

Introduction

This Species Action Plan covers a number of species of flowering plant, which are rare in the District.

These include :

- Clary
- Bithynian Vetch
- Purple Milk Vetch
- Baneberry
- Meadow Rue
- Sweet Galingale
- Common Butterwort
- Dyer's Greenweed
- Pepper Saxifrage
- Broad-leaved Helleborine
- Parsley Water Dropwort

Our objective for Rare Flowers is:

To maintain the current populations of the species and where appropriate increase the size and range of the populations.

There are a number of other species that are either covered by their own Species Action Plan, such as Water Violet or are covered within Habitat Action Plans, such as Bloody Cranesbill within Coastal Cliff Mosaics; Green-winged Orchid within Calcareous Grassland / Unimproved Neutral Grassland and Sea Lavender within Coastal Wetlands.

There are likely to be other species that are not referred to here because as yet their status is uncertain. One in particular is of interest, that of May Lily on Oliver's Mount. This was translocated there in the 1920s and recorded for many years, but has not been recorded recently and the exact translocation site has now been lost.

Plants are rare because of many factors. It may be because the conditions that suit them are rare, as is the case with Baneberry. It may be that the species is naturally rare and, for whatever reason, it does not flourish. This is the case with Bithynian Vetch, Clary and Purple Milk Vetch. With others it may be that management has removed it or prevents its spread and this is likely to be the case with plants such as Meadow Rue.

When considering what can be done about maintaining the populations, one consideration will be the possibility of enhancing the existing population and re-introducing it to other suitable sites. This last option raises the always very thorny question of re-introduction. Guidance on this must be agreed, not only for the above plants but also for other species as well. It is unlikely to be the same for each species and must take account of a range of issues, including the effect of global warming, but a general policy would be of value in guiding future introductions.

Status and Distribution

All of the above species are known from just one or two sites.

Clary is known from one site on the Castle Headland below the Castle walls. Nationally it is a local plant of the south and east. In the north it is very local.

Bithynian Vetch is known from one site at Sandsend and one unconfirmed site at Burniston Cliff. Nationally this is a very localised plant of the southern coast. In the north it is very rare.

Purple Milk Vetch - nationally a local plant of eastern distribution, regionally scattered locations in the Wolds. Locally previously known from two sites at Hunmanby and Muston although it is now thought to be extinct in the District.

Baneberry is known from one site, at Folkton. Nationally it is a rare plant confined to a belt stretching across northern England between the Humber and Newcastle.

Meadow Rue is known from one site at Seamer where it is recorded intermittently. Nationally it is an uncommon species of southern distribution and here it is toward the edge of its northern range. Within the region it is in a few scattered localities mainly in river flood plains.

Rare Flowers



Above: Baneberry
(Photograph by Susan Wilson)

Below: Baneberry
(Photograph by Graham Megson)



Links to Habitat Action Plans and Guidance Notes.

Priority habitats associated with Rare Flowers:

Woodland, Unimproved Neutral Grassland, Acidic Grassland, Wetlands, Coastal Cliff Mosaics

Action Plans have been prepared for those in bold.

What you can do to help:

Don't pick wild flowers.

Enjoy them in their natural environment.

Sweet Galingale is known from one site in the Seamer Valley but there is an old record for another at Hunmanby (possibly Sands Lane Meadow). This species is outside what is thought to be its natural range where it is an uncommon plant of the south coast. Here it may be a Victorian introduction.

Common Butterwort is known from one site, on Wheatcroft Cliff near Scarborough.

Dyer's Greenweed is known from one site on Whitby Abbey Headland and has not been recorded for several years. Nationally it is a localised plant of old grasslands in England.

Pepper Saxifrage was recorded once from one site at Gristhorpe Cliff and has not been recorded since. Nationally it is a local plant of old, damp grasslands throughout England.

Broad-leaved Helleborine is recorded on one site at Whitby. Nationally it is an uncommon plant of old woods.

Parsley Water Dropwort is a local plant of wet grasslands with a markedly coastal or brackish distribution. Here it has been recorded at one site at Whitby. Elsewhere in the region it is found on the Humber.

Threats

The primary threats to any species that is reduced to only one location has to be accidental loss and inappropriate management. Clary is particularly threatened because of the need to maintain Scarborough Castle walls, desire to improve the footpath system, the pressure from people trampling the grassland to view the walls and the difficulty of managing the site.

However, other threats include the loss of reproductive viability because of the small population and the potential loss because of a natural occurrence such as a drought, heavy rainfall or cliff slippage. This later occurred with Purple Milk Vetch in 1994.

Current Action

At present, little concerted effort is made to do anything with regard to these species other than to monitor their presence (or otherwise). Some attempt has been made to protect and increase the Clary population and manage the Baneberry site but no sustained effort has yet been achieved.



Bifthyian Vetch:
(Photograph by Nan Sykes)