



A Month by Month Look at Millie Bank - June 2021

Millie Bank - June

June is bursting out all over.... and there is a lot of evidence of that on Millie Bank!

Star of the Show is this splendid orchid, but it's a puzzling one. It is a hybrid between **Common Spotted** and **Northern Marsh** orchids. Orchids do sometimes hybridise when members of the same family grow near each other, and we do have Common Spotted orchids on Millie Bank, but, as far as we know, the nearest Northern Marsh Orchid is well over three miles away!

Looking up Millie Bank there is a definite red hue to much of the grassland, courtesy of **Common Sorrel**. Although a member of the dock family, it is a welcome sight in any pasture, and indicative of unimproved land.

Despite the drought, there is still plenty of water trickling down Millie Bank, and there is a good population of **Water-cress**, although some will be lost when inevitable drainage work takes place.

Also in the wetter areas, there is an increasing amount of the handsome **Marsh Thistle**. It can become a bit of a nuisance (although nothing like as much as Creeping Thistle), but, if it confines itself to the main wet flush, it can be left in peace, unlike its more robust 'cousin' the Spear Thistle, which is deemed to be 'an injurious weed', and needs controlling.

Right hybrid between **Common Spotted** and **Northern Marsh** orchids.



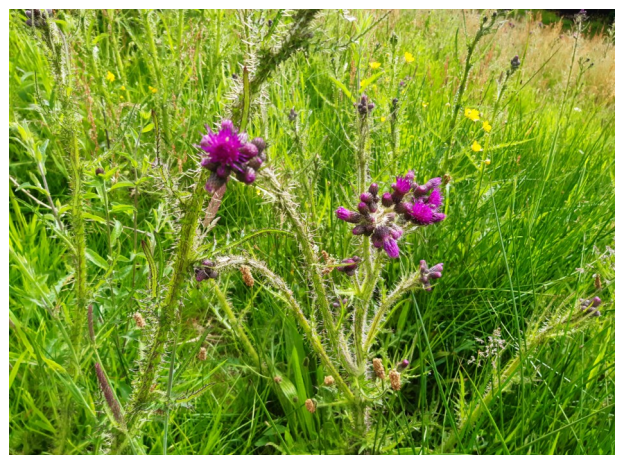
Below **Common Sorrel**.



Right **Water-cress**



Below **Marsh Thistle**





Although common in unimproved fields and verges, **Crosswort** is often overlooked, which is a shame as its intricate little flowers are well worth close inspection. It takes its name from the cross-like arrangement of the leaves on its stems.

Crosswort



Another plant found throughout places like Millie Bank is **Pignut**. It looks a bit like Cow Parsley, but is usually much smaller, and more delicate. As its name suggests, it has an edible tuber.

Pignut

Yellow Rattle

A very welcome new plant this year is **Yellow Rattle**. Seeds



were sown several years ago, but, unfortunately, just before year-round grazing started again, and, as it is an annual, no plants survived. However, last year, seeds were again sown, and now with no Summer grazing, it has flowered, and will disperse its seeds without further human help. It is a plant which is parasitic on grasses, so, in time, reduces tall grass cover, thus creating more opportunities for lower-growing flowering plants.



Yellow Rattle (close up)

Meanwhile back on the hard-standing area, here is a brave clump of **Bird's-foot Trefoil**. Although the flowers are usually yellow, it is not uncommon to find splashes of red amongst them, hence the plant's nick-name: 'bacon and eggs'. Although the area looks barren from a distance, there is a surprising



amount of floral life here, given the absence of top-soil which would encourage grass-growth, and 'thug plants'.

Bird's-foot Trefoil



And finally for now: the Grass of the Month is **Yorkshire Fog**. Identifying grasses is not easy, as nearly all of them are, er, green, but Yorkshire Fog is as much grey as green, with tinges of lilac. When in full flower, a patch of it evokes mist on the moors, hence the name. (It is also a grass wearing 'striped pyjamas'.... the base of the stem is delicately striped in pink and green!) It is not very palatable to grazing animals, but some species of butterflies are partial to it.

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