alan Blackman later took the matter a little further (*JHOS* 5 [2] 40), pointing out that he not only found whole flower spikes of the Lady Orchids had been eaten, but also individual flowers had been removed, leaving the remains of the ovary attached to the still erect stems. He thought it unlikely that badgers or birds were responsible since they are not vegetarians. No firm conclusions were drawn, and it was hoped that further observations might throw more light on the situation.

I am very familiar with the *Orchis purpurea* site which Alan and Derek discussed in their earlier *JHOS* articles, and sadly have to report that the devastation to the Lady Orchid population there has been almost total for the past two or three years. Certainly in May 2011 when I visited, I could find no Lady Orchids flowering on the site in a year when this species flowered quite well elsewhere right across the county. As Alan intimated, it appears *O. purpurea* is a particularly juicy morsel for herbivores, since the extremely large population of Common Twayblades (*Neottia ovata*) seem to flower untouched, as do the several clumps of Bird’s-nest Orchids (*Neottia nidus-avis*), which regularly flower on the site.

Who is the villain of the piece? Alan thinks it may be Muntjac deer, and I agree that deer species must be heavily involved, but I would also suggest that the humble bunny cannot be ignored. A small colony of Lesser Butterfly-orchids (*Platanthera bifolia*) flower across the road only a few hundred metres from the Lady Orchid colony. They are regularly attacked by a large ambient rabbit population, and unfortunately, only a few flowering spikes of *P. bifolia* manage to survive each year. Several other Lady Orchid colonies that I monitor suffer rabbit damage, so I know that rabbits have a taste for “Our Lady”. One such colony of Lady Orchids at Cuxton (near Rochester) was suffering severe rabbit damage, but the site’s Plantlife warden organised local volunteers to erect brushwood barriers around the main part of the colony, and I am pleased to report that in 2011, 30–40 plants flowered happily within the barriers, whilst most of those plants outside the barriers were rabbit grazed.

Returning to the East Kent *O. purpurea* site, which is in beech woodland, Alan said that in 2007 some complete flower spikes were eaten, but other stems were left

standing with only the florets “very neatly chewed off”. I agree that in those instances, deer must have been the culprits, as rabbits tend to chew off flower spikes whilst they are still close to the ground. Possibly both deer and rabbits have combined to wreak havoc on this fine Lady Orchid population, which regularly used to hold in excess of 1000 flowering plants. It is of particular concern since this large colony held far more colour and lip-shaped variants than any other Lady Orchid colony I have ever seen. Several of the true var. *albiflora* with a white lip and green hood could always be found, together with a huge range of colour variants. Also, lip variants were frequent, and occasionally some plants could be found with long-waisted florets resembling what has been termed var. *militariformis* (remnants perhaps of a past Kentish *O. militaris* population?).

I have not personally witnessed the phenomenon which Alan mentioned of individual florets being neatly removed from the otherwise undamaged spikes of Lady Orchids, but a couple of years ago, I did notice such an occurrence with Violet Helleborines (*Epipactis purpurata*). In late July 2009, I saw two fine spikes of Violet Helleborine in full flower at High Elms close to Darwin’s famous “Orchis Bank” at Downe (Bromley). To my surprise, on re-visiting some 10 days later, both spikes were still standing, but all the florets had been stripped off! As the spikes stood over 60 cm high, I can only assume they had been browsed by deer, of which I understand there are several species around the High Elms area.

From my own observations in Kent, I would suggest that there has been a massive increase in deer numbers in recent years and they have become a growing problem for many of our flowering plants, and in particular for our woodland species of orchid. Rabbits have always posed a threat, more perhaps to our downland and grassland orchids, but they will enter woodland margins and glades, and seem to “enjoy” many orchids. Fences and barriers can help to keep rabbits at bay, but not so with deer, although I understand Muntjac will only get over relatively low barriers. A problem indeed where large numbers of orchids are involved and caging is not a practical proposition.

