

Calyptrochaeta (Southern first Irish record confirmed in Co. Cork



apiculata
Hookeria):

Calyptrochaeta apiculata in Ireland

Fionnuala O'Neill describes her exciting and significant discovery of this southern hemisphere moss in Ireland.

Previously unrecorded in Ireland, *Calyptrochaeta apiculata* (Hook.f. & Wilson) Vitt was found in south-west Ireland on 12 July 2007 in a small area of wet coastal woodland in County Cork (v.-c. H5). This species has a Southern Hemisphere distribution (Chile, Tierra del Fuego, Australia and New Zealand), and is considered to be an introduction from horticultural plants where it occurs in Britain (Smith, 2004). The same is doubtless true for its station in Ireland, as the find was made close to Fota Arboretum, which is host to many plant species from the Southern Hemisphere. The establishment in south-west Ireland of several Australian bryophyte species has already been noted (N. Lockhart, pers. comm.).

In Ireland, *C. apiculata* grows in an area of wet woodland close to sea level (altitude approx. 5 m) beside the Belvelly Channel of the River Lee estuary. The ground is flat and the soil

appears gleyed, with a pH of 6.28. The main tree species immediately in the vicinity of the moss (i.e. present in the same 10x10 m quadrat) are ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), with the following present as seedlings or juveniles (<7 cm diameter at breast height): hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Chilean myrtle (*Luma apiculata*). Downy birch (*Betula pendula*), grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) and European silver-fir (*Abies alba*) are also present within 15 m. Stace (1997) notes that Chilean myrtle is a South American introduction which thrives only in very mild areas, but is self-sown in semi-natural woodland in Ireland and Britain; this is the case here.

The woody species bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*), wild privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and ivy (*Hedera helix*)

△ *Calyptrochaeta apiculata*. David Holyoak

together covered approximately 50% of the area of the quadrat. The herbs, sedges and bryophytes recorded reflect the wet nature of the habitat. The most abundant herbaceous plant in the quadrat was hemlock water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*), with the following all found but covering less than 1% each: wild angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), wavy bitter-cress (*Cardamine flexuosa*), common marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), wood dock (*Rumex sanguineus*) and violet (*Viola* sp.). Remote sedge (*Carex remota*) and pendulous sedge (*C. pendula*) together also covered almost half of the quadrat, with remote sedge the more abundant of the two. A small amount (<1% cover) of compact rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*) was also found within the quadrat.

Bryophytes covered approximately 15% of the quadrat, and were as follows, in decreasing order of cover: *Thamnobryum alopecurum*, *Isoetecium myosuroides*, *Kindbergia praelonga*, *Mnium*

hornum, *Brachythecium rutabulum*, *Hypnum cupressiforme* var. *resupinatum*, *Neckera complanata*, *Rhizomnium punctata*, *Thuidium tamariscinum*, *Brachythecium rivulare*, *Hookeria lucens*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Lophocolea bidentata*, *L. heterophylla*, *Metzgeria furcata*, *Neckera complanata* and *N. pumila*. *C. apiculata* was found growing in a patch measuring approximately 10 cm in diameter; however, it was not accurately measured at the time as the significance of the find was not then realized, and a sample was taken back to the laboratory for identification.

The discovery of *C. apiculata* in this location is significant as the site is damp, relatively semi-natural and undisturbed, unlike its UK stations, where it grows on a bank in the Isles of Scilly and on sandstone boulders on a raised beach shoreline near Hastings (G. Rothero, pers. comm.). As noted above, the position of the site close to Fota Arboretum is also significant, as the plant is likely to have been introduced accidentally with one of the specimen plants.

The identity of the plant recovered from Cork was confirmed by Gordon Rothero, and a sample has been lodged with him. The find was made during work for the National Survey of Native Woodlands in Ireland, funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government).

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References

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