

Cornfield Flowers Project



Species Cards



Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*)

Extinct in the Wild

Present in the UK since the Iron Age, it is now considered extinct as a wild plant of arable fields

Seeds reported to be toxic so were actively removed from grain, hastening its extinction

REASONS FOR DECLINE:

Improved seed-cleaning methods; herbicides

Our Corncockle experience...

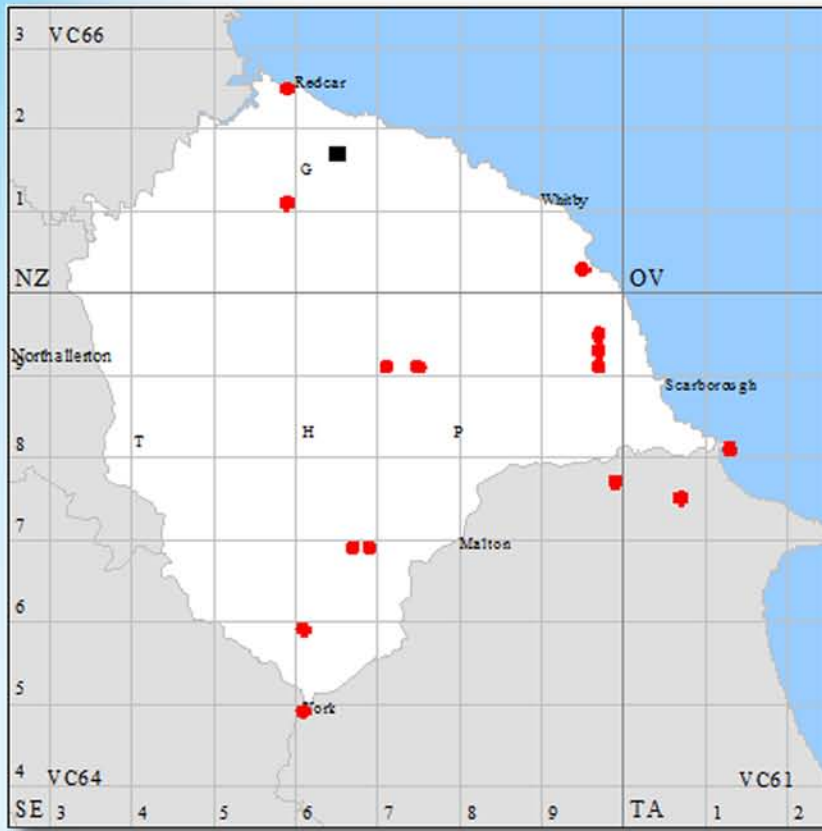
Although relatively common in the 1800s, Corncockle seems to have undergone a rapid decline in our area in the early 1900s. Scarborough Field Naturalists Society lists its last sighting as 'Staxton, 1940'. Eva Crackles in *Flora of the East Riding of Yorkshire* recorded it at Wintringham in 1957 and that seems to have been its last record in our area.

Phil Wilson in *Arable Plants - A Field Guide* says that it is 'probably extinct in the wild'. However Chris Wilson, Cornfield Flowers Project Officer, has seen it flowering in Plantlife's arable demonstration fields in Kent, where the warden assured it was native. Ian Carstairs of the Carstairs Countryside Trust also told us he found it growing on a ditch bank after dredging and we have received other reports of it reappearing spontaneously.

Records from north-east Yorkshire show a scattering of sites throughout the North York Moors National Park - most of these can be traced to introductions by the CFP. A very few of these sites cannot be easily explained, except we know that Corncockle is a prolific seed producer and the seeds are readily available - we have had to make attempts in the past to reduce the numbers of plants growing in our fields at Silpho and Terrington.

The seed we use was supplied from an unknown source in the south of England in 2000, our first year of operation, and all our seed dates back to that introduction.

Distribution in north-east Yorkshire: Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*)



Key

● Post-2000 records (inc. CFP introductions)

■ Pre-2000 records

G: Guisborough T: Thirsk

H: Helmsley P: Pickering

Data: BSBI, 2014 Maps produced by MapMate®

Key Facts - Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*)

- An attractive plant, much used in wildflower seed mixes
- Its use in bought seed mixes makes it difficult to distinguish possible native plants / sites from introduced ones
- Autumn and spring germinating
- Historical records indicate seeds are toxic to animals and people if consumed in sufficient quantities

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.

