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Making I. Count for People and Plants. The Making I. Count for People and Plants programme, generously funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, was set up in 2002 as a joint initiative between Plantifile and the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSB). Midking It Count for People and Plants aims to identify the state of the UKS flora by co-ordinating volunteers to carry out plant surveys. The programme has four elements: Plantifile Single Species Survey, Plantific Common Plants Survey, Blantific Count Plants Plant Registers.

Plantifie in the UK: leading charity working to protect wild plants and their habitast. The charity has 11,500 members and owns 23 nature reserves. Plantifie is 'Lead Partner' for 77 species under the UK Government's Biodiversity Initiative. Conservation of these threatened species is delivered drough the charity's Book (from the Brink species recovery programme, which is jointly funded by Countryside Council for Wales. English Nature, Costoth Natural Heritze, charitable trusts, companies and individuals. It involves its members as volunteers (Flora Guordion) in delivering many aspects of this work. Plantifie's head office is in Salisbury, Wilshire and the charity has associal offices: Wales and Scotobia.

The Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSB) is for everyone who is interested in the flora of British and Irlanda from its earliest day in Itsa weekend both professional and matter members. BSB is one of the video's largest contributors of biological data, providing over nine million records to the Vascular Plants Database. The Society's notable recent achievements include the New Albs of the British and Irlin (2002), and sating as the Society's notable recent achievements include the New Albs of the British and Irlin (2002) and sating as when the Society's society and in the Society and sortion of the Society and Soc

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The late Pete Selby, BSBI Volunteer Officer, who died in post during this project.

The Common Plants Survey Steering Group which includes Michael Braithwaite (85B), Jenny Duckworth (Plantife), Simon Smart (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology). Chris Cheffings (Joint Nature Conservation Committee (MCCO), Rowena Langston (RSPB), Inn Bonner (BSBI & Plantife), Bob Bunce (RSPB), In Bonner (BSBI & Plantife), Bob Bunce (Alterra Wageningen) and Paul Rose (INCC).

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Our thanks go especially to all the volunteers who participated in our surveys – without your help the project would simply not have happened.

# Summary

This report is a celebration of the Meking It Count for People and Plants project, as it nears its completion. The project raised public awareness and improved understanding of the nation's plant heritage by recruiting volunteers to carry out plant recording; improving the co-ordination of existing specialist volunteer networks; encouraging new audiences to participate in botanical recording by recruiting young people, people with disabilities and members of ethnic communities as volunteers; and improving reporting on the state of the UK's flora. This was achieved through four projects:

Plantife Single Species Surveys aimed to encourage more people to get out and about searching for plants and to encourage new groups to get involved with plant recording and conservation. Each year a different species group was focussed on, and these included Poppies, Bluebells and Harebells.

Plantife Common Plants Survey is the only national annual survey of wild plants in the UK. Participants look for any of the 65 Indicator species, within small plots, in a random 1km square. The data from the survey are used to produce species trends, which will provide a picture of the health of the countryside.

BSBI Local Change was a repeat survey of selected 2 x 2 km Ordnance Survey grid squares throughout the country that were first studied in 1987-88. About 750 volunteers took part in the survey and detailed analysis of their records has revealed some key changes in the UK flora.

BSBI County Rare Plant Registers (CRPRs) are a definitive and detailed record of nationally and locally, native, rare and scarce plants in individual counties. The joint project has given a significant boost to this aspect of BSBI's voluntary work.

Over 5,500 people took part in the project, including 100 schools participating in Plantifie's Bluebells for Britain survey. Over 500 people joined in with the Common Plants Survey in 2005 and initial results show impacts from eutrophication (increase of Nettle and decrease of Bird's-foot-trefoil), a decline in wetland species, species-poor plots in intensively farmed areas (with Common Poppy utilising other habitats such as roadsides to survive) and one in six woodlands with a mixture of native and hybrid/Spanish Bluebells, highlighting the possible threat to our native Bluebell from hybridisation.

In excess of 750 botanists participated in the BSBI Local Change Survey. Results have shown that species of chall/limestone grassland and heather moorland have shown the strongest evidence of decline; evidence of eutrophication is apparent in wetlands through decline of Marsh Marigold and increase of Bulrush; species are responding to climate change such as Pyramidal Orchid and Bee Orchid almost doubling in frequency, arable weeds appear to be recovering (such as Long-headed Poppy), but the rare ones continue to decline; and some roadside plants have spread dramatically, such as Great Lettuce and Grass-leved Orache.

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# Introduction

### Celebrating Making It Count for People and Plants

This report is a celebration of the Making It Count for People and Plants project, as it nears its completion. Together, successful partnerships have been built and over 5,000 people have been engaged in collecting vital plant records.

### Aims and objectives

The project aims to raise public awareness and improve understanding of the nation's plant heritage. The project's objectives are to:

- recruit volunteers to carry out plant recording within new and established survey projects;
- improve the co-ordination of existing specialist volunteer networks;
- encourage new audiences to participate in botanical recording by recruiting young people, people with disabilities and members of ethnic communities as volunteers:
- · improve reporting on the state of the UK's flora.

