

## Assessment of Pilot Pollinator Action Areas -August report 2018

### 1. The Corbally Road Meadow

This site was surveyed again on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2018. Three additional plant species were added to the original (June) list: tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), white melilot (*Melilotus albus*) (Fig. 1), red campion (*Silene dioica*)(Fig. 2) and hybrid knapweed (*C. x moncktonii* [=*Centaurea nigra x jacea*])(Fig. 3). The last species is uncommon in Ireland, and is likely to have originated from the seed mixture used to reseed the site in 2017.

The drought conditions that prevailed through the previous month were relieved by rainfall at the beginning of August, resulting in re-growth of some of the grasses and smaller herbaceous plants. The meadow therefore presented a much greener appearance in August than in July (Fig. 4)

#### 1.1 Value for biodiversity and pollinating insects in August

While the majority of plant species had finished flowering, 28 species were still in flower to some extent (Table 1). Pollinator-friendly plants in flower were less obvious than in July. Wild carrot was still by far the most abundant of these (in area B especially), but red bartsia, yarrow, hybrid knapweed, autumn hawkbit, bird's-foot trefoil, chicory and purple loosestrife (Fig. 5) were also conspicuously in flower. On the meadow margins, rosebay willowherb, butterfly bush, yarrow and hedge and large bindweed were still in flower

#### 1.2 Recommendations for August management.

- Cutting: I originally felt that the meadow should be cut before the end of August. However, given the abundance of wild carrot in flower, I think it would be better to delay cutting until the middle of September to avoid loss of seeds. Not all parts of the meadow need to be cut; Area A should be cut in its entirety, while the parts of Area B with very shallow soil and a light vegetation cover (See Fig. 6) could be left uncut.
- The cut sward should be removed and not left as "thatch" (if this is left in situ, it will encourage grass growth at the expense of herbaceous plants that are more valuable for pollinators). Some of the cut sward could be transferred to areas with shallow or negligible topsoil and this should in time help to develop a topsoil.
- The scale of encroachment by docks, creeping thistles and willows is particularly evident this month (Figs. 7 and 8). Removal of the willow saplings needs to be done by hand; this is not a major undertaking as they are still relatively few in number. Cutting in September is unlikely to have any significant effect on the abundance of docks and other perennial/biennial weeds next year, since they have set seed. Physical removal of the docks this month may help to reduce the seed burden for next year. In any case, it will be necessary to start controlling these from the beginning of the next growing season by a combination of methods including physical removal, and herbicide application, and possibly an early cut of the new sward.

- Herbicide treatment of the colony of Japanese knotweed in area A should commence before the end of the growing season.

## **2. The College Park Meadow.**

The range of plant species found here was the same as in the June survey with the addition of the weedy species knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*), fat-hen (*Chenopodium album*), smooth sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) and groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*). These were all abundant, along with redshank (*Persicaria maculosa*) in the diagonal strip which was disturbed in June as a consequence of drainage works. Meadow buttercup was the only plant in flower in the main meadow to any extent.

### **2.1 Value for biodiversity and pollinating insects in August**

Scattered plants of meadow buttercup were the only pollinator-friendly plants in flower in the main meadow, and the weedy species mentioned above were in flower in the disturbed strip. The overall value to pollinators was low in August.

### **2.3 Recommendations for August**

The meadow should be cut and the cut sward removed. There are locations on the site where the cut sward could be composted, bypassing the need for removal from the site.

## **3. Childers Road site**

The area has recovered to a large extent from the severe drought conditions of July, although few plant species were in flower. Canadian fleabane (*Conyza canadensis*), a non-native weedy species was added to the list for this site in August

### **3.1 Value for biodiversity and pollinating insects in August**

With the exception of butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*) and red valerian (*Centranthus ruber*), pollinator-friendly plants were not in evidence on the site in August. The aforementioned plants, especially butterfly bush which is prolific on the site, are an important resource for pollinators in August.

### **3.2 Recommendations**

The grassland on the roadside berm should be cut at the end of this month and the sward removed (it can be composted on site, for example to the rear of the site on one of the spoil heaps).

**Table 1.** Plant species in flower in Corbally Road, College Park and Childers Road meadow sites on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

Species	Common Name	Corbally Rd.	College Park	Childers Rd.
<b>Grasses</b>				
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	Timothy	+		
<b>Herbaceous Perennials</b>				
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	+		+
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy		+	
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge Bindweed	+	+	+
<i>Calystegia silvatica</i>	Large Bindweed	+		
<i>Centaurea x moncktonii</i>	Hybrid Knapweed	+		
<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	Red Valerian			+
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse-Ear	+		
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Rosebay Willowherb	+		+
<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	Chicory	+		
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Willowherb	+	+	
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel			+
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick	+		
<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	Autumn Hawkbit	+		+
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common Bird's-foot-trefoil	+		
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Purple Loosestrife	+		
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal	+		+
<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>	Common Fleabane	+		
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup	+	+	+
<i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>	Water Figwort	+		
<i>Scrophularia nodosa</i>	Common Figwort	+		+
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge Woundwort	+		+
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover	+	+	+
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	+	+	+
<b>Herbaceous Biennials</b>				
<i>Conyza canadensis</i>				+
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Carrot	+		
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Wild Teasel			
<i>Melilotus officinalis</i>	Common Melilot	+		
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red Campion	+		
<b>Trees and Shrubs</b>				
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Butterfly-bush	+		+
<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Honeysuckle	+		
<b>Annuals</b>				
<i>Brassica rapa</i>	Wild Turnip	+		
<i>Odontites vernus</i>	Red Bartsia	+		+

Fig. 1 White Melilot (*Melilotus albus*), Corbally Road meadow.



Fig. 2. Red campion (*Silene dioica*), Corbally Road meadow.





Fig. 3. Hybrid knapweed, Corbally Road meadow

Fig. 4. Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Corbally Road meadow.



Fig. 5. Area B in August 2018, Corbally Road meadow.



Fig. 6. Part of Area B, Corbally Road meadow, with very little topsoiland light vegetation cover.



Fig. 7. Colonization by docks (*Rumex* spp.) Corbally Road meadow.



Fig. 8. Colonization by willows (*Salix cinerea*) in Corbally Road meadow.



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