Lost Ladies – Does It Matter? Mike Gasson

As David Johnson mentions, I made a point of drawing attention to the plight of one of the biggest and best Lady Orchid populations in Kent. My reasons were two-fold. First, for the past few years I have taken an interest in the impacts of deer on the flora of remnant ancient woodland in Norfolk, noting in particular the damage done to orchids by the introduced Reeves Muntjac. Second, I have a special affection for the species – one of my earliest, most memorable and formative orchid trips involved an overnight drive and wait until dawn for a first encounter with *Orchis purpurea*. I was

rewarded with a glorious late spring morning, trees bathed in dappled sunlight and a young badger family out for a frolic, oblivious to my presence in their back yard. The “Ladies” were spectacular and numerous; perfect flowering plants displaying subtle variations of colour and anthropomorphic form. And there was the bonus of albinos, whose flowers sported lime green hoods in place of the usual deep purple. Mornings like this remain in the memory and make a long drive and forfeited sleep massively worthwhile.

In the past, *JHOS* has carried several references to the destruction of Lady Orchid flowering spikes at one of their best sites, with various theories about the culprits aired. As David suggests, there may be several “players”, although I share Alan Blackman’s view that the Muntjac probably plays a major role. A while ago at a HOS Meeting, Alan staged a photographic exhibit that nicely illustrated the fact that this particular colony shows extensive morphological variation in its flowers, something that David also notes in his article. Furthermore, this is one of the largest populations in Kent. The preserved diaries of the botanist Francis Rose illustrate this well, with estimates of 3-4000 plants in 1991, 2000 in 1993, 1000 inflorescences in 1996, 2000 and seen to be “sub-dominant in parts of the wood” in 1999.

Contrast this with recent years when hardly an inflorescence has survived to set seed. One might argue that tubers remain to provide plants in another year but obviously the recruitment of new plants from seed is eliminated. Hence, sustained selective “herbivory” on an ageing orchid population may ultimately lead to its loss. Does this matter? There are other large colonies and a significant number of additional sites in Kent, as well as a few outpost plants elsewhere. But do we actually know the current status of *O. purpurea* across its remaining sites? Of possibly greater significance for the population in question is the extent to which its large size, long history and acknowledged phenotypic diversity indicate an important gene pool that could be relevant to future adaptability of the species. If this really is an unusually diverse colony then arguments about genetic conservation come into play and indicate that the preservation of its plants and/or its gene pool warrants serious consideration. The cause of extensive herbivore damage could be investigated further. In the deer-afflicted woods that the Norfolk Wildlife Trust manages we have used exclusion cages to differentiate rabbit and deer browse. Also, it seems worthwhile to decide whether this particular population has real significance as an unusually diverse genetic reservoir, as that would trump even its status as the location of a very large number of individual plants. Overall a case might be made for some form of site management to preserve at least a part of this important colony of Lady Orchids.

Photographs of *Orchis purpurea* inflorescences taken in seasons prior to their loss due to herbivore pressure. This illustrates the extensive phenotypic variation that is characteristic of this colony.

Photos by Alan Blackman (1-7) and Mike Gasson (8-9)





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***Orchis mascula* – Observations and Questions**

Nigel and Lois Harbron

Although *Orchis mascula* is one of the more common of British orchids, we are sure we are not alone in greeting its appearance each Spring as, in most places, it is the first orchid to appear and, of course, heralds the beginning of another orchid season. It hardly needs to be said that it is also an extremely attractive plant.

Since 1999, we have been Honorary Managers of Cumbria Wildlife Trust’s Argill Woods Nature Reserve - a small (7.4 ha), rather linear reserve comprising stretches of ancient woodland interspersed with small meadows/pastures - and we have been able to monitor with a degree of accuracy the comings and goings of *O. mascula* on the reserve. Argill Woods is an upland reserve in the North Pennines and is of mixed geology. There are tufa-forming springs towards the east end of the reserve (reflecting the presence of limestone in the area), but there are also red sandstone outcrops to the west, and coal measures run through the reserve. The soil can be heavy, with clay in many areas. *O. mascula* appears throughout the reserve, particularly in the wooded areas. We have tried to count flowering spikes since 1999, but accuracy may have been compromised by several factors. We have, inevitably, increased our knowledge of where to look over the years and because the flowering season is late and usually quite short (just two weeks for many plants), even a week’s difference in visiting time can make a big difference. Also, the growth pattern of other plants (particularly *Allium ursinum*) can make it difficult to spot less robust plants.

