

## A Walk down the Almond in July

The colour I associate most with this walk is green, followed by white! Species with flowers in umbels such as Sweet Cicely, Ground Elder and Hogweed were common and there was the occasional Giant Hogweed plant.

Sweet Cicely, native to south and central Europe was now fruiting. It can be easily identified by the white markings on the leaves. If crushed this plant smells strongly of aniseed and can be used in cooking.



Sweet Cicely (*Myrrhis odorata*)

Archaeological evidence suggests that Ground Elder was introduced to Britain in Roman times. It was cultivated throughout the Middle Ages for use as a spinach-like vegetable and the young leaves can be used in salads.



Ground Elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*)

Somewhat more attractive perhaps were Meadow Sweet and Giant Bindweed. The flowers of the former have a strong sweet scent and the plant has a long history of use in herbal medicine. Indeed it was one of the most sacred herbs used by the Druids!



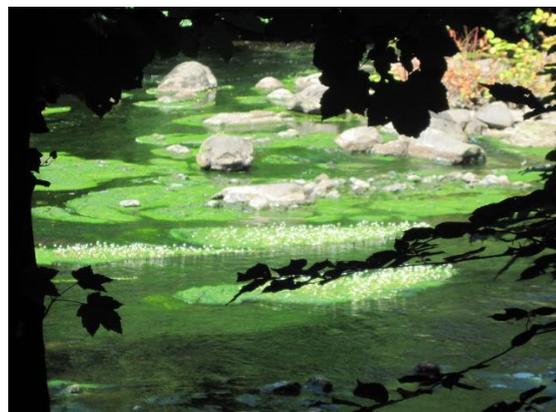
Meadow Sweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*)

Giant Bindweed was present between Cramond Brig and Dowie's Mill. This plant is native to Southern Europe but has become naturalised, after being introduced as a garden plant.



Great Bindweed (*Calystegia silvatica*)

There was another interesting white species growing in the middle of the river between Peggy's Mill and the Salvesen Steps. I have been advised that this is Stream Water-crowfoot. One day I'll wade across and have a closer look! The photograph below was taken last year when it was a little more prolific.



Stream Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus penicillatus*)

And of course there were sweet-smelling Elderberry flowers which I have recently used to flavour gooseberry jelly and which tastes delicious!

The attractive Giant Bellflower was flowering again on the river bank. The flowers can be white or blue.



Giant Bellflower (*Campanula latifolia*)

Yellow flowers included Common Sowthistle, Lady's Mantle, Wood Avens, Nipplewort, Creeping Buttercup, Leopard's Bane, Monkey Flower, Yellow Corydalis and Tutsan.

The shade-loving Leopard's Bane, growing on the river bank among the trees, was a welcome sight! This plant has been grown in the UK since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Leopard's Bane (*Doronicum pardalianches*)

As last year, there was a Monkeyflower plant growing on the wall by Fair a' Far weir. It is a native of western N America and was introduced in 1812.



Monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*)

Yellow Corydalis, a native of the Southern Alps grows on a wall by Dowie's Mill Cottage.



Yellow Corydalis (*Corydalis lutea*)

Pink flowers included Foxglove, a Crane's-Bill species (probably a garden escape at Dowie's Mill) Rosebay Willowherb, Herb Robert and Himalayan Balsam.



Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

Workparties organised by the Friends of the River Almond Walkway have been removing the Himalayan Balsam which has become one of the UK's most widespread invasive weed species. Single plants can produce up to 4000 seeds and these are readily transported along waterways. It competes with native plant species for space, light, nutrients and pollinators and has been implicated in soil erosion of riverbanks. At the present time research is being carried out in the UK to see if introduction of a rust fungus to which it is susceptible can aid control of this plant –see <http://himalayanbalsam.cabi.org/scientific-research/>

Walking regularly down the Almond one observes how the vegetation changes so dramatically throughout the year. In Spring we had prolific growth of Few-Flowered Leek and Ramsons and now we have proliferation of nettles, tangled masses of Sticky Willy Bramble and so many other species!

We would be delighted to hear from you if you have any queries or observations on the wildlife of the Walkway.

Isla Browning