

# Cornfield Flowers Project



## Species Cards



### Viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)

#### Least Concern

A unique and striking plant, this biennial likes disturbed ground but isn't ideally suited in arable

Uncommon in north-east Yorkshire, only recorded in 6% of CFP surveys

#### REASONS FOR DECLINE:

Herbicides; development of neglected ground

### Our Viper's-bugloss experience...

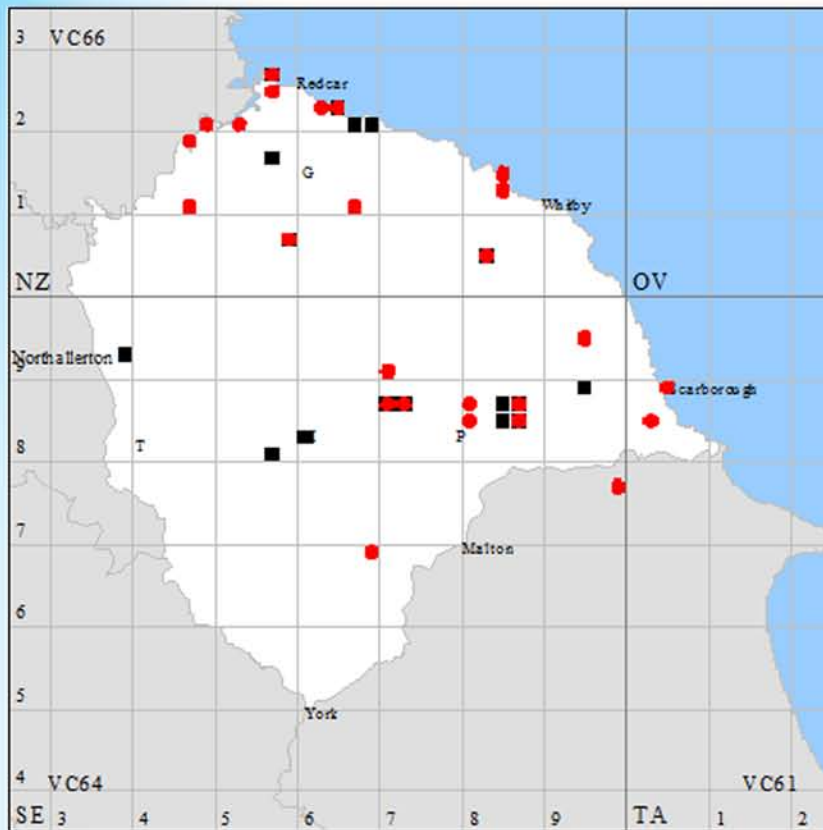
Viper's-bugloss is a striking plant, so much so that it takes two years to build enough energy to produce its one metre tall flowering stalk, spending the first year as a rosette of prickly leaves. As a biennial it is not strictly at home in arable land but prefers to grow along the bare fringes of field edges where it escapes cultivation. It can be reliably found at Glebe Farm, Potter Brompton, well-suited to the free-draining sandy soils.

Viper's-bugloss is capable of impressive displays, as witnessed in Spaunton Quarry in 2011 when hundreds of plants decorated the quarry floor with a purple haze, attracting countless bumblebees and humming-bird hawk-moths to feed.

The ancient herbalists Discorides and Culpeper reported it to be a cure for snakebites - *Echium* comes from the Greek *echion* meaning viper. 'Bugloss' is also of Greek origin, meaning ox-tongue and said to refer to the roughness and shape of its leaves.

The closely related Giant viper's-bugloss (*Echium pininana*) is an even more striking plant with flowering stalks up to four metres tall! A native of the Canary Isles, it has been widely planted including in UK gardens, but prefers warmer climes than Yorkshire...

# Distribution in north-east Yorkshire: Viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)



## 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 - Viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)

- Prefers well-drained soils in bare, disturbed ground or quarries
- Autumn and spring germinating biennial
- An unmistakable plant when flowering in second year - first year rosettes need care to identify
- In the same family as the annual Bugloss (*Anchusa arvensis*) found in same habitats but impossible to confuse the two

## 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.

