



THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY CENTRAL SUSSEX GROUP



NEWSLETTER

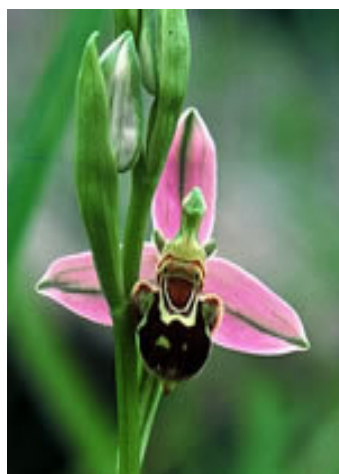
March 2007

Mr. COLIN KITCHNER PICOS DE EUROPA AND THE WESTERN PYRENEES

The ferry to Santander avoids a long journey across France and quickly gives access to the Picos de Europa (largely of Carboniferous Limestone) which lie athwart the boundary between the provinces of Cantabria and Asturia. En route in Santillana del Mar (which in spite of its name is not quite a seaside town!), with medieval, Renaissance and Baroque building including the 12thC Collegiate Church of Santa Juliana and *Erigeron karvinskianus*, a palm tree and a house whose balcony was festooned with flowers. A little further along is Camillas with its Sombrellano Palace



Serapias cordigera
Tereso Farino



Ophrys apifera
Teresa Farino



Teucrium pyrenaicum
Teresa Farino

and Pontifical University with nearby swamps, roadside meadows and *Serapias cordigera*. Then San Vicente de la Barquera and an *Oenothera*. Just into Asturias near Panes in the Rio Cares, *Campanula scheuzeri*. Further west inland from Ribadesella a road follows the Rio Selle and at its junction with the Rio Guena at Cangas de Onis, a supposed Romanesque bridge (actually Gothic). The latter river leads to the Covadonga National Park, the first of Spain's national parks (1918) which forms the western segment of the Picos de Europa. Covadonga itself has the Basilica of Nuestra Senora de las Batallas and nearby an *Ophrys apifera*. The surfaced road ends below the 2596m Pena Santa at 1100m Lake Ercina and around its margins *Saxifraga trifurcata*, *Petrocoptis glaucifolia*, *Linaria faucicola* and *Teucrium pyrenaicum*. Following a return to the Rio Sella, the road southwards skirts the western end of the Picos and passes through the Desfiladero de los Beyos (which Polunin and Smythies call "one of the finest of all limestone gorges") with Campanulas, to Vegacerneja where long spikes of *Dactylorhiza maculata* were photographed..

To return around the southern edge of the Picos necessitates a long loop into Leon province via the Riano barrage in the upper reaches of the Rio Esla. The lake itself, framed by picturesque mountain scenery, is attractive and around it plants such as *Orobanche* including a rusty-coloured one with clover – a very difficult genus for specific identification with the host plants often providing a clue and a tallish *Campanula patula* ssp. *costae*? And so north eastwards over the Puerto de San Gloria to Potes in the ancient province of the Cantabrian Liebaná. Towards Potes an orange and orange and yellow *Orobanche* with dark brown markings and and *Halimium*



Linaria alpina ssp. *filicaulis*
Teresa Farino

alyssoides? A dead end road runs west along the Baro valley from Potes to Fuente De with its parador and single 1400m span cable car carrying passengers 750m higher to the Balcon del Cable below the Pena Vieja and El Pico Tesorero. What you see from the top depends on the weather – either panoramic views, or a sea of clouds which in themselves are attractive, although whether the Japanese tourists think that is another matter! Along the track from the top of the cable car at around 1825m the downy Pyrenean thistle *Carduus carlinoides*, *Asperula hirta*, *Arenaria purpurascens*, *Chaenorhinum originaifolium*, *Erinus alpinus*, rock-draping *Genista legionensis*?, *Crepis pygmaea*, *Geranium pyrenaicum*, *Globularia repens* (275/151), *Androsace villorsa*, *Helianthemum nummularium*, *Jasione crispa*, Iberis-like *Teesdaliopsis conferta*, *Linaria alpina* ssp. *filicaulis*, *L. supina*, *Scilla verna*, *Lithodora diffusa*, *Erodium petraeum* ssp. *glandulosum*, *Gentiana acaulis*, *Anthyllis vulneria* ssp. *pyrenaica*, *Androsace villosa*, *Eryngium bourgatii*, *Erysimum grandiflorum*, *Matthiola fruticosa* ssp. *perennis*, *Saxifraga canaliculata*, (275/150) *Acinos alpina*, *Linum suffruticosum* ssp. *salsaloides*, *Carduncella mitissimus*, *Cuscuta epithymum*, *Eurphorbia*, and *Himantoglossum hircinum* in the cloud zone. There are the inevitable goats eating all except the spiny *Genista*. Back to the valley and at Pido a view of a wooden farm building on stilts, *Iris latifolia*, *Eryngium bourgatii* and long spiked *Orchis ustulata*, while in Espinama a bridge and *Orobanche hederaceae*. The Picos de Europa is home to more than 1,400 species of vascular plant (including around 50 orchids), over 70 mammals, 176 species of bird (120 of which breed), 15 amphibians, 19 reptiles and an incredible 155 different species of butterfly

