



Laytown

Leader: Declan Doogue

18th July 2016

BNFC members met up with members from the **Dublin and Wexford Naturalists' Field Clubs** at the **Sonairte Ecology Centre** in Laytown.

In the afternoon we enjoyed the expertise and enthusiasm of the botanist **Declan Doogue**. In the courtyard he explained how the dominant **Mediterranean Red Valerian** (*Centranthus ruber*) could prevent the growth of our native winter annuals. Another wall-growing alien plant **Ivy-leafed Toadflax** (*Cymbalaria muralis*) could survive being sprayed with weed-killer when native plants did not. The dark yellow **Mediterranean Wallflower** (*Erysimum cheiri*) has been growing on old Irish walls since Norman times. Declan showed us how to identify **Broad-leaved Willowherb** (*Epilobium montanum*)- there are 8 species of Willowherb in Ireland and all hybridise. The rarer **Keeled-fruited Cornsalad** (*Valerianella dentata*) can be distinguished from the **Common Cornsalad** (*V. locustsa*) by its fruit.

We walked through the organic walled garden where we admired a fine yellow **Tree Lupin** (*Lupinus arboreus*) and along the nature trail to the salt marsh on the banks of the tidal **River Nanny**. Here the dominant plant was **Sea Club Rush** (*Bolboschoenus/Scirpus maritimus*) along with **Sea Arrow-grass** (*Triglochin maritima*).

The dominant colour beside the beach was the yellow of **Charlock** (*Sinapis arvensis*) and of **Sea Radish** (*Raphanus raphanistrum ssp. maritimus*) which was full of the invasive Brassica-feeding **Diamond-backed Moths**. Declan showed us how tough rootstocks of **Marram Grass** (*Ammophila arenaria*), **Sand Couch** (*Elytrigia/Elymus juncea*) and **Sand Sedge** (*Carex arenaria*) enable dunes to form. The invasive bluish-green **Lyme Grass** (*Leymus arenarius*) however is having a detrimental effect by allowing shore-growing plants to be washed away.

It has been a late spring - some say our climate is now "a long spring and a long autumn" and **Ladys' Bedstraw** (*Galium verum*) was just coming into flower. Another Bedstraw found was **Hedge Bedstraw** (*Galium mollugo*) which Webb describes as "widespread but very rare". I had once been shown it in Co. Tyrone. Being less than a hundred miles further south can make a noticeable difference to the plants one finds. There was a large clump of **Goatsbeard** (*Tragopogon pratensis*) with its spherical clocks; there were no flowers open - hence its popular name 'Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon'.

Declan was thanked for an afternoon, very interesting and informative for us all.

Margaret Marshall