

## Daisies, Dandelions and Thistles: Identifying the Asteraceae



The location of many of John Constable's paintings, Flatford Mill runs over 120 Natural History and Arts courses in a unique and tranquil learning environment.

### Course Overview

By August many of our finest native plants have finished flowering, with the notable exception of glorious shows of thistles, ragworts, dandelions and mayweeds – a great time therefore to concentrate on the *Asteraceae* or the *Compositae* as we used to call them.

The *Asteraceae* is the biggest flowering plant family in the world and is also the family that is most strongly represented in the British Isles. It therefore seems appropriate for anyone seriously interested in our native flora to feel confident in identifying them. Despite the apparent confusions between hawkweeds and hawkbits, mayweeds and chamomiles, this is not, in fact, a difficult task to do! Much of the course will be devoted to helping participants increase their confidence and competence in using scientific keys to identify the look-alikes that are such a notorious feature of this family.

The habitats around Flatford harbour a rich selection of members of this family and the weekend will be designed for those who have previously shied away from them. It is *not* designed for the more advanced botanist who may wish to learn to distinguish between the different micro-species of *Hieracium* (Hawkweeds) and *Taraxacum* (Dandelions).

Short lectures and discussions will cover different aspects of the Asteraceae family, for example:

- The structure of the flower and inflorescence
- Mechanisms of pollination
- Dispersal success
- Diversity within and taxonomy of the family

The course will be essentially a practical one with ample time provided, under guidance, for the study of floral design under the low power microscope: a useful experience which undoubtedly aids future field identification.

On Sunday we may venture further afield but most of the field excursions will be spent exploring the pastures, cornfields, marshes, riverbanks, waysides and hedgerows of the beautiful Dedham Vale, searching for and taking trouble to identify its 'Dandelions', 'Daisies' and 'Thistles'.

*This is one of a series of courses run jointly with Manchester Metropolitan University contributing to the University Certificate in Biological Recording and Species Identification. This qualification is being discontinued so is no longer open for new registration. Existing certificate students will be able to gain credits in the 2019/20 academic year. The course remains a module choice for the Masters programme. To gain university credits you must be registered for the Masters programme in advance of this course. For further details please contact:*

*The Division of Biology and Conservation Ecology Manchester Metropolitan University. E-mail: [biorec@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:biorec@mmu.ac.uk)*

*There is assessment of the course through, for example, identification tests, producing survey reports or field journals, working through keys and other various pieces of work.*

*The course is also suitable for non-credit students and for those enrolling on the new certificate course with FSC. For further details on this course please contact FSC Head Office at [reception@field-studies-council.org](mailto:reception@field-studies-council.org)*

## About the Tutor

**Ros Bennett** is a botanist and ecologist. She was formerly a full time tutor at Flatford Mill and then organiser and leader of courses for FSC Overseas. She has written books on flowers and has taught courses on wild flowers to all age groups.

## What to Bring

Please bring with you if you can:

- A x10 magnification hand lens (available on the course, £8.75)
- Two pairs of fine pointed forceps and/or two mounted needles
- *New Flora of the British Isles* by Stace (CUP)
- A picture guide such as *The Wild Flower Key* by Rose and O'Reilly (Warne)

If you have none, or only some, of these items, they may be borrowed from the Centre.

## Start and finish times

Residents: Please aim to arrive between **1600 and 1800** on the Monday to allow us sufficient time to show you to your accommodation and around the communal areas. Afternoon tea on Monday is available from 1600, but the first formal activity is dinner at **1900** (with the bar open from 1845!).

Non-residents: You do not need to arrive quite so early but please can you be here by **1800** as we need to show you the communal areas as well.

The course ends at **1600** on Thursday.

## How to book

Bookings can be made by telephoning the Centre; we are open 0930 – 1700 weekdays and most weekends. Alternatively, bookings can be made via our website: [www.field-studies-council.org](http://www.field-studies-council.org).