



## A Month by Month Look at Millie Bank - February 2021

Last month we intimated that there might be plants in flower visible this month, as well as gorse. Certainly, the gorse was showing quite a few more flowers, but we couldn't find any other splashes of colour. Different plants have different triggers when it comes to flowering, but, like humans, not many like to get their delicate bits out when the Beast from the East is howling around!

Winter is a good time to look at ferns and mosses, and first up by the beck is Hart's-tongue fern, this one with a leaf conveniently bent back to show its sori (where it stores its spores).

Nearby, there is a good patch of an attractive moss by name of *Thamnobryum alopecurum*, or Fox-tail Feather-moss. Unlike most mosses which are low-growing this one is a 'dendroid', meaning it grows like a small tree, as can be seen from the picture of the specimen. It's quite happy under water at times, hence its proximity to the Raven.



Hart's tongue fern



Fox-tail Feather-moss



Fox-tail Feather-moss, individual plant





Common Tamarisk-moss



Barren Strawberry



Primrose



Ribwort plantain

Looking more like a typical moss is *Thuidium tamariscinum* (Common Tamarisk-moss). Mosses are really attractive plants, but you might need a small magnifying glass fully to appreciate them.

If flowers in bloom are scarce at the moment, leaves are everywhere. Barren Strawberry is a common Spring flower, usually smaller than the Wild Strawberry, and flowering earlier.

There are still primroses on Millie Bank, mainly in the scrubby area, and their leaves are showing up now, although some are looking a little the worse for wear.

One plant with very distinctive leaves is the aptly-named Ribwort Plantain, a very common species of unimproved grassland. Its flowers are not very colourful, but can be seen throughout Summer and early Autumn. One very attractive Summer flower (and one sometimes mistaken for an orchid) is Betony, and there is plenty of it on Millie Bank. Although not in flower until at least June, its distinctive shiny leaves are on display all year round.

PS: We had good sightings of a grey wagtail, a dipper and a heron.



Betony