Backtracking to the San Glorio Pass, a half an hour's walk takes you to the Mirador de Llesba with exceptional views over the Picos. From the pass down to Portilla de la Reina in the province of Castille and Leon with meadows of *Aquilegia vulgaris*, *Digitalis parviflora*, the yellow form of *Antirrhinum majus*, *Armeria maritima* ssp. *alpina* and *Sedum hirsutum*. A photograph showed a green coloured conglomerate for which the area appears to be noted – see website below. A lake on the Yesa with an abandoned castle and village on a flat topped hill and spiny-winged, purple flowered *Onopordum acanthium*.

And so via Pamplona to the western Pyrenees and the Spanish Ordesa National Park north of Jaca. This is primarily a fairly wide canyon with steep wooded slopes facing north and grass and rock facing south through which a shuttle bus now runs to a parking lot. In woodland clearings *Lilium pyrenaicum* near the Estancha cascade at around 1400m, the magenta form of *Antirrhinum majus*, *Campanula speciosa*, *Ramonda myconi*, *Pinguicula longifolia* on a very moist bank, *Aquilegia pyrenaica*, *Helianthemum nummularium pyrenaicum*, *Paronychia capitata* and *Platanthera bifolia*. To reach France, at least by vehicle, needs crossing the watershed between the Rio Aro and the Rio Gallego where seen at Ysero was *Linum viscosum* and *Dacylorhiza majalis praetermissa*. Turning north the road climbs the Gallego into the Valle do Tena, past Hoz de Jaca at the southern end of an artificial lake to the frontier at El Formigal (views shown) and at Laruns turning eastwards to cross the Col d'Aubique and to Argeles Gazost where a road leads south eastwards to Gavarnie only 10km from Ordesa as the crow flies, but 193km by road! A view from the north of the Cirque de Gavarnie and closer, grass being cut by scythe. This is a very popular spot, but if you can withstand the

odorous smells (horses and their ilk), there are plenty of plants to view, among them *Aconitum napellus* (275/154), *A. vulparia* and *Plantanthera bifolia* and nearer the cirque with splendid vies of cascading waterfalls, *Geranium cinereum*, *Alchemilla* ssp., *Ranaunculus gouanii*, *Paronychia*, *Pritzelago alpina* (more familiarly known as *Hutchinsia alpina*), *Helleborus viridis*, *Saxifraga cotyledon*, on a cliff *Lonicera pyrenaica*, *Ramonda myconi* in rock fissures, *Arenaria biflora*, *Asperula hirta*. With final views of the snowbound Breche de Rolande, the Porto de Boucharo and of *Phyteuma globularifolium pedemontanum*, a return to Gedre and a right turn along a toll road into the Cirque de Troumouse, on a larger scale than Gavarnie and much less touristy. Here *Vincetoxicum hirundinaria*, *Eriophorum* sp., *Lychnis alpina*, *Silene acaulis*, *Geranium cinereum album*, *Saxifraga exarata*, *Pinguicula*, *Gentiana verna* in dark and pale blue forms, *Saxifraga longifolia* attractive when even not in flower, *Erigeron alpinus*, *Salix reticulata*, *Trifolium alpinum*, *Primula integrifolia*, *Alchemilla* ssp., rock-draping *Silene acualis* and a splendid frog. There are only difficult paths out of Troumouse, so a return must be made to Gedre and at Esquize Sere, with its castle and stature of the Virgin, right towards the Col du Tourmalet below the 2872m Pic du Midi du Bigorre with an observatory. At 2150m, *Polygala* sp., *Cryptogramma crispa*, *Linaria alpina*, *Sedum alpestre* and a little higher *Androsace carnea*, rosea, *Silene acaulis* and blue-marked sheep. Although it is possible to walk from near here to the the Hourquette d'Aubert with splendid views across Lakes d'Aubert and d'Aumar in the Neouvielle Natural Reserve, the easy way is to continue north east from the Col du Tourmalet to St. Marie de Campan, south east over the Col d'Aspin into the the Aure Valley, past St. Lary where a by-road will take you to the lakes and *Rhodendron ferrugineum* (and though not shown, the dwarf form of *Pinus uncinata* for which the Reserve is famed).

