

# THE ORCHID HUNTER

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**In the summer after leaving school, a young botanist sets out to fulfil a childhood dream – to find every species of orchid native to the British Isles.**

## A weird and wonderful sex life

Fly Orchid flowers have a fascinating, yet diabolical sex life. While most plants attract pollinators with the promise of nectar, these orchids lure them in with the promise of sex. This deception is accomplished by imitating the scent, appearance and texture of virgin females. A passing male senses the orchid from afar, and is delighted to find a 'female' resting on the flower. Excited by this, he alights and attempts to mate with it, and in doing so unwittingly picks up pollen on the back of his neck. Eventually, frustrated by the lack of action, he buzzes off in search of a more enthusiastic partner. Upon encountering a new population of Fly Orchids, he immediately falls for the ruse all over again, depositing the pollen on the new flower.

*“Over the years, I've realised that looking for Fly Orchids is a futile activity. Instead, you have to let them come to you.”*



Fly Orchid  
*Ophrys insectifera*

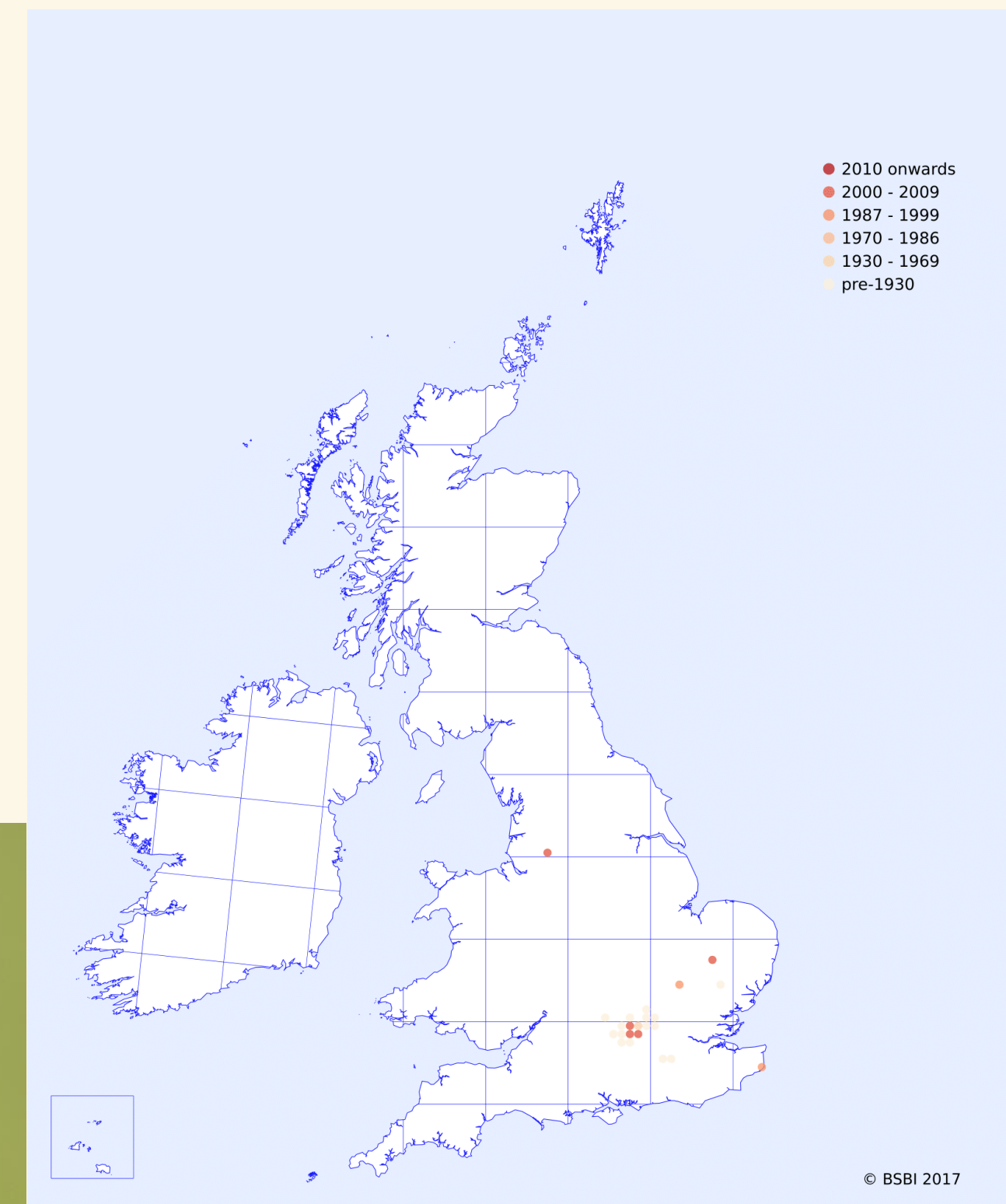
## Hunted to the brink of extinction

If ever the plant kingdom had a celebrity, it would be the Lady's Slipper. No other orchid has attracted so much attention and been subject to such levels of protection. An orchid of great beauty, with such large, conspicuous blooms, quickly caught people's attention; it was picked and dug up from the moment it was first recorded in 1629. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Victorian Orchidelirium was on the rise and the woods and hillsides were stripped of their Slippers at an alarming rate. Declared extinct in Britain in 1917, a single plant was famously rediscovered in 1930 which, until the recent reintroduction project, remained the only one in the wild.

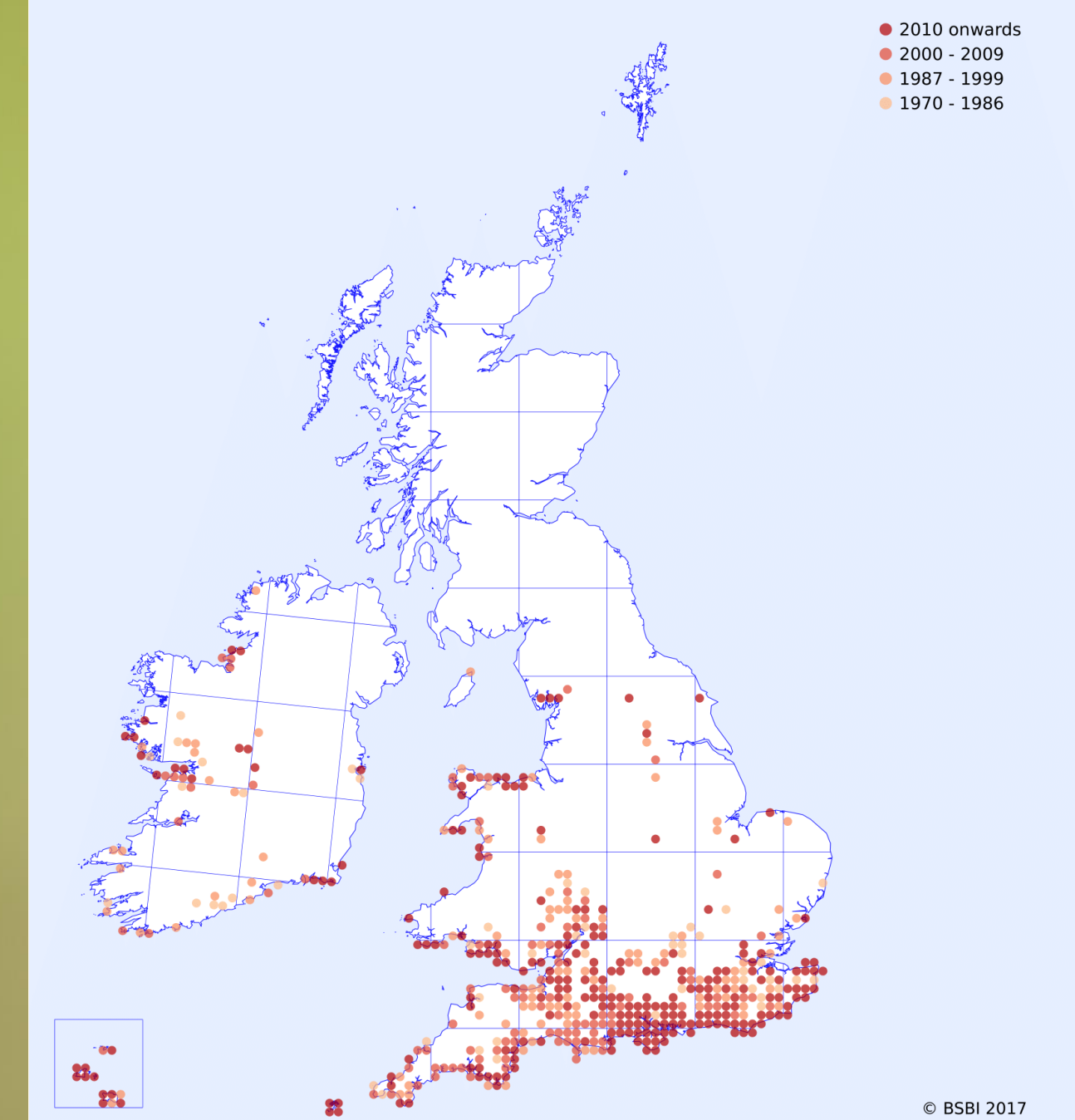
*“Its stunning flowers are a feast for the senses: spirals of claret and bubbles of yellow. It is unlike anything else found in Britain.”*