Approximate Numbers of Flowering Spikes (mid-May +/- a week)

1999	43	2000	44
2002	59	2003	53
2004	42	2005	63
2006	84	2007	60
2008	92	2009	53
2010	61	2011	51

The reserve was closed in 2001 during the Foot and Mouth outbreak. During 1999 and 2000 some stray sheep were trapped on the reserve, and probably put paid to some orchid spikes.

Observations and Questions:

Some researchers, such as Lang (2004), suggest that *O. mascula* is normally mono-carpic but others, such as Etlinger (1997), disagree. Our observations support the latter view. Apparently, there are occurrences of vegetative reproduction (Harrap & Harrap 2005) but we hadn't seen this at Argill until this year (possibly - see photograph!). **Q: How common is vegetative reproduction?**

Some specific flowering plants at Argill have been evident for at least nine years. The Harraps suggest that *O. mascula* may take 4 years to develop leaves, then up to eight years before flowering, but has a maximum life-span of 13 years (from first appearance of leaves). If this is true, then some plants at Argill may well be living on borrowed time! **Q: How long-lived are *O. mascula*?**

Harrap & Harrap (2005) suggest that around 60% of plants flower in successive years. Our observations go some way to support this, but a few plants seem able to flower every year as a matter of course. **Q: Why do some plants flower repeatedly, when others don't?**

A few plants have appeared in areas where they couldn't have been missed in previous years, but have then apparently disappeared for good just a year or two later, despite no obvious change to their habitat. **Q: Why do plants that take so long to establish themselves, come and then go?**

In the time we have been monitoring *O. mascula* at Argill the single most obvious change possibly affecting them has been the increasing spread and vigour of *Allium ursinum*. We suspect that this plant might also be having a negative impact on the few *Epipactis helleborine* on the reserve. **Q: Is *A. ursinum* a threat?**

According to folklore *O. mascula* has spotted leaves as it received drops of Christ's blood during the crucifixion. Foley & Clark (2005) suggest that spotting is less likely in Scotland. Argill is just under 50 miles from the border, and a quick check on plants during 2010 suggested that about 60% were spotted, some only lightly.

Q: Why are some plants spotted when other adjacent ones aren't?

During mild Winters at Argill we have seen *O. mascula* rosettes as early as the middle of December. In 2010, the first didn't appear until early March. **Q: Does early showing lead to more - or less - successful flowering?**

The perceived wisdom seems to suggest that coppiced woodland is an ideal habitat for *O. mascula*. At Argill we have three areas of seemingly identical habitat (i.e. coppiced hazel with occasional mature oak/ash/rowan/birch), all on thin soil and with a similar amount of light coming through the canopy. *O. mascula* does fairly well on two sites but is absent from the third, even though several other species of orchid grow very close to it. **Q: Why is *O. mascula* so fussy?**



Vegetative reproduction in *O. mascula* at Argill Woods NR (left)
Woodland edge *O. mascula* at Argill Woods NR (right)

Most reference books use words such as common, widespread, frequent, etc. to describe the distribution of *O. mascula*. We live in the heart of what is (erroneously) described as the ‘Unspoilt Eden Valley’ but we know of only one plant within a ten mile radius of us. Should there ever be some sort of planning hearing where *O. mascula* is implicated, one can easily see a lawyer quoting the abovementioned adjectives to prove that the site isn’t special. **Q: Is *O. mascula* still widespread and frequent, or are many books living in the past?**

