



Spring Sandwort (*Minuartia verna*)



Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiyen-Feie

Background

The Spring Sandwort is a short, cushion forming perennial herb, most commonly found on lead mine-deads.

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



For much of the year, the plant looks little more than moss, but when in bloom it is smothered in bright white flowers, which can carpet an area.

British Isles Distribution

This European plant has a wide distribution in the uplands of the British Isles, but it is always considered scarce and is a protected species throughout the UK and Isle of Man.

Isle of Man Distribution

The single Manx site is on Bradda Head where a large healthy colony occurs.

Habitat and Ecology

The Spring Sandwort is short cushion forming perennial herb. A plant which is most commonly found on lead mine deads (hence its alternate name of 'leadwort'), it has little competitive ability against taller plants, so relies on contaminated land to control competition. It also grows on sparse rocky vegetation on limestone sites. On the Isle of Man, it grows on lead deads with Thrift, fescue, Sea Campion and Buck's-horn Plantain.

The fine seed is produced en-mass in pods, which disperse the seed very locally. Like many plants in the campion family, the seeds are probably dispersed further by ants.

The 'deads' habitat is fairly persistent without any management. But over time, lead does leach away and layers of organic and mineral soil accumulate above the contaminated land. This allows ranker vegetation to encroach. On the Manx site this process looks to be slow, and the habitat could yet persist another century or more.



Of the Schedule 7 species, the Spring Sandwort is one of the most secure at the moment, as it has a population of hundreds of healthy plants. They are, however, on just one site and, as has just been mentioned, the suitable habitat will naturally reduce over time (although it could be renewed by local turf removal).

Local threats to the population from the capping of the mines, should not pose a long-term threat, so long as careful procedures to protect the soils are taken.

Legal protection

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

Threats

Threatened due to being restricted to one single site.

Reason for BAP

Only found at a single site on Island.

Aims

Establish a second site.

Linked BAPS

None

Delivery Options

Spring Sandwort is an easy species to grow large numbers in cultivation. The Wildflowers of Mann project currently grows small quantities of this species.

Active

Challenges

Doubts do exist as to whether this plant will grow on deads away from the coast as it does favour lime. But trials can be made to find out its suitability. There are several mineral deads across the Island that could be potential sites.

Delivery Plan

Strategy

Establish a secondary site on safe 'deads' habitat.

Lead

Manx Wildlife Trust

Action

Collect seed.

Timing

Summer 2007

Responsibility

Wildflowers of Mann

Sow/grow seed.

Spring 2008

Wildflowers of Mann

Identify receptor sites.

Summer 2009

Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Plant Trial sites.

Autumn 2009

Wildflowers of Mann

Review trials.

Summer 2010

Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Plant out.

Summer 2010

Wildflowers of Mann



Review.	Summer 2012	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Annual Updates		
Year		
2007-2023	Plans to develop secure mine-dead site not progressed significantly, although Cross-Vien Mines is favoured.	