A fascinating tour of two special alpine regions, which for me brought back many memories of a similar itinerary during the 1980 AGS Camping Tour. Apologies for a more abbreviated account than usual (perhaps better for it?), but time caught up with me!

AGS Bulletins

Picos

160/141 Sempervivum hunting in Northern Spain and the Pyrenees

164/152 A journey through Spain – Picos de Europa

167/39 A host of daffodils

173/240 Cloud-Cuckoo-Land

181/215 A Spanish Odyssey

275/147 Alpines in the Picos de Europa

Ordesa

271/123 10 days in June

French Pyrenees

158/370 Always a little further

191/75 Nature's garden – the Pyrenees

235/84 Gavarnie in July

271/116 Ten days in June Troumouse

276/190 Back to the Pyrenees (*Saxifraga*)

Flowers of South-West Europe a field guide. Oleg Polunin and B.E. Smythies OUP

Flora & Fauna of the Picos de Europa. Teresa Farino

Teresa Farino a British naturalist who has been living in the Picos de Europa since 1986, has compiled a 90-page report (A4) which includes lists of all the mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, dragonflies and vascular plants ever recorded the Picos de Europa, plus summaries of each of these groups and an eight-page introduction to the wildlife of these mountains. If you would like to purchase a copy, the price is £15, including postage and packaging. Please contact

Teresa for further details or to place your order.

E-mail: teresa@iberianwildlife.com Office phone: +34 942 735154 Mobile phone: +34 656 337129 Address: Apartado de Correos 5939570 Potes Cantabria Spain
She runs day and longer tours of the Picos and elsewhere in Spain.

Travellers' Nature Guides: Spain Tereso Farino (co-authored with Mike Lockwood) Oxford University Press 2004. Said to be perhaps the most comprehensive account of the prime Spanish wildlife destinations ever to appear in print, incorporating a wealth of detail about the flora and fauna of each.

Sunflower Landscapes: Picos de Europa: Teresa Farino third edition published by Sunflower Books in 2005 ISBN 1-85691-291-4

Picos De Europa Walks and Climbs.: Robin Walker – a Cicerone guide

<http://www.iberianwildlife.com/picos-europa/flora-fauna-picos-europa.htm> Picos de Europa: a naturalist's paradise - by Teresa Farino. Includes plants seen by the BSBI 2004 field meeting, list of orchids and much other – it is not the 90 page publication!

www.rjb.csic.es/pdfs/

[Anales_11\(2\)_385_462.pdf?PHPSESSID=19b1e1a7728c5969f7ecea72d025eb64](http://www.rjb.csic.es/pdfs/Anales_11(2)_385_462.pdf?PHPSESSID=19b1e1a7728c5969f7ecea72d025eb64) -

Extract from ANALES DEL I. BOTÁNICO A.J. CAVANILLES : Nueva aportación al estudio de la flora de los montes cántabro leoneses. This is in Spanish, but if you wish to learn more about the area around Portilla de la Reina, this is a very detailed description of the flora, including those on the siliceous conglomerate. Plant names are, of course, in Latin. There are also line drawings of some of the plants, black and white photographs of the area and habitats. If you can't use the web address, you will find it by Googling Portilla del Reina. A 6.8MB pdf download.

MEETING 17 MARCH

A.G.S. LECTURE ADRIAN ORCHARD ON HELLEBORES – SPECIES & HYBRIDS

Adrian is the owner of Southease Plants which specialises in Hellebores

I was going to add something about the plants shown by members at the last meeting, but that will have to wait until next time. Don't forget, please bring a plant along to talk about, or give us your views which could be of interest to other members.

RM