What impact is climate change likely to have on *O. mascula*? Apparently, it grows in North Africa and the Faroe Islands so perhaps it is in a better position than many plants to survive changes in temperature. However, will it cope with what we see as an increasingly inconsistent climate? Argill nowadays is often wetter at times in Summer than it is in Winter, and very dry Springs (particularly that of 2010) seem to be becoming the norm. **Q: Is rainfall a more important factor than temperature as far as *O. mascula* is concerned?**

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Central Apennines – May 16th to 25th 2011
John Spencer, Robert Thompson and Mike Parsons

The rocky spine of Italy could be regarded as one big national park, but our orchid itinerary for 2011 focused on four of the most well-known parks. Travelling from south to north these are: Cilento, Abruzzo, Gran Sasso and Monti Sibillini. The Apennines, (or Appennio as the Italians prefer), are a chain of mountains that form the backbone of the Italian peninsula. They extend some 840 miles / 1,350 km from the region of Liguria in the north, (essentially a continuation of the Maritime Alps) and follow a northwest to southeast orientation to the toe of Italy. This picturesque landscape of rolling hills and meandering paths is complemented by an abundance of atmospheric mediaeval villages, which from a distance appear embedded in the hilltops, making it a photographer's paradise. Orchid hunting by day, and sampling the local wine and cuisine in the evening, completes the Italian experience.



Figure 1: Monte Vettore, Sibillini National Park
Photo by Robert Thompson

The central Apennines, which were our destination for this trip, contain the highest mountains including: Gran Sasso d'Italia at 2,914m (9,560ft), which has a small glacier; La Maiella (2,794m / 9,167ft); Monte Velino (2,487m / 8,159ft); Monte Vettore Sibillini (2,476m / 8,126ft); Terminillo (2,216m/7,273ft); and La Matese (2,050m / 6,728ft). These mountains provide a refuge for much of Italy's most interesting natural history. The climate is essentially continental, but ameliorated by Mediterranean influences, resulting in summers that are normally hot with temperatures often reaching the mid-thirties; the winters are cold with frequent heavy snowfalls.

The flora of the region is largely Mediterranean in its origins, but differs as one would expect with both latitude and altitude, providing a rich diversity of plant life including orchids. With the exception of Lepidoptera, the insect fauna has received less attention, although there are a number of endemic Apennine species. Notable mammals, which are under national protection and occur in several of the larger parks, include the endemic marsican bear, chamois, Apennine wolf, and wild boar. The geology of the landscape is comprised of shales, sandstones and limestones. The woodlands are predominantly oak, beech and pine, surrounded in many areas by placid green (often poppy-rich) meadows and imposing partly forested mountains.



Figure 2: Poppy Meadow, near Capestrano
Photo by Robert Thompson

Our journey started with an early flight from Gatwick to Rome's Fiumicino Airport. After picking up our car we headed south, primarily to see *Ophrys lacaitae* (cover photograph), which had eluded Robert on a previous trip. Our base was a rather picturesque hotel in the coastal town of Agropoli. It was only after we had checked in that we realized that a high-speed railway line passed within yards of the hotel! After refuelling in the hotel's café, we were on our way, exploring a maze of minor roads in the surrounding hills near Orria. The area had been badly hit by landslides, which frequently had us backtracking, but, as the evening light began to fail, we located our target species. The soft evening light complemented the delicate yellow colouring of *Op. lacaitae*, which is less forgiving in bright sunshine. In the surrounding scrubby habitat, we also found *Anacamptis morio*, *A. pyramidalis* and *A. papilionacea* plus *Ophrys lucana*.