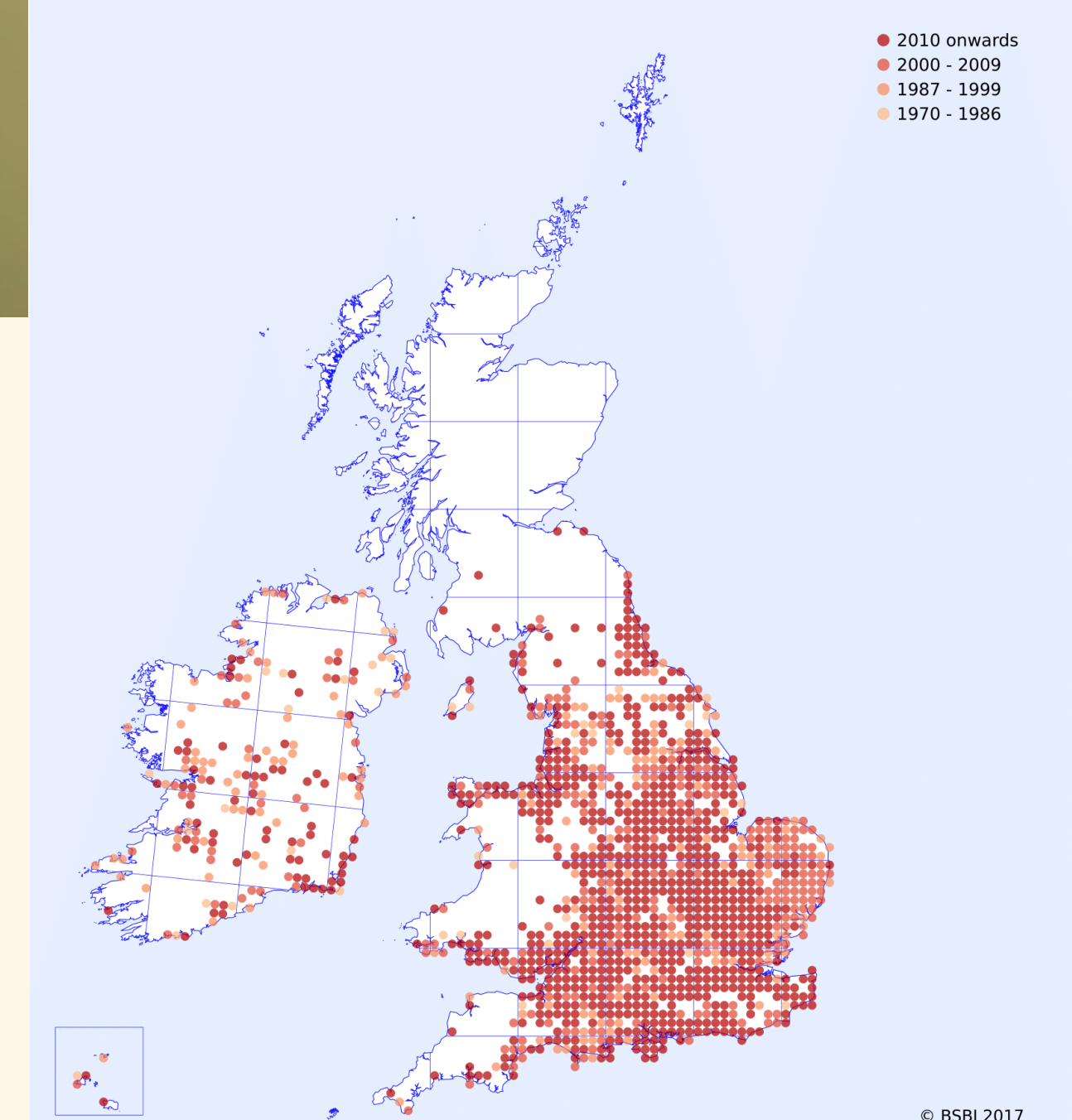
Lady's Slipper  
*Cypripedium calceolus*



