



Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*)



Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiny-Feie

Background

Wood Speedwell is a vulnerable plant, present at two sites on 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



Looking like the far more common Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), the Wood Speedwell can be separated by its paler foliage and flower, and uniformly hairy stems (rather than in two rows).

British Isles Distribution

This is a European species, found through most of the British Isles, although absent in Lewis, Shetland and Orkney and very rare in the Highlands. It is rarely common, being mostly confined to Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, although in many parts, it will occur in almost all such sites.

Isle of Man Distribution

On the Isle of Man, it is only recorded in two neighbouring riverside sites below Narradale (an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland). The lower site is a road verge, where the plant grows along a five-metre stretch with Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europea*) and Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*). The upper site, adjacent to Narradale is within the grounds of a private house and has not been recently surveyed. In 2008 the species was also found in Groudle Glen (an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland). In 2016 a further site was found in Ballachrink (West Baldwin). In 2019 AN Additional population WAS found on stream gravel at East Balwin River at the River Glass confluence. In 2022 an additional population was found to Silverdale Glen.

Habitat and Ecology

Wood Speedwell is a creeping perennial plant, of woodlands and shady places. It is regarded as an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland indicator, throughout the British Isles. The short stature of the species can make it hard to find in spring, among vernal species such as Wild Garlic and native Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). But as an evergreen, it is easy to find at other times of the year.

Wood Speedwell tolerates shadier conditions than its relative *Veronica chamaedrys*. Spread is mostly by vegetative propagation, with roots readily forming where stems come into contact with the soil. With seed spread being rare, the species does not often colonise new sites.



It prefers damp rich soils, such as those preferred by Wild Garlic, but its greater tolerance of trampling, will often allow it a niche by tracks and paths. It is mostly found in W8 or W9 Ash woodland.

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*. The roadside population is mapped by Sensitive Verge (Wildlife Site) designation.

Threats

The limited nature of the current population, while seemingly stable, is too small to be considered safe. However, the recent disappearance (and consequent probable Island extinction) of Three-Nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*) from this same site, highlights its fragility.

Reason for BAP

Threat of extinction due to restricted population.

Aims

Establish a stronger population at Hairpin Woodland Park.

Linked BAPS

All Woodland for Wildlife BAPs.

Delivery Options	Active	Challenges
The upper site needs re-surveying to fully assess the status of this population.		
This species can be readily propagated from vegetative material, although seed propagation has not been tried. Its vigour in cultivation, will allow a ready supply of unrooted cuttings for planting out.		

Delivery Plan

Strategy	Lead
The long-term strategy will be to create a secure, large, multi-site meta-population of Wood Speedwell in the lower Narradale area. A permanent ex-situ population will be held in the Wildflowers of Mann greenhouses, as well as in a habitat bed in St Johns Mill. Vegetative material from the upper site should also be collected for genetic diversity and to allow seed propagation.	Manx Wildlife Trust
The first introduction has already been attempted in the autumn at Ohio Plantation - probably the site with the most potential for this species. Other Shady trackside locations can also be used for introductions in the future.	



Action	Timing	Responsibility
Survey upper site.	2008	Wildflowers of Mann
Maintain ex situ material of more than one origin.	2008 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann
Introduce to Ohio Plantation.	2008 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann
Introduce to other sites.	2009 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann
Monitor.	Summer >2009	Wildflowers of Mann

Annual Updates

Year	
2008	2 nd population found at Groudle Glen. Introduction to Ohio Plantation.
2011	Plant spreading well at Ohio Plantation.
2013	Due to catastrophic windblow, Ohio site has been abandoned. Additional population found near Ramsey Hairpin.
2016	Additional population found at Ballachrink (West Baldwin).
2018	Planting at Hairpin Woodland Park to reinforce the Hairpin population.
2019	Additional population found on stream gravel at East Baldwin River, River Glass confluence.
2022	<p>Additional population found to Silverdale Glen along with a single plant on a shingle bank in the Sulby River at Kerrowmoar, Sulby (downstream of Narradale).</p> <p>Population at Hairpin Woodland Park is now quite extensive, with lots of seedlings appearing, often some meters from original introduction. It is likely that, from finding plant of various years in new places (such as river gravel), it has a long-lived seed-bank, that readily germinates when conditions allow (good for coppice sites).</p>