The following day saw us returning to the same area, exploring locations which the fading light had prevented us from visiting the previous evening. At Stio we saw three species of *Serapias*: *S. vomeracea*, *S. lingua* and *S. parviflora*, growing on a bank along with *Ophrys apifera*. A little further on *Anacamptis laxiflora* was seen in a damp patch with more *A. pyramidalis* and *Op. lucana*. Near the village of Laurino, we returned to a site, where on a previous visit, we had seen *Ophrys pollinensis*. This species, along with *Orchis simia* and *Orchis quadripunctata* had either gone over, or was going over, but we did find some fresh *Orchis italica* and a small number of the curious *Ophrys posidonia*. From a distance *Op. posidonia* could be mistaken for *Op. tenthredinifera* but close examination shows that it is a member of the *tetraloniae* group. Our last site for the day was a high (800m) chilly “rock garden” on the Piaggine to Teggiano road. Although the cattle had got there before us, there were still plenty of orchids. In addition to species already seen, there were: *Serapias cordigera*, *Neotinea tridentata*, *Anacamptis coriophora*, *Orchis provincialis* and a few of the dainty *Ophrys gracilis*.

With *Op. lacaitae* in the bag and an air of contentment on Robert’s part, we headed north for the Abruzzo National Park located in the heart of the Apennines. The national park was established in 1923, protecting some 400 square kilometres of outstanding natural habitats, with a rich diversity of wildlife. Our accommodation was the excellent Albergo Paradiso, a family-run hotel situated on the outskirts of the picturesque village of Pescasseroli, located in the valley of the River Sangro.

Our first objective was to see the *Cypripedium calceolus* located at the nearby wooded area known as Camosciara (Ferrari, 2011). Our searches turned up *Orchis purpurea*, *Neottia nidus-avis*, *Neottia ovata*, *Cephalanthera longifolia* and more *Anacamptis morio*, some of which had a dark magenta colouring. In addition to the regular *Orchis mascula*, there was the *speciosa* ssp with its long curling sepals. *Dactylorhiza sambucina* was flowering but another *Dactylorhiza*, *D. gervasiana* perhaps, was still at an early stage. A mixed group of *Orchis mascula*, *O. pauciflora* and *O. provincialis* had produced some interesting hybrids. Despite a lengthy search of the area, a flowering slipper still eluded us at this point in the trip, although we did see *Cypripedium* leaves. However, this was not to be the end of the slipper saga.

Nine years previously, the hairpin bends above the town of Alfadena had proved particularly rewarding for us and again this proved to be the case. While many of the

Figure 3: *Anacamptis morio*, near Orria

Figure 4: *Ophrys posidonia*, near Laurino

Figure 5: *Himantoglossum adriaticum*, Alfadena

Figure 6: *Ophrys promontorii*, Alfadena

Photos by Robert Thompson (Figs 3 & 5) and John Spencer (Figs. 4 & 6)

roadside banks in the vicinity were peppered with orchids, one section in particular had hundreds of *Orchis anthropophorum* in full flower. A short distance along, another bend produced hundreds of *Orchis pauciflora* just starting to go over. Here we encountered the first *Neotinea ustulata* of the trip and more *Orchis purpurea*. An adjacent grassy verge produced a partially flowered *Himantoglossum adriaticum*, but a little further on, a single south-facing plant inhabiting a rocky alcove, with its own microclimate, was in full flower. The dark *Ophrys promontorii* were similar to those on the Gargano, if less colourful. Hybrids were seen between *Op. promontorii* and both *Op. bertolonii* and *Op. incubacea*. Mike reported finding a single early *Ophrys majellensis*. There were a small number of *Op. gracilis* in addition to a very varied *Ophrys fuciflora* population with a mosaic of varying lip patterns, providing us with material for a lengthy evening discussion after dinner. In addition to standard *Op. fuciflora*, there were plants which displayed characteristics that indicated both *Op. gracilis* and *Op. apulica* were present in the gene pool. Some plants have been described by others as *Op. brachyotes* or *Op. serotina*, but in our opinion could just as easily be lookalike hybrids. Plants with strongly recurved lips and complex lip markings looked much the same as *Op. fuciflora* var. *dinarica*. We were disappointed not to see the split basal field associated with var. *dinarica* and can't help wondering just how common this feature actually is. However, there is undoubtedly a genetic connection between the plants on either side of the Adriatic.