Making It Count for People and Plants is an innovative and productive programme that has been very successful in co-ordinating volunteers to carry out plant surveys. These surveys will help to conserve Britain's wild plants by giving a picture of the state of the UK's flora. A range of different surveys was carried out to identify changes and trends in our flora. This information will inform policy and help the shaping of conservation management plans that will promote a healthy environment for wild plants and enable them to resoond to environmental chanees.

This project helps towards achieving several targets in Plant Diversity Challenge (the UK's response to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation), such as Target 14. Communicating and educating and Target 15: Training in plant conservation.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has generously funded this project, and without this the project would have been unable to get off the ground.

# Single Species Surveys

These surveys are for those who want to discover more about, or who have a growing interest in, wild plants. The Single Species Surveys aim to encourage more people to get out and about searching for plants and to encourage new groups to get involved with plant recording and conservation. Each year a different species group was focussed on.

### Counting Councils hills summe

The first Single Species Survey in 2002 was the Counting Crane's-bill survey; it included the Meadow Crane's-bill, the Bloody Crane's-bill and the Wood Crane's-bill. The Meadow Crane's-bill has declined due to changes in agricultural practice impacting on its main habitat, hay meadows.

# Bluebells for Britain survey

The Bluebells for Britain survey followed in 2003 and people were asked to look for the native Bluebell, the Spanish Bluebell and the garden hybrid. The survey raised awareness about the problems that might affect the native Bluebell e.g. competition and hybridisation with the Spanish Bluebell, habitat loss, unsustainable collection and climate

# Plantlife Poppy Survey

change.

2004 saw the launch of the Plantlife Poppy Survey and people were asked to spot the Common, Rough, Prickly, Long-headed or Babington's Poppy. Poppies, like other arable flowers, have declined in recent times due to agricultural intensification.

### The Harebell Hunt

The Harehell Hunt was the focus of the 2005 survey and the Harehell and four other beliflowers were included (Giant, Nettle-leaved, Spreading and Clustered Beliflower). The beliflower family acts as a barometer for the natural world as its species are affected by habitat loss, decline in grazing and coppicing, increased use of herbicides and removal of hedgerows.

# Common Plants Survey

This survey is for those who are interested in developing their knowledge or who already have a reasonable understanding of wild plants.

The Common Plants Survey is the only national annual survey of wild plants in the UK. Sixty-five of the UK's common plants were carefully chosen to be both easy to identify and indicative of particular habitats e.g. Bluebell in broadleaved woodland. Participants look for these plants in plots within a randomly selected Ikm square close to where they live. They survey a centre and linear plot in the centre of the Ikm square, and up to five targeted plots throughout the square. By surveying these random squares each year, a picture about the health of the wider countryside is built up. If you are participating in the survey, please keep monitoring your square, as the value of the data increases as the number of years grows.

# Local Change Survey

This survey is for those with a very good understanding of botany and wild plants. The survey aims to identify changes in the geographical range of British flowering plants and ferns by a repeat study of selected 'tetrads' (2 × 2 km Ordnance Survey grid squares). In 1987-88, botanists visited 811 tetrads in a regular grid and all the plants they could find in them were listed. In 2003-4 these squares were revisited, and again the aim was to record as many plants in them as possible.

Careful thought has been given to the analysis of the results, so that they are not biased by differences in recording between the two surveys. In comparing the results of the two surveys, only tetrads that were recorded to a comparable extent in both surveys have been included in the analysis. Excluded from the basic analysis were:

- · very common species, as they are too frequent to show change at this scale;
- rare species, as they were too infrequently sampled for us to draw any conclusions about them;
- recently introduced species ('neophytes'), as botanists now record many of these more comprehensively than they did in 1987-88.

This leaves for analysis 726 native and long-established non-native species ("archaeophytes") in 635 tetrads (shown as blue in map above) extending from the Isles of Scilly to Shetland. This provides a unique dataset, which incorporates species of both urban and rural habitats throughout Britain.

# County Rare Plant Registers

County Rare Plant Registers (CRPRs) are a definitive record of native and longestablished non-native plants considered rare and scarce within a particular area. These registers can range from a simple list of sites with grid references to glossier publications with pictures and texts, and usually entail a great deal of work.

CRPRs provide a starting point for effective conservation work at the county and community level and are an important tool in directing local conservation action. They interpret recent records in relation to detailed recording over two centuries. The HLF funding enabled recorders to be provided with GPS (Global Positioning System) equipment (as shown right) that has allowed plant populations to be routinely recorded to 10m accuracy. This will make a huge difference when these populations come to be recorded in the future.



# Tetrad coverage

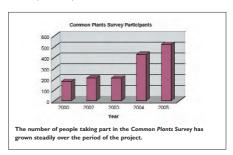
The tetrads recorded comparably for the two Local Change surveys. The yellow tetrads were less comparable than the blue tetrads, and were therefore not included in the analysis (see Local Change Survey left).