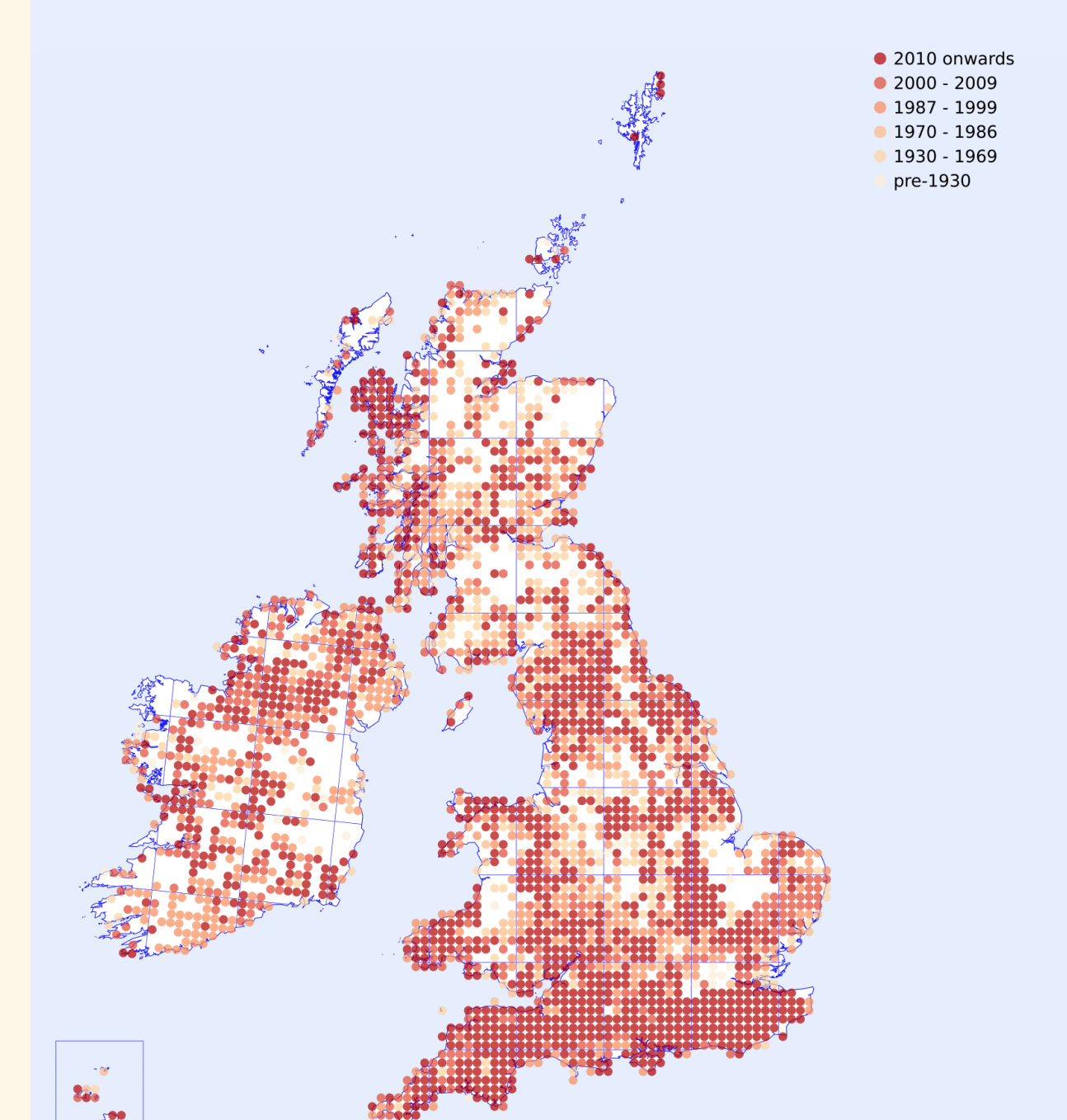
Military Orchid  
*Orchis militaris*



Autumn Lady's-tresses  
*Spiranthes spiralis*



Bee Orchid  
*Ophrys apifera*



Early Purple Orchid  
*Orchis mascula*