In what was left of the day, we took the road north from Villetta Barrea as far as Scanno lake. A roadside stop revealed *Orchis pallens* growing with the yellow form of *Dactylorhiza sambucina*, which prompted a double take. Further on, as rain set in, we were brought to a halt by an impressive display of over 100 *Orchis purpurea* growing with more *Ophrys promontorii* and other orchids on a rocky outcrop on a bend in the road. Rain, which by now had become prolonged, forced us back to base where an open fire and aperitif before dinner was a relaxing end to another long and busy day. During dinner we had the good fortune to meet a French lady called Elna Bianchi who makes regular trips to the park throughout the year. We were excited to hear that *C. calceolus* had been seen in flower. As a frequent visitor to the park, she is naturally familiar with the orchids and their locations. The following day, with a little assistance, we did get to see the *Cypripedium calceolus* at Camosciara, but had to settle for a single flowering plant. This small group is a long way removed from the Alps, however the park rangers assured us that this is the remainder of a relict

Figure 7: *Ophrys promontorii*, Alfadena
 Figure 8: *Ophrys fuciflora* var. *dinarica*, Alfadena
 Figure 9: *Dactylorhiza sambucina*, near Scanno
 Photos by Robert Thompson



population as opposed to an introduction. When the shutter buttons finally fell silent, we departed to visit the meadows alongside the road south of Rionero Sannitico, where *Ophrys lacaitae* and *Ophrys gracilis* were growing together and producing attractive hybrids. Seeing *Ophrys lacaitae* again in greater numbers and in a more picturesque setting was an unexpected bonus. Mike turned up a form of *Serapias vomeracea* with an exceptionally long lip, and we recorded *Ophrys bertolonii* and other orchids seen previously.

We could easily have spent the rest of our trip in the Abruzzi, but our whirlwind itinerary demanded that we move north. However, our planned route had to be changed when we encountered a roadblock, manned by the park rangers. Shortly before our trip a bear had been killed by a hit and run driver. A mother and cub had been spotted that morning on our road and a 30km stretch was promptly closed to all traffic. The dwindling bear population (the symbol of the park) is naturally a matter of concern, with only about 50 bears remaining. The Rangers were protective and rightly so. “Better to strike a pedestrian than a bear” a local remarked and we were given an alternative route.



Figure 10 (above): *Cypripedium calceolus*, at Camosciara

Figure 11: *Ophrys lacaitae* × *Ophrys gracilis*, Rionero Sannitico

Figure 12: *Ophrys gracilis*, Alfadena

Figure 13: *Ophrys apifera* var. *bicolor*, near Spoleto

Figure 14: *Orchis pauciflora* × *Orchis mascula* ssp *speciosa* hybrid, Campo Imperatore

Photos by Robert Thompson





Figure 15: Panoramic view of Campo Imperatore
Photo by Robert Thompson

It was a sunny morning and to break our journey north we had a lengthy stop on a hillside above our road just before it disappeared into a tunnel for Cocullo. Here we saw our first *Orchis militaris*. There were several other orchid species, but the only other new one was *Ophrys sphegodes* at the last flower stage. At this site, like many others, the plethora of butterflies was a constant distraction. Species which come readily to mind were: Marsh, Glanville and Spotted Fritillaries, Brimstone, Adonis Blue, Small Blue, Chequered Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Grizzled Skipper and Green Hairstreak. Several day-flying moths including the Mother Shipton were seen among the vegetation.

The highest point in the Apennines is the Gran Sasso d'Italia. Our new base was the former monastery of San Colombo, perched above the town of Barisciano. We lost no time in driving up through a succession of villages to the alpine pastures of Campo Imperatore. In truth, we were too early for the orchids and insects, which are at their best here in June, but the scenery was spectacular. At 1,600m there was an abundance of gentians and pansies, but orchids were in short supply. Only a few *Dactylorhiza sambucina* were starting to open. *Gymnadenia* and *A. pyramidalis* rosettes accompanied a handful of *A. morio* and *Neotinea tridentata*. The tiny *Ophrys sphegodes* were at the first flower stage. As we descended, the orchids become more numerous: hundreds of *Orchis militaris*, a few *O. militaris* × *purpurea* hybrids, thousands of *D. sambucina*, hundreds of *O. pauciflora*, some *O. mascula* ssp *speciosa*, plus *Orchis pauciflora* × *speciosa* hybrids. With so many *D. sambucina*, it was not surprising that we saw some orange-flowering plants, intermediate between the red and yellow forms.

