

GREEN-WINGED ORCHID

(*Orchis morio*)

What is the GREEN-WINGED ORCHID?

The green-winged orchid is an attractive orchid with violet, purple or lilac flowers which appear between March and July. It is a species with a wide ecological tolerance, but it has generally declined due to changes in agriculture. It grows in old meadows, unimproved grassland and pastures on base-rich soil.

Where is it found in the UK?

The green-winged orchid is found in the southern half of England, Wales and Ireland. It reaches its northern limit around the Durham area. Temperature is thought to determine the northern limits of growth. However, coastal sites are milder than inland sites, which allows the green-winged orchid to grow further north in coastal areas.

Why is the green-winged orchid of CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE?

The green-winged orchid is declining across the UK due to habitat loss following agricultural intensification. Unimproved lowland grasslands declined by 97% in the 50 years prior to 1984, with a loss of 0.2 million hectares. Losses continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The green-winged orchid is one of a group of scarce and declining plants dependent on unimproved grasslands and low nutrient input.

THE GREEN-WINGED ORCHID IN THE DURHAM AREA

How HEALTHY is the local population?

The green-winged orchid was last recorded at Blackhall in 1954, when 29 spikes were present. After this, the rich pastures at this site were ploughed up, almost to the cliff edge. There are no records after this date in the Durham area.

How much do we know about the green-winged orchid in the DURHAM AREA?

There are records of green-winged orchids dating back to 1805 from scattered sites across the Durham area.



STATUS: The green-winged orchid is protected on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order.

Other action plans and statements covering issues relevant to the green-winged orchid:-

➤ COASTAL GRASSLANDS***

➤ COASTAL GILLS***

➤ LOWLAND MEADOWS AND PASTURES*

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WHERE has the green-winged orchid been found in the Durham area?

The green-winged orchid has been recorded at Upper Teesdale (1890), Hamsterley Woods, Chopwell Woods and Muggleswick (1903), Myers Flatt (1927), Birtley, Consett, Derwent Valley and Ebchester as well as "in enormous numbers" in a field near Blackhall.

Green-winged orchids are at RISK from:

HABITAT LOSS - due to changes in agriculture, notably grassland improvement and the associated application of fertiliser, herbicides and ploughing.

FRAGMENTATION OF HABITAT.

NEGLECT - leading to the encroachment of scrub and bracken.

Green-winged orchids BENEFIT from:

RE-INTRODUCTION TO SUITABLE AREAS where green-winged orchids have formerly been present and where suitable habitat is available.

PROTECTION AND APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT OF RE-INTRODUCTION SITES.

REDUCED LEVELS OF NUTRIENT INPUTS.

Important HABITATS for green-winged orchids:

UNIMPROVED LOWLAND GRASSLANDS AND MEADOWS

TARGETS

- 1** *Re-introduce green-winged orchids to 2 sites where it has historically been present and where long term re-introductions are possible.*
(2002)
- 2** *Maintain sustainable populations of green-winged orchids and ensure appropriate management at sites where re-introduction has been successful.*
(ONGOING)
- 3** *Monitor the re-introduction programmes.*
(ONGOING)
- 4** *Raise general awareness about the green-winged orchid in the DBAP area.*
(2002)

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ACTION PLAN

ACTION	DATE	Possible PARTNERS	Meets TARGET No.
POLICY AND LEGISLATION			
1. Protect the re-introduction sites for the green-winged orchid.	ONGOING	DCC, EN, EDC, DWT, DBAP	1, 2
SPECIES MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION			
2. Reintroduce green-winged orchids to appropriate sites by means of seed sowing and plug planting.	ONGOING	DCC, EN, EDC, NT, DWT, DBAP, Local Specialists	1
3. Encourage implementation of appropriate management regimes on sites where the green-winged orchid has been reintroduced and on adjacent land.	ONGOING	NT, DCC, EDC, SCC	2
RESEARCH AND MONITORING			
4. Monitor the re-establishment of the re-introduced green-winged orchids.	2002	EN, DCC, EDC, DWT, DBAP, Universities	3
5. Submit all records to the Local Records Centre.	ONGOING	All Partners, Local Communities	3
ADVISORY			
6. Increase general awareness of the green-winged orchid amongst land owners and managers.	ONGOING	DCC, EDC, EN, DBAP, DWT	4
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY			
7. Increase public awareness of the conservation programme to restore the green-winged orchid population in the Plan area as part of an integrated coastal/marine interpretation package.	2002	CA, DBAP, DCC, EDC, SCC, STMBC	4