

Kent Rare Plant Register

Introduction



Orobanche caryophyllacea at Sandwich Bay. Photo by Liam Rooney, June 2010

Compiled by Geoffrey Kitchener and the Kent Botanical Recording Group

version 2, rev. February 2015



Contents:

	Page
1. Register documents	2
2. Purpose	2
3. Development of the register	2
4. Criteria	3
5. Geographic coverage	5
6. References	6

1. Register documents

This introduction forms part of a suite of documents as follows:

- the Kent rare plant register list
- draft accounts of Kent rare plants
- list of 'probably extinct' Kent plants.

These may be accessed via the Kent webpage of the BSBI website at <http://www.bsbi.org.uk/kent.htm>

2. Purpose

Many counties (or botanical vice-counties) now have county rare plant registers, either complete or in preparation. This exercise has been encouraged by the Botanical Society for the British Isles, who have published a number of registers as well as guidelines to encourage consistency of compilation. This register is intended to fill the gap for Kent and, by assembling and publishing data on the presence, location, population trends and perceived threats, it should assist in conservation, monitoring, research and further recording.

3. Development of the register

Prior to the initiation of this register, Kent had no such current active register, but a broadly similar function was fulfilled by the vascular plants section of the Kent red data book (Pitt, 2000), which covered 164 plants. Since 2000, there have been developments in how rarity and scarcity are assessed¹, and in the availability of national and local botanical data to inform such assessment². Accordingly, any register project would need to reflect these developments and, for example, the listing of plants would not be the same.

In early 2010 a proposed list of rare plant register plants (RPR plants) was issued for consultation, together with the criteria for their selection and suggestions as regards the geographic area to be covered. As a result of feedback, changes were made and the register proposal was put to the Kent Botanical Recording Group at its inaugural meeting in March 2010 and adopted. After a year's recording, the list was again revised, and preparation of individual species accounts began. It is intended that these accounts will be made available on a rolling basis in draft, so as to encourage

¹ See Cheffings & Farrell (2005) in conjunction with Leach & Walker (2011).

² Nationally, in particular through Preston, Pearman & Dines (2002); locally through Philp (2010).

feedback and further recording; and that a cycle of updating will keep the register current. The list of RPR plants is updated to meet changes in circumstances and, following request, there is also a version with both Latin and English names.

4. Criteria

The register focuses on plants which are considered to be native to Kent but does not discount those which are native elsewhere and have reached Kent by ‘natural’ means. Nor does it discount ancient introductions which are regarded as having the status of archaeophytes³, so all references to “native” plants are to be regarded as including archaeophytes. In some cases, the benefit of doubt has been afforded to the inclusion of recently recorded taxa native in the British Isles whose means of arrival in Kent is unclear.

The list of plants has been compiled by using the following criteria.

National rarity or scarcity:

- All Kent native plants were included which are regarded as nationally threatened (for Great Britain), within IUCN-based categories as listed in Cheffings & Farrell (2005). Those categories of threat are: **CR** (critically endangered), **EN** (endangered), **VU** (vulnerable), or **NT** (near threatened). Cheffings & Farrell also have so-called waiting and parking lists of taxa, particularly for those where there are uncertainties. However, the Kent RPR list only includes waiting or parking list plants when there is some other reason to do so⁴.
- In 2014, threat categories were assessed separately for England (Stroh et al., 2014). The English categories are not necessarily the same as those for Great Britain as a whole. It has been decided to include in the Kent RPR list those plants assessed as **CR**, **EN**, **VU** or **NT** in England, whatever their GB status may be. However, if the English category represents a downgrade from the GB category, this is not treated as a reason to remove any plant from the Kent RPR list.
- All Kentish native plants falling within the following other national categories of protection or rarity / scarcity were included. These categories are:
 - nationally rare plants⁵;

³ An archaeophyte is a plant which was introduced by man (or arrived naturally from an area in which it was present as an introduction) and became naturalized before AD 1500.

⁴ A consequence of this approach is that, if the waiting or parking list status would prevent the plant as being clearly assessed as a native, then its local scarcity status would not qualify it for inclusion - *Cerastium brachypetalum* (Grey Mouse-ear) is an example, with only one site. Also, whilst both Rock Sea-lavenders *Limonium binervosum* subsp. *binervosum* and subsp. *cantianum* are on the waiting list (taxonomic work pending), the difficulty of determining intermediate plants in the field has precluded an ability to ascertain whether either subspecies warrants locally scarce status (where both together would not).

⁵ The usual definition of nationally rare plants is that they are recorded in not more than 15 hectads (10 km squares based on Ordnance Survey for Great Britain). The status for RPR purposes was taken from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee taxon designation spreadsheet published as at November 2009 (<http://www.jncc.gov.uk>), but lists of nationally rare and scarce plants are conveniently accessible on the BSBI website, under ‘Resources’.

- nationally scarce plants⁶;
- Biodiversity Action Plan priority plants⁷.

Listing in Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (wild plants protected from picking, uprooting or sale) was noted but not used as a criterion, as it does not necessarily reflect rarity or scarcity (e.g. *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell) is a Schedule 8 plant for the purposes of the sale prohibition). International listing (through the EU Habitats Directive and the Bern Convention) has been considered, but does not add any species which would not have been included through the national categories.