The following day we decided to confine our orchid hunting to lower altitudes and drove to the village of Collepietro and explored large sections of the old road. We saw about 10 species including *Op. promontorii*, *Op. bertolonii* and *N. tridentata*, but nothing that we hadn't seen elsewhere. Below the picturesque Castelvechio were some very large *Himantoglossum adriaticum* in full flower growing with *Cephalanthera damasonium*. A Chequered Blue butterfly was laying eggs and the occasional Southern White Admiral along with a number of Ant-lions patrolled the roads and meadows at speed. A massive *Ophrys sphegodes* was on its 15th and last flower. The “*classica*” form of *Op. sphegodes* has been reported from this area, but we were unable to find plants with prominent basal swellings to the lip (“horns”), a characteristic feature of this early *Ophrys*.

After a second night at the monastery, we headed north to the fourth and last of the national parks: Monti Sibillini, one of the more recently designated parks, located between Umbria and Le Marche. A botanical delight, enriched with a profusion of wild flowers, an abundance of butterflies and insects, and with a backdrop of stunning vistas.

Our final base for the remainder of this trip was in the ancient walled town of Norcia, famed for its ham and architecture. However, the car had issues with the narrow streets and we finished up booking into a hotel just outside the walls and walking into town for dinner. The big attraction here is the Piano Grande; a vast upland plain with magnificent views, which undergoes a botanical metamorphosis each year, producing a sea of colour in the low-lying plains. However, the floral grandeur is not a natural phenomenon, but an artificial creation of cultivated plants; not quite what we were looking for, but nevertheless an impressive sight at the appropriate time of the year.

Our first stop was the slopes above the Abbey of San Eutizio, lured by reports of many thousands of *Orchis pauciflora*. Surprisingly, we failed to find the site but, in trying, built up a list of a dozen orchid species from stops along the road. *Cephalanthera longifolia* was particularly fine here and we saw more *Ophrys fuciflora* var. *dinarica*, similar to the plants at Alfadena. Our drive up to the Piano Grande proved to be a letdown. Great views, but the only colour, on a dull day, down on the plain was provided by a profusion of buttercups. Climbing up we had seen a handful of familiar orchid species, but the descent was more rewarding. We found *Limodorum abortivum* and *Platanthera chlorantha*, both in flower, plus the leaves of what was probably *Epipactis latina*. One of the *Platanthera* had strongly deflexed lips, but was otherwise a typical *chlorantha*.

On our last full day in Italy, we spent the morning exploring minor roads between Norcia and Spoleto. Even at this late stage, we were still adding to our orchid list

with sightings of *Platanthera bifolia*, *Ophrys insectifera* and *Ophrys apifera* var. *bicolor*. In the afternoon we travelled from Spoleto back to Rome (witnessing one of Italy's spectacular thunderstorms) in good time for our flight home.

In conclusion, four national parks in ten days is, to say the least, a hectic schedule impacting not only on the passengers, but also the driver (Robert in this case). The upside is the diversity of sites and habitats you are able to take in. On the downside one is left with only a brief encounter with the landscape, flora and fauna, which deserve more than a casual look. If we were allowed a return visit, but only to one park, it would have to be the Abruzzo. After all, we never got to see the bears!

Our grateful thanks for site information to: Gabriel and Ulrich Müller, Gianpiero Ferrari, Richard Byrne, Richard Manuel, Barry Tattersall and Günther Blaich.

