

# Cornfield Flowers Project



## Species Cards: non-arable



### **Bithynian vetch** (*Vicia bithynica*)

#### **Vulnerable**

An annual vetch of coastal cliffs and grasslands; one of the non-arable species the CFP conserves

Included under the Rare Plants section of the Scarborough Biodiversity Action Plan

#### **REASONS FOR DECLINE:**

Habitat degradation; scrub encroachment

### ***Our Bithynian vetch experience...***

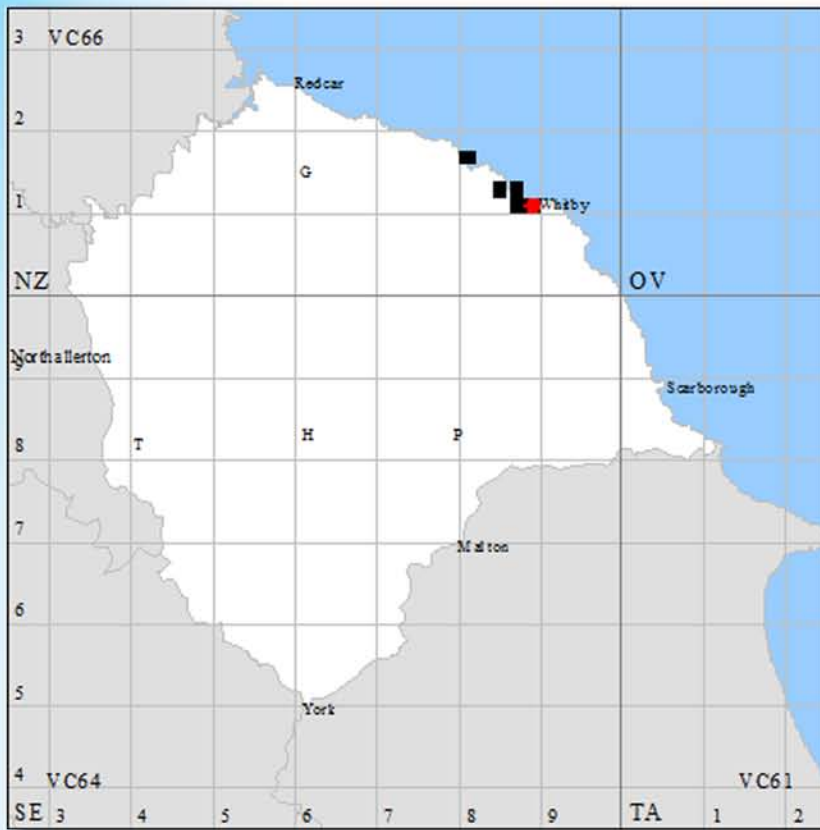
Bithynian vetch is a rare plant in Britain. With a mostly coastal distribution, it reaches its northernmost limits on the east coast at Uppang Ravine just north of Whitby. Easily identified when in flower by its pale-purple and white flowers, it spends most of the year pretending to be meadow vetchling. The best feature for identification is its deeply notched stipules.

The Uppang Ravine site is the only place we can be sure of finding it, and even there sometimes two or three years have gone by without any report of it being seen. There have, however, been reports of it on the cliffs at Lythe, Burniston Wyke and South of Cayton Bay. None of these sites have been confirmed over the years, but are probably correct as it is so easily identified in flower.

Bithynian vetch was included in the Scarborough Biodiversity Action Plan, and the Cornfield Flowers Project undertook to grow it from seed and introduce to other sites. At first we had trouble getting it to germinate until our volunteer Pauline Popely hit upon the idea of treating it like Sweet-pea and scarifying the seed shell. After that it was 'every egg a bod', as they say in these parts.

The Cornfield Flowers Project introduced Bithynian vetch to several sites over the years and it now grows spontaneously in Cayton Bay, South Steel Battery by Scarborough Castle, Birkdale Farm at Terrington, Spaunton Quarry and Stoupe Brow Cottage Farm at Ravenscar. However, if you really want to see it, take a trip to Minorca where you will wonder why we ever thought it was rare...

# Distribution in north-east Yorkshire: Bithynian vetch (*Vicia bithynica*)



## 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 - Bithynian vetch (*Vicia bithynica*)

- A very rare vetch in our area, found exclusively in coastal rough grasslands
- Spring germinating; usually an annual but sometimes persists into second year
- Appears suited to heavy clay soils on the coast at our native site, but will also grow on very dry limestone where introduced
- Strongly resembles Meadow vetchling before flowering; toothed stipules are the key identifier

### 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.

