Greater Spearwort (*Ranunculus lingua*)

Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiyn-Feie

Background

Greater Spearwort is a popular species of water plant for introducing to large domestic ponds. It is often sold by nursery retailers, however, it is only native to one site in the north of the Island.

This Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been reformatted from a Rare Species Action Plan, produced by Wildflowers of Mann in 2004, and approved by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in the same year.

Description

A wetland and emergent plant. It grows to 1m tall with large yellow buttercup like flowers.

British Isles Distribution

The distribution of this species is somewhat unclear due to its use as an ornamental. It is found occasionally throughout all but the far north-west, of the British Isles. It enjoys a widespread European distribution.

Isle of Man Distribution

On Mann, the species is thought of as a native, only on one site - Ballakinnag Dub at the Ayres. As with many aquatic ornamentals, it is impossible to be completely sure of its native status. It also occurs as an obvious introduction to other domestic ponds on the Island, particularly in urban areas.

The species has already been introduced to two other new sites by the Wildflowers of Mann Project. Ballacunner Dub is near to Ballakinnag Dub and is connected to it via seasonal streams. It has also been introduced to MWT Ballachurry Nature Reserve in the south of the Island.

Habitat and Ecology

A perennial herb of wetlands, where the species grows as an emergent plant in still or slow running water, or as a species of swamp communities.

The species mostly spreads via runners forming large clonal clumps. But it also produces large quantities of seed, with a probable long viability (a typical trait of the genus). Runners often break off through the actions of waterfowl, leading to the vegetative spread of the species.

Legal protection

Listed on Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 and amber-listed under *Plants of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2022*.

Threats

Limited native population, with populations at risk due to successional change of habitat to woodland.

Reason for BAP

Highly threatened species as a native plant.

Aims

Maintain and expand Island distribution.

Linked BAPS

Greater Pond-sedge

Delivery Options	Active	Challenges

Delivery Plan

Strategy	Lead
Conservation work on this species is already well underway in an ad-hoc capacity, with two introductions from cultivated native stock. The Wildflowers of Mann stock plant, originated from a single geminated seed collected from Ballakinnag Dub. It has proved to be a vigorous species in cultivation, producing lots of potential translocation material. This species has also proved to be easy to transplant and introduce to new sites, although wildfowl do pose a problem in early establishment. In the long term, the establishment of the species on many of the wetlands connected to Ballakinnag Dub, should be a priority. Sites such as MWT Lough Gat e Wing Nature Reserve, Curragh y Cowle and the Lhagagh are all connected, but overgrown, wetland sites suitable for restoration. At MWT Ballachurry Nature Reserve in the south of the Island a similar strategy will be employed with Greater Spearwort being introduced to suitable sites in the same water catchment, around Port Erin.	Manx Wildlife Trust

Action	Timing	Responsibility
Grow vegetative material.	2009 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann
Establish new populations as receptor sites become available	2009 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann
Monitor and review	2009 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Introduction to MWT Billown Nature Reserve to be advanced once club-rush beds are more established	2026 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann

Annual Updates	
Year	
2010-2021	Plant held in cultivation.
2010	Plant found at Ballavarran Dub.
2011	Plant found in Ballaugh Curragh.
2022	Plant lost from cultivation (reason not known, but probably ducks).