

Tha an raineach air aire luchd-breithneachaidh a tharraing thar nan linntean a rèir choltais agus b’ e comharrachadh an dà fho-chineil seo mar *Dryopteris cambrensis pseudocomplexa* agus *Dryopteris cambrensis cluthensis* toradh air mòran beachdachaidh ann a bhith gan sgaradh bhon mhearlaig fhèin a tha gu math coltach riutha. Tha an inbhe a th’ aca na h-adhbhar cnuasachd is deasbaid fhathast ach tha cuid den bheachd gum faodte an àrdachadh gu ìre gnè fa leth. Mar a tha cùisean an-dràsta, thathar a’ toirt iomradh air a’ bhuidhinn seo de rainich a tha dlùth an dàimh mar “bhuidheann *Affinis*” agus i air a dèanamh suas le ceithir gnèithean air neo trì gnèithean agus caochladh fho-ghnèithean.

Tha iad gu math coltach ris a’ mhearlaig (aig a bheil caochladh lusan-àitich a thathar a’ fàs mar lusan-gàrraidh no lusan-taighe), ach tha geugan-duilleagach nas làidire is nas leatharaiche aca le lannan tiugha eadar òr is dhonn. Tha na dhà dhiubh sgapte ann am fearann-coille tais, bog aig ìre ìseal le *cluthensis* an làthair ann an Arainn agus mu Chluaidh, agus *pseudocomplexa* ri fhaotainn ann an Arainn, Ìle agus anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. Tha an srianadh orra ri dìreach beagan àiteachan agus mar a tha àrainn shònraichte a dhìth orra gam fàgail ann an cunnart bho atharrachadh na gnàth-shìde, gu sònraichte ma thig mar thoradh air sin gum bi barrachd tioramachd ann.

Scottish Male-fern

Mearlag Albannach

Dryopteris pseudocomplexa

Tha an lus-eòlaiche, an t-òraidiche agus am fear-breithneachaidh mòr Albannach, Pàdraig Geddes, ga mheas a bhith air thoiseach air gluasad na h-àrainneachd agus bha e fo gheasaibh aig an rainich. Tha na briathran ainmeil leis “by leaves we live” a’ toirt tarraing air mar a tha saoghal an nàdair agus an saoghal sòisealta ceangailte eadar a chèile agus a’ ceangal mar a tha nithean cruinneil agus ionadail ceangailte. Tha tòrr ri fhaicinn ann an geugan-duilleagach rainich.

*cluinnidh mi bhuam duan
hoireann ò na gillean san raon
's iad a' buain hillean ò nam mearlagan*

Ferns seem to have attracted the attention of deep thinkers over the ages and the recognition of these two subspecies as *Dryopteris cambrensis pseudocomplexa* and *Dryopteris cambrensis cluthensis* was the culmination of much consideration in separating them from the very similar scaly male fern. Their status is still the matter of much thought and debate but some believe that they could be raised to the level of separate species. As matters stand, this group of closely-related ferns is referred to as the “*Affinis* complex” and comprises either four species or three species plus a number of subspecies.

They are very similar to the scaly male fern (which has several cultivars that are grown as garden or indoor plants), but they have more robust and leathery fronds with dense, golden-brown scales. Both are dispersed in damp, swampy woodland at low level with *cluthensis* present on Arran and around the Clyde, and *pseudocomplexa* found on Arran, Islay and Skye.

Their restriction to just a few localities and their dependence on specific habitat makes them at risk to climate change, especially if that results in increased aridity.

The great Scottish botanist, lecturer and thinker, Patrick Geddes, is considered a forerunner of the environmental movement and was fascinated by ferns. His famous quote “by leaves we live” points towards the interconnectedness of the natural and social world and links how global and local factors are connected. There is a lot to see in the fronds of a fern.

NOTES

The name “mearlag” was coined for scaly male fern in another naming project and we have happily incorporated that into the new Gaelic names for these species/subspecies following the English name meaning for Scottish and Clyde.

Wild ferns and bracken were traditionally used in the Highlands and Islands to produce yellow dyes.

cluinnidh mi bhuam duan
hoireann ò na gillean san raon
's iad a' buain hillean ò nam mearlagan

I can hear a ditty over there, the lads in the field gathering ferns