

LAPLAND MARSH ORCHID, *DACTYLORHIZA LAPPONICA* LAEST. EX HARTMAN, IN IRELAND

Thomas ENNIS

Samenvatting

Na de ontdekking van *Dactylorhiza lapponica* in Groot-Brittannië (Schotland) in 1988, werd een *Dactylorhiza* groeiplaats op kwetsbare heidegrond onderzocht in County Antrim in Ierland. Aanvankelijk werd gedacht dat het een dwergvorm van *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri* betrof en daarna dat het mogelijk om een hybridezwerf van *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri* x *lapponica* ging, maar als gevolg van de toenemende ervaring met vormen van *Dactylorhiza lapponica* in kolonies in Schotland worden sinds kort enkele van deze planten in County Antrim beschouwd als *Dactylorhiza lapponica*. Daarmee is dan voor het eerst het voorkomen van deze soort in Ierland vastgesteld.

Summary

After the discovery of *Dactylorhiza lapponica* in Great Britain in 1988, a *Dactylorhiza* site on exposed moorland in County Antrim on the Irish mainland was investigated. At first it was thought that these plants were a dwarf form of *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri* and then that they were possibly a hybrid colony of *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri* x *lapponica*, but more recently, as the result of widening experience of *Dactylorhiza lapponica* forms at colonies in Scotland, some of these County Antrim plants are now regarded as *Dactylorhiza lapponica* and as such they constitute the first record for this species in Ireland.

Zusammenfassung

Nach der Entdeckung 1988 von *Dactylorhiza lapponica* in Großbritannien wurde ein *Dactylorhiza*-Standort in einem exponierten Heidemoor in der Grafschaft Antrim in Irland untersucht. Zuerst wurde angenommen, diese Pflanzen seien eine Zwergform von *D. traunsteineri* und später, dass sie vielleicht eine Hybridpopulation zwischen *D. traunsteineri* und *D. lapponica* sein könnten. Jetzt aber, als Folge von weiteren Untersuchungen an Populationen in Schottland, werden einige der Pflanzen in der Grafschaft Antrim als *D. lapponica* aufgefasst. Damit wurde zum ersten Mal das Vorkommen dieser Art in Irland belegt.

On 15 June, 1990, J.C.L. Phillips and I located a small colony of *Dactylorhiza* orchids on the Garron Plateau, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, which I consider constitutes the first record of the Lapland Marsh Orchid, *Dactylorhiza lapponica*, in Ireland.

Although the occurrence of *Dactylorhiza lapponica* had been suspected for some time in Great Britain, it was only in 1988 (Kenneth & al., 1988) that this was confirmed. The British sites were all in Scotland, along the West Coast, including the Outer Hebrides and Kintyre.



Bearing this in mind my thoughts turned to the *Dactylorhiza* site discovered by R.D. Meikle "in bogland near the sources of streams which drain the plateau basalt behind Carnlough" (Heslop Harrison, 1956). These are the same plants referred to by V. S. Summerhayes as collected by Meikle "in 1949 in County Antrim which seem to agree with the Wicklow plants" which at that time he designated *Orchis traunsteineroides* (Summerhayes, 1951).

With the discovery of *Dactylorhiza lapponica* so close to Northern Ireland, I was determined to investigate these County Antrim plants, which had, until then, been regarded as *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri* to see if they were referable to *Dactylorhiza lapponica*. The site was known to few Irish botanists and I am most grateful to Mr. D. Ledsham for providing information which led to us finding a site to the East of Crockavarr in very wet flat ground in the headwaters of the Inver River (Irish Grid D240203). There were about 120 plants in mineral rich flush conditions. Companion plants included *Erica tetralix*, *Narthecium ossifragum*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, *D. anglica*, *Carex nigra*, *Trichophorum cespitosum*, *Eriophorum vaginatum*, *Eriophorum angustifolium*, *Molinia caerulea* etcetera. On drier more acid land some distance away were *Calluna vulgaris* and a few *Dactylorhiza maculata* subsp. *ericetorum*. I have since learned from Mr. Meikle (personal communication) that his plants were "growing, rather sparingly, in an area of flat, very sodden bog." He further states that "my plants were collected in the area you indicate, namely the headwaters of the Inver River east of Crockavarr". This site is 110 km from the nearest *Dactylorhiza lapponica* site in Scotland (Knapdale, Kintyre).

The plants were very small ranging from 60 to 150 mm in height mostly with five leaves. In the majority the leaves were unmarked but a few had some sparse, very fine spotting near the tips of the two larger sheathing leaves and in some of these the spots even extended onto the underside. In some the sheathing leaves had their edges tinged purple. The inflorescence was lax and one sided with very few flowers; commonly five but seven or more could be found. Colour ranged from reddish purple through red to pink with the bracts washed purple in some. The labellum was three lobed with the centre lobe longer than the sides, strongly marked with darker lines and dots. The lateral sepals were spreading, marked with darker dots and the dorsal sepal together with the petals formed a hood. The spur was thick, straight and round in cross section. One or two larger plants were found which suggested hybridisation, perhaps with *Dactylorhiza maculata* present on drier ground a short distance away.

These *Dactylorhiza* did not closely resemble any published illustration of *Dactylorhiza lapponica* I had seen, the lack of heavy spotting on the leaves and bracts being a particular

Foto's pagina 68: 1 2
 3 4

1. *Dactylorhiza lapponica*, Garron Plateau, N. Ireland, June 24th, 1990
2. *Dactylorhiza lapponica*, Garron Plateau, N. Ireland, June, early 19-nineties
3. *Dactylorhiza lapponica*, Garron Plateau, N. Ireland, June, early 19-nineties
4. *Ophrys arachnitiformis* GRENIER & PHILIPPE (zie pagina 64)

Foto's 1-3 : Th. Ennis.

Foto 4 : H. Van Looken

concern. As a result I revisited the site on 15 June, 1991 in company with M.R. Lowe, R. Piper and the late D. M. Turner Ettlinger. After careful consideration Mr. Lowe was of the opinion that the plants, although puzzling in certain aspects, were best regarded as a dwarf form of *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri*. In subsequent correspondence he expressed the thought that the Garron *Dactylorhiza* might be hybrids *Dactylorhiza lapponica* x *traunsteineri*, but in correspondence in August, 1999 he cautioned "the claim to the discovery of *Dactylorhiza lapponica* in Antrim should be expressed with caution, unless further finds have been made." However, in more recent correspondence he informed me that as the result of increasing experience at new sites for both *Dactylorhiza lapponica* and *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri* in Scotland, "both of which can now be described as widely distributed along the western coast" he is content that some of the Garron plants should be called *Dactylorhiza lapponica*. While he feels that they "are not 'typical' *Dactylorhiza lapponica* there is a close similarity to the dwarf forms of *Dactylorhiza lapponica* from South Harris".

Conservation

The site now lies within the protection of the Garron Plateau Area of Special Scientific Interest which was declared on 31st May, 1994.

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Thomas Ennis
51 Rannoch Road
Holywood
County Down
BT18 0NB
Northern Ireland
E-Mail: tom_ennis@lineone.net