

SUFFOLK LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

Shepherd's Needle

(*Scandix pectin-veneris*)



Plan Lead FWAG

1 Definition of habitat or species

This annual plant was once common in arable fields, particularly on summer dry soils and often calcareous clays. It has suffered a dramatic decline due largely to agricultural intensification exacerbated by the low level of seed dormancy. The bulk of the seed germinates in autumn. It appears to be partially unaffected by some herbicides and competes well with intensively farmed winter cereal crops.

2 Current status: national, regional, and local (including trends and losses)

The UK population of shepherd's needle has declined dramatically since the 1950s, now being only found in a quarter of its previous locations. It is now restricted to east of a line from the Humber to the Bristol Channel. The species occasionally appears in large numbers on the chalky boulder clays of East Anglia. Suffolk is its stronghold where it is occasionally recorded as still occurring in pest proportions. It appears to have made something of a recovery from its past decline, doubling the number of 10km square records in the last ten years. However the Suffolk distribution appears to be stable.

3 Current factors affecting the species or habitats

The following changes in agriculture have largely been responsible for the decline of shepherd's needle and continue to affect its recovery

Increase use of herbicides and fertilisers

Major improvements in seed cleaning techniques

The demise of crop rotations and the ability to grow monocultures over long periods

Deeper and more intensive cultivations

Loss of field edge refuges

Loss of winter stubbles

4 Current action

The Great Waldingfield Airfield site is a County Wildlife Site

Shepherd's needle was harvested from an existing site (Elmsett) and introduced into the arable weed area at The Museum of East Anglian Life (2006)

5 Targets

Maintain viable populations at current sites and newly created sites

Baseline 2005, targets for 2010, and identify targets for long-term species or habitat viability for 2015 and 2020 and longer term (if desired)

6 Actions

Action (apply SMART approach and include locations where relevant).	Achieve by date	Delivery partners (identify lead and support partners)
Site safeguard and management Or species protection/management		
Where appropriate, promote take up of Environmental Stewardship (ES) options that encourage and support arable wildflowers e.g. conservation headlands, uncropped margins.	2006-2010	FWAG, NE, SWT
Survey Great Waldingfield Site to establish current management.	2006-2010	SBRC, SWT, FWAG
Establish whether the Great Waldingfield site and other good populations are in an agri-environment scheme, and apply for Environmental Stewardship as appropriate	2006-2010	NE, SWT, FWAG,
Research and monitoring		
Monitor the success of the introduction site at the museum of East Anglian Life	2006-2010	SWT, MEAL
Advisory		
Ensure landowners and managers are alert	2006-2010	FWAG, SWT, SBRC

to its appearance in arable crops and headlands and advise on appropriate management		
Communications and publicity		
Raise awareness and tolerance of the species amongst (e.g. articles, publicity relating to this species and to reassure landowner/ farmer concerns regarding uncropped margins and conservation headlands,) amongst farmers, landowners and managers and the general public and the need to notify conservation bodies of new sites.	2006 -2010	FWAG, SWT, SBRC, NE

NB Most of the action achieve by dates are 2006-2010 this means they need to be achieved or worked towards by 2006 and annually renewed until 2010.

Objectives currently not achievable by the plan partners:

This section should include objectives that the working group relevant to this plan would like to fund and achieve but due to constraints can't currently. By recognising these in the plan, means they aren't lost from the BAP : A list of bullet points

The production of a leaflet arable plants covering why they are important, how they can be incorporated into current farming practice.

Work in partnership with the Museum of East Anglian Life to continue to develop and promote their arable plant plot both as a refuge for arable plants and as an educational resource.

Monitoring of progress:

Reported annually on the UK BAP reporting system BARS Biodiversity Action Reporting system.

List of organisations that have been consulted regarding this plan and have agreed to aim to deliver their organisations commitments:

SWT Susan Stone and Dorothy Casey
 NE Monica O'Donnell and Alison Collins
 All District Council SBP Representatives
 Suffolk County Council Andrew Murray-Wood
 SBRC Martin Sanford
 Suffolk biodiversity partnership officer Mary Norden
 FWAG Phil Watson
 RSPB Kirsty Coutts
 SOG Steve Piotrowski
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