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Variation in Bee Orchids

Richard Mielcarek

I have been intrigued for some time by the variation in Bee Orchids, *Ophrys apifera*; not just the named variants themselves, but the various aberrations that appear and, more recently, the variation between flowers on the same plant. As an example of the latter, the photo gallery on the HOS website shows a plant in Gloucestershire that has an apparent var. *trollii* flower on a stem of otherwise normal flowers.

During June last year, I regularly searched a site on the Mendips, and on the 24th found a Bee Orchid with one open flower that had sepaloid petals. This in itself was not unusual: the site regularly holds such plants of which there were five others in 2011, four attributable to var. *friburgensis* and one to var. *botteronii*. On this particular plant, although the petals were relatively narrow, they were long, more than two-thirds the length of the sepals, and I was happy at the time that it was an example of var. *friburgensis*. The lip of the flower was somewhat unusual, rather elongat-



Ophrys apifera var. *friburgensis*
Somerset 27th June 2011

Top image:-The long sepaloid petals on the lower flower suggest *friburgensis* but the shorter rolled petals on the flower above are not unusual on *O. apifera*.

Lower image:- petals on the top flower are intermediate.

Photo by Richard Mielcarek

ed with the tip not properly curled under, the colour somewhat washed out and speckled with small patches of yellow.

On the 26th Simon Mackie visited and found the second flower had opened; this had a normal lip pattern and the petals, although quite long, were clearly not sepaloid and well within the normal variation of *apifera*. Intrigued I visited again the next day. By now the third, and final, flower had opened and the petals on this were longer and more sepaloid than on the second, making them somewhat intermediate between those on the other two flowers. If I had seen this third flower in isolation I would have been reluctant to claim it as var. *friburgensis*.

It is not that unusual at this site to find differing lip patterns between flowers on the same stalk. This year as well as the var. *botteronii*, which had two completely differently patterned lips on its two flowers, I found two other plants with a single oddly patterned flower on an otherwise normal stem. One was reminiscent of var. *belgarum* whilst the second had a bulbous lip, reminiscent of Late Spider Orchid, with the yellow patterning predominating over the reddish brown.

What I had not previously noticed was any variation in the shape or size of the petals on a plant. Whilst petals clearly vary between plants in the colony (a lot of the plants at this site have unusually long petals) I had not noticed it before between flowers on the same stalk.

These plants are growing on the site of an old lead mine and it may well be that high metal levels in the soil are the cause of this variability.

**Discovery of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* × *Gymnadenia densiflora*
at Kenfig National Nature Reserve
Michael J. Clark**

As we are aware, members of the group called *Dactylorhiza*, the marsh-orchid family, tend to hybridise more than any other orchid group. But intergenetic hybridization, where a hybrid has two parents from two different genera, is less common. On finding three plants in 2009 with an unusual appearance I made a study of the plants in the area and came up with the strong possibility that they were Southern Marsh × Fragrant Orchid – *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Druce) Soó × *Gymnadenia densiflora* (Wahlenberg). I think it is worth noting that I found all three plants contained the fragrance of *Gymnadenia*. The identity of the 2009 plant, shown in the figures, was confirmed by Richard Bateman.



×*Dactylodenia ettlingerana* - the hybrid of Southern Marsh Orchid with
Fragrant Orchid at Kenfig National Nature Reserve, Glamorgan, Wales
Close-up (left) and whole plant (right)
Photos by Mike Clark

Tim Rich of the National Museum of Wales, collected (under licence) the leaves and inflorescence as type specimens. The only previous record of this hybrid known to authors is a single plant found by Derek M. Turner Ettliger and Barry Tattersall in 1981/82 in North Hampshire. I thought it would be appropriate to give this hybrid a scientific name. So, following much discussion and help from Les Lewis, it is described now under the binomial \times *Dactyloдения ettligerana*. Note that the cross between *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and *Gymnadenia conopsea* is \times *Dactyloдения wintonii*. For more detailed information on \times *Dactyloдения ettligerana* consult Clark and Lewis (2011). This article was included in the first issue of the new scientific journal “*New Journal of Botany*”, published by the Botanical Society of the British Isles.

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