

Winter Plant Identification and Habitat Assessment Course

5th December 2010



When planning the Winter Plant ID and Habitat Assessment course back in tropical October, we joked that it would be good to have a dusting of snow to add authenticity. But even though too much snow threatened the course, it went ahead on a beautiful sunny morning at Craflwyn, just outside Beddgelert in the heart of Snowdonia.

The course was led by Rod Gritten, formerly the National Park Ecologist and current BSBI recorder for Meirionethshire. After a short introduction, the group of 22 participants headed outside to the frozen shores of Llyn Dinas, where we were introduced to the characteristic woodland, heath and mire habitats surrounding the lake. At this time, especially under several inches of snow, many plants are inconspicuous. Therefore we were drawn to evergreens, dead plant material and even taste to determine characteristics of plants common to these habitats. It was actually surprising what there is to identify at this dormant time of year. From evergreen mosses, ferns, rushes and shrubs to the die back of grasses, trees in bud and heather in leaf, these plants helped us piece together the habitat characteristics and what type of management was taking place.



Apart from seeing and being able to identify a wide range of plants, we also saw some quite special species too. Some of the more notable were a small clump of Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) [Below] growing at only 60 metres above sea level, an iridescent swathe of Wilson's Filmy Ferns (*Hymenophyllum wilsonii*) [Left] growing in a small rock outcrop in an oak woodland and the sweet smelling Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*).

After several enjoyable hours moving carefully through the snowy terrain, it was back to the warmth of field centre for mince pies and hot drinks.



Thank you to all those who braved the weather to attend. Thank you also to Rod for giving us the chance to experience his knowledge and passion for plants in winter.

