\*\*PRESS RELEASE EMBARGOED UNTIL 17TH SEPTEMBER 2014\*\*



**BSBI launches England’s first Red List for Vascular Plants.**

The first ever England Red List will be launched at Kew Gardens on 17th September. The List is a comprehensive and objective analysis of changes in the distribution of our native flora and identifies our most threatened species.

Dr Pete Stroh of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) is lead author of the Red List and project co-ordinator. He and fellow scientists from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology carried out the analysis, using evidence extracted from sources such as the BSBI’s database. Many of the 13 million plant records analysed had been collected by BSBI volunteers and others since 1930.

BSBI President Ian Denholm said “These alarming trends mirror declines recently reported for many birds, butterflies and moths, and reinforce the importance of long-term biological recording schemes reliant on the efforts of enthusiastic volunteers. As the foundation of UK’s biodiversity, plants have a flagship role as indicators of detrimental changes to our environment. The new England Red List is a timely and vital evidence-based contribution to informing national conservation policies.”

**Twelve scientists from six organisations\* worked together on the England Red List and many will be present at the launch to answer questions.**

Ian Taylor (Natural England) said **“**Thanks to the tremendous efforts and skill of BSBI’’s network of recorders, we now have a clear and up to date perspective on the changing fortunes of the English flora. The scientific rigour brought to the England Red List by a partnership of the country’s leading botanical organisations will enable us to target our conservation efforts more precisely and with greater confidence on those plants, habitats and landscapes revealed to be most urgently in need”.

**The results of the Red List show that a fifth of England’s c.1850 wildflower species are under threat, with the majority of these suffering a decline of 30% or more**.

Wildflowers associated with highly basic or acid habitats on nutrient-poor soils, such as Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica),* fare particularly badly. The analysis also identifies species that have suffered such severe declines in lowland areas of England that they meet the ‘Threatened’ criteria, despite being still relatively widespread and common in upland areas. Examples here include Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*), Grass-of-Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) and Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*).

**Perhaps even more worrying is that some wildflowers that we still think of as common and widespread are now close to being listed as threatened.**

Red List lead author Dr Pete Stroh (BSBI) said “Whilst many of these ‘Near Threatened’ species are found within nature reserves, they also once had a much greater presence outside of protected areas. Following the widespread destruction or modification of vast swathes of unprotected countryside - particularly in lowland England - over the past 60 years, it is perhaps not so surprising to find out that these species have undergone such severe declines”.

**We will be revealing the identities of five of these ‘Near Threatened’ wildflowers at the ERL launch on 17th September, and will post more information on our website www.bsbi.org.uk**

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

For more on the ERL please contact Dr Pete Stroh: peter.stroh@bsbi.org Telephone: 01223 762054

Twelve scientists from six organisations7 worked together on the England Red List and many will be at the launch at RBG Kew on 17th September to answer your questions. Details are on the attached invitation and we hope that you will be able to join us for the launch.

For more information about the launch, or to request high-resolution images of threatened plants, please contact Louise Marsh, BSBI Publicity & Outreach Officer: louise.marsh@bsbi.org Mobile: 07971 972 529 For more about BSBI, please visit our website http://www.bsbi.org.uk/

1. Stroh, P.A., Leach, S.J., August, T.A., Walker, K.J., Pearman, D.A., Rumsey, F.J., Harrower, C.A., Fay, M.F., Martin, J.P., Pankhurst, T., Preston, C.D. & Taylor, I. 2014. *A Vascular Plant Red List for*

*England*. Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, Bristol. ISBN 9780953971862

2. A Red List uses a globally recognised and scientifically rigorous approach designed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to assess and determine risks of extinction. The method is applicable to all species and provides information on status, trends and threats. The production of a first vascular plant Red List for England follows similar Lists for Great Britain (Cheffings & Farrell 2005) and Wales (Dines 2008) that have examined changes to our flora since 1930 and identified those species most at risk.

3. The analysis involved applying IUCN threat criteria to data extracted from sources such as the BSBI’s plant database, one of the largest biological databases in the world which currently holds more than 30,000,000 vascular plant records. Many of the 13 million plant records analysed for the England Red List had been collected by BSBI volunteers and others since 1930.

4. An England Red List Working Group was set up in 2012 consisting of 12 people from 6 different organisations: Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Natural England, Natural History Museum, Plantlife and Royal Botanic Garden Kew.

 5. Vascular plants (also termed ‘higher plants’) have lignified tissues for conducting water and minerals. They include all flowering plants, conifers and ferns. The catch-all term ‘wildflowers’ is often used as a proxy.

5. Threat is not synonymous with rarity. A species assessed as threatened may have suffered considerable declines but still be relatively widespread, whereas a species that is rare or scarce may not be assessed as threatened because its population is relatively stable.

6. Dr Pete Stroh is a Scientific Officer employed by the BSBI. He was responsible for co-ordinating, writing and delivering the England Red List and is the lead author.