

# Cornfield Flowers Project



## Species Cards



### Small-flowered catchfly (*Silene gallica*)

#### Endangered

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) Priority Species

An extremely rare *Silene*, previously declared extinct in the area. It was never included on the original list of species for the CFP to refine as it was considered lost for good

#### REASONS FOR DECLINE:

Nitrogen application; herbicides; competitive crops

### *Our Small-flowered catchfly experience...*

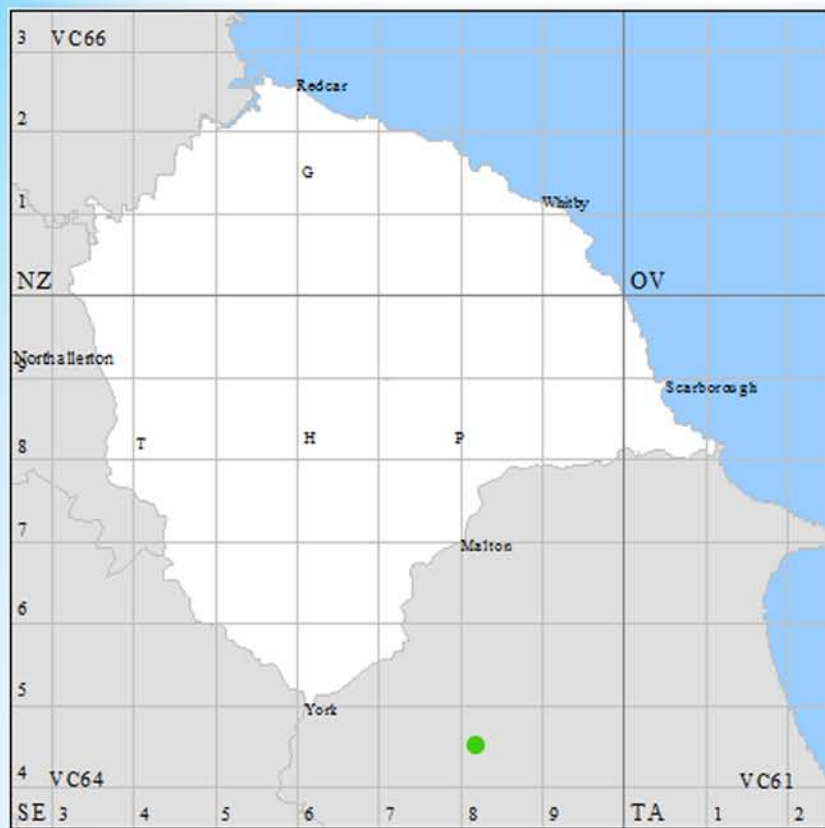
Small-flowered catchfly was once widespread in cornfields of England and Wales, but always scarce in Scotland. Today it is quite rare even in its 'stronghold' of Norfolk. A plant with a preference for sandy or gravelly soils, it seemed to have disappeared from our area about 1940.

Scarborough Naturalists, in *The Natural History of the Scarborough District*, class it as rare and give only two sites from 1940 at Cayton Carrs and Thornton-le-Dale. They also have a record for *Silene quinquevulnera*, at Forge Valley in 1915 and classed as 'rare'. *Quinquevulnera* is considered today to be a variant of *gallica*.

In 1990 Eva Crackles commented, 'said to be formerly common in cornfields, although only five localities were specified. Not known now.' Staxton sand pits were the last site given in 1940.

In 2014, our volunteer farmer Martin Stringer found *Silene gallica* var. *quinquevulnera* growing in one of his fields near Hayton. After first accidentally cutting the top off it, he tended it carefully and managed to persuade it first to flower again and then part with some seeds. These germinated in the autumn, and it looks as though we may be able to multiply it in 2015. Contact with the East Riding recorder tells us that another find was made the same year at Escrick. This plant could really be 'back from the brink'.

# Distribution in north-east Yorkshire: Small-flowered catchfly (*Silene gallica*)



## Key

● Post-2000 records  
(inc. CFP introductions)

■ Pre-2000 records

● Original known site

G: Guisborough T: Thirsk  
H: Helmsley P: Pickering

Data: BSBI, 2014 Maps produced by MapMate®

## Key Facts - Small-flowered catchfly (*Silene gallica*)

- Preference for well-drained sand or sandy-loam soils
- Autumn and spring germinating
- Similar overall appearance to the other arable *Silenes* but with smaller flowers that open in the daytime and sticky upper stem
- The variety *quinquevulnera* has a dark-red blotch at the base of the petals, rather than the usual plain white or pale-pink

### UK Conservation Designations

The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain (2006) designates all UK wildflowers by their rarity, and hence conservation importance, in the following order:

Extinct → Extinct in the wild → Critically Endangered → Endangered  
Vulnerable → Near Threatened → Least Concern

The Cornfield Flowers Project is spearheaded by the Carstairs Countryside Trust, Ryedale Folk Museum, North Yorkshire Moors Association and North York Moors National Park Authority. It has a demonstration field and nursery at Ryedale Folk Museum and a working arable field at Silpho, near Scarborough. It is supported by the North York Moors National Park Sustainable Development Fund, North York Moors Coast & Hills LEADER Programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

