

***Astragalus danicus* (Purple Milk-vetch) at Westwell Gorse
Nature Reserve
18 June 2018**



Members of the WFG present:

Ken Betteridge, Brenda Betteridge and Genny Early

We were pleased to see that the Purple Milk-vetch is holding its own and is still covering approximately the same area as 3 years ago. Unfortunately our scheduled visit was too late for us to see the plant in full bloom. Most of the flowering heads were going to seed and were therefore harder to spot in the vegetation.

Site 1 (SP 21989–11328 about half way along the *Carex filiformis* surveying baseline

We could find no evidence of flowering in this patch but there were vegetative parts of the plant in 10 quadrats, in roughly the same area as last year.

Site 3 (SP 21955–11312) at south end of grassland

This patch has become divided into two definite sections, with a 3-m gap between them. The plant appears to have spread north along the surveying base line, being found in 3 quadrats beyond the limit last year. The southernmost section has contracted to 6 quadrats, 5 of which are on the surveying base line, covering roughly the same area as last year. All 18 flowering heads, most of them going to seed, were found in the southernmost section. The sward in this area of the reserve is more rank than is ideal for the milk-vetch which requires short grassland in which to flourish. If winter grazing does not result in the sward becoming short and open this area would benefit from additional attention in February/March. A few years ago, in late winter, the use of a strimmer, followed by raking off the cut vegetation and any thatch which had formed, allowed the milk-vetch to recover after it had almost disappeared from here.

Brenda Betteridge
for the Wychwood Flora Group

Copies to:

Robert Mills (owner)

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