Local rarity or scarcity:

- All native plants **rare** in Kent were included. These were taken as those with three or less sites recorded since 1990. Because the most comprehensive overall survey data of the administrative county of Kent is Eric Philp's New Atlas of the Kent Flora (Philp, 2010), whose records are in terms of tetrads (2 x 2km squares), a tetrad record has been equated, for convenience, with one site. Obviously, this is approximate: a tetrad may have more than one discrete population of a plant, but equally a single population may span a gridline and result in two adjoining tetrad records. Records for the part of vice county 16 (West Kent) which lies outside the administrative county of Kent are not covered by the New Atlas. Data for that area kindly supplied by Rodney Burton have been considered, when assessing alternative scenarios as regards whether the register should include or exclude those areas (see paragraph 5 below). In general, post-1990 records not noted by Eric Philp have been taken into account where known by the writer, but there will be others not known.
- All native plants **scarce** in Kent were included. These were taken as those with four to ten (inclusive) sites recorded since 1990⁸. The same principles as regards equating tetrads with sites apply, as with locally rare plants. Native plants with more than ten Kentish sites but which are thought to be in serious decline could also be included. However, in practice it was found that many likely candidates initially qualified for the list on other grounds - e.g. *Clinopodium acinos* (Basil Thyme), *Gnaphalium sylvaticum* (Heath Cudweed), *Neottia nidus-avis* (Bird's-nest Orchid), *Valerianella dentate* (Narrow-fruited Cornsalad) - and the subsequent assessment of conservation status in England given in Stroh et al. (2014) has brought in others.
- The result of investigations after the publication of Philp (2010) has on occasion been such as to show that a plant was not rare or scarce in accordance with the preceding criteria after

⁶ The usual definition of nationally scarce plants is that they are recorded in 16 to 100 hectads (10 km squares based on Ordnance Survey for Great Britain). The status for RPR purposes was taken from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee taxon designation spreadsheet published as at November 2009 (<http://www.jncc.gov.uk>).

⁷ These are plants designated as priority plants for the purposes of the UK's planning for the protection of its biological resources under the international Convention on Biological Diversity.

⁸ However, *Potamogeton obtusifolius* (Blunt-leaved Pondweed) has been included, notwithstanding that no sites were identified in the survey for Philp (2010). This is on an assumption that an examination of appropriate habitats at the optimum time of year would be more successful; and, indeed, it has since been found.

all, in that over ten current sites may have been recorded for the plant. Where a species account has not already been prepared, then the plant will normally be removed from the RPR list and an explanation given as regards its status. Where a species account has already been prepared, then this will be retained, with an option to retain it in the list or to include it in an appendix to the RPR. This is in order to ensure that information relevant to the assessment of the status of that plant is not discarded.

Other criteria.

- The species or microspecies in the complex genera of *Hieracium* (Hawkweeds), *Rubus* (Brambles) and *Taraxacum* (Dandelions) have been excluded, at least for the time being. Data may be found in Philp (2010).
- Treatment of hybrids presents some issues, and the choice may be to a degree arbitrary. There is a case for inclusion of these (cf. Preston, 2004). It may be considered that the register should not be encumbered with fugitive hybrids, but that priority should be given to those with a longer term presence. This criterion on its own, however, still results in a substantial number of plants, many of which may demonstrate not much more than the proximity of parents and the skill of the identifier (although there is room for more than one viewpoint here). The inclusion of hybrids has accordingly been limited to those currently present in Kent which retain the genes of a parent which has become extinct, or is close to extinction, in Kent. The list therefore includes *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* x *triqueter*. On the same principle, the list originally included *Hypericum maculatum* x *perforatum*, although this was removed on the rediscovery of *Hypericum maculatum* (Imperforate St John's-wort).
- The BSBI guidelines provide scope for including heritage plants, viz. long-established non-native plants which have particular cultural, historical or ecological interest. On this basis, *Malva setigera* (*Althaea hirsutam*, Rough Marsh-mallow) has been admitted to the list, as still being known in Kent in the area where, in 1792, it was first recorded as growing wild in Great Britain. *Chaenorhinum organifolium* (Malling Toadflax) is also a Kent heritage plant, both in view of its English name and because West Malling is the location of its first record in Great Britain (in 1880) and its most persistent population.

5. Geographic coverage

The Kent Rare Plant Register is intended to align with neighbouring registers. When the register proposals were first consulted upon, it was assumed that the London Rare Plant Register was in active progress, and so it would not be appropriate for the Kent register to include the metropolitan areas of vc 16. As the London project subsequently appeared to be in abeyance, the case for a Kent register which included the whole of vc 16 (rather than risk leaving an area which ends up without a rare plant register at all) became more substantial. Currently, therefore, the Kent register is intended to cover the whole of vc 15 and vc 16, so extending north to Deptford. This differs from the approach taken by Philp (2010), whose records are delineated by the administrative county boundaries and so omit metropolitan vc 16.

6. References

Cheffings, C.M. & Farrell, L. (eds) 2005. The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain. *Species Status 7*: 1-116. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

Leach, S.J. & Walker, K.J. (2011). Vascular plant Red Data List for Great Britain: a summary of year 5 amendments, covering years 3, 4 and 5 (2008-10) of the annual amendments process. *BSBI News 116*: 51-56.

Philp, E.G. 2010. *A New Atlas of the Kent Flora*. Kent Field Club.

Pitt, J. 2000. *Vascular Plants*, in Waite, A (ed.) *The Kent red data book: a provisional guide to the rare and threatened flora and fauna of Kent*. Kent County Council.

Preston, C.D. (2004). Should conservationists continue to ignore plant hybrids? *British Wildlife 15*: 411-415.

Preston, C.D., Pearman, D.A. & Dines, T.D. 2002. *New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora*. Oxford University Press.

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.



Galeopsis angustifolia at Dungeness. Photo by Liam Rooney, July 2011.