



A Month by Month Look at Millie Bank - July 2021

We made it to Millie on the 18th. It was a gloriously sunny morning, and the place was buzzing - literally - with insects. Since then we've been a bit busy, so our apologies for the late arrival.

Hogweed



We are going to start with two common species, both considered by some to be 'thug plants', as they can easily dominate an area. At this time of the year, **Hogweed** seems to be growing everywhere there is uncultivated ground, and it is easy to ignore it as you go in search of rarer offerings, but a close look at its flowers is strongly recommended. When doing this, you might well notice the number of insects on it. In a recent bit of research, hogweed was in the top-ten of nectar-producers. It is related to giant hogweed, but is usually much smaller, and is not toxic.

Meadowsweet



Meadowsweet is also at its best in July, usually on damp ground. Like hogweed, it has really attractive flowers and attracts lots of insects. It is a member of the rose family, and seems to have gained its name as it was used to sweeten mead.

Greater Bird's Foot Trefoil

Last month we looked at bird's-foot trefoil; this month it is time for the less common **Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil**, and there is a lot to see in the first boggy bit of Millie Bank. Like its smaller cousin, it can develop reddish patches on its petals as it comes to the end of flowering.



If you look up at the slope of Millie Bank, you should see some hazy yellow patches of **Lady's Bedstraw**. It is a close relative of goosegrass, but doesn't stick to you! It is sweet-smelling, and was used to stuff straw mattresses, hence its name. Unlike the plants mentioned so far, it prefers dry soil which is why it is happy on the well-drained slope.

Lady's bedstraw





Marsh Ragwort

Another yellow plant at its best at present is **Marsh Ragwort**. Now, although beneficial to much wildlife, it is not a plant to be encouraged on grazing land, as it is toxic, although nothing like as much as common ragwort. The best method of control on somewhere like Millie Bank is to pull or cut it when it is coming to the end of flowering and before it can set seed.



Not every plant is yellow at this time of the year, and the delicate blue of the **Harebell**, can often be seen nestling amongst lady's bedstraw. It has a number of other names, the bluebell of Scotland being the commonest, but we prefer 'old man's bell', the old man being the devil.

Harebell



Grass of the month is **Floating Sweet-grass**, *Glyceria fluitans*. This elegant grass grows in the boggy area by the path. It likes ponds, too, where its leaves lie flat on the water, hence the common name.

Floating Sweet-grass

Nigel and Lois Harbron