# Results - people participation

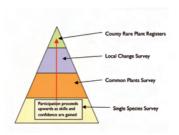
Aim: Recruit volunteers to carry out plant recording within new and established survey projects

Over 5,500 people took part in one or more of the surveys in the Making It Count for People and Plants programme. The number of volunteers participating in the project was 362 in 2002. 2760 in 2003. 1608 in 2004 and 960 in 2004



# Aim: Improve the co-ordination of existing specialist volunteer networks

In this project, progression of survey participants has been demonstrated. Plantifie has encouraged the hundreds of new people that took part in the Single Species Surveys to move on to do the Common Plants Survey (dedicated plant recording). The BSBI Local Change Survey offered one-to-one training and the County Rare Plant Registers had dedicated local groups evolving. Support was given to Vice County Recorders throughout the project particular help was given for using computers for storing and forwarding data.





Aim: Encourage new audiences to participate in botanical recording by recruiting young people, people with disabilities and members of ethnic communities as volunteers



Plantife's Single Species Surveys were targeted at groups who may not already be involved with plant conservation and monitoring. Young people, ethnic communities and disabled groups were encouraged to participate in our surveys and make a difference for plant conservation.

Data were entered electronically via Plantlife's website for the Single Species Surveys, with 45% of the Bluebell data received in this format. The survey



instructions along with species identification help were available for survey participants on our website.

Training workshops have been run by both Plantlife and BSBI. Informal training in the field was an important aspect of Local Change recording with experienced botanists acting as mentors to less experienced ones.



terms of raising public awareness and educating people regarding the potential threats to our native Bluebell. This survey was the most successful Single Species Survey with 1800 people taking part. It was our most popular survey with children with around 100 schools taking part. A successful partnership with the RSPB was developed and they promoted our surveys through their Wildsquare Initiative.



Common Plants Survey 1km square locations in 2005

# Results - mapping the UK's flora

Aim: Improved reporting on the state of the UK's flora

Plantlife Common Plants Survey and Single Species Survey results

In 2005, over 500 people participated in the Common Plants Survey. The point where species trends can be produced with confidence is just about being reached. As of 2005 there are five years of data, but there are not many I km squares where there is a full run of data from 2000. Where there is, initial statistics have been produced and these are presented below. The map shows the I km source locations in 2005.

The Making It Count for People and Plants programme has enabled Plantlife to set up the survey and to establish a robust baseline of data, from which species trends will be generated in the future.

In 2005 improved grassland was the most recorded habitat in the centre plots and inland rock/standing water and canals were the least recorded. Within the linear plots, boundary features were the most recorded habitat (seven times as many as rivers/streams). For targeted plots the most recorded habitat was boundary features and the least was coastal habitats. These patterns reflect the habitat preferences of the 65 species as well as the natural abundance of habitas in the UK.



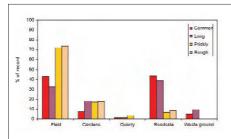
Nettle Urtica dioica, was the most recorded species in all types of plots and showed an overall increase between 2002-05. Bird's-foot-trefoil Lotus corniculatus had the most losses (2002-05): it is a species of well-drained grassland and does not tolerate nutrient rich areas. With Nettle increasing and Bird's-foot-trefoil decreasing, this suggests that there is evidence of eutrophication in infertile habitats.



Just under half of the standing open water/canal plots had **Yellow Iris Iris**pseudacorus and Bulrush Typha latifolia.
Analysis of species trends within habitats showed that marsh/fen species appeared to be decreasing. This is probably due to outroohication of these wetland habitats.



About 40% of plots in arable! horticultural habitats and just under a third in improved grassland had zero records. It is likely that plots will be species poor if they are intensively farmed. In the future, when indicative species trends are produced, the response of agricultural habitats to impacts such as agri-environment. schemes will be able to be monitored.



The Plantlife Poppy Survey concentrated on our five red-flowered poppies -Common, Rough, Prickly, Long-headed and Babington's Poppy. The aim of the survey was to raise awareness of the issues surrounding arable plants and to find out more about where poppies are growing and how they are faring in the countryside. The results showed that field margins/strips were the most common place to find poppies within fields. The rarer Rough and Prickly Poppies appeared to be confined to fields, whereas the Long-headed Poppy and Common Poppy utilise many other habitats including roadsides. In the future the Common Plants Survey will supply trend data for both Long-headed and Common Poppies, as indicators of arable habitat quality.



Boundary features (such as roadsides, hedgerows, footpaths) are the most recorded habitat type for survey plots, Initial results show that Bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta appears to be increasing in boundary feature habitats and decreasing in broadleaved woodland and serub. Two wood edge species Lesser Celandine Ranunculus ficario and Lords-and-Ladies Arum maculatum (shown here) both appear to be faring well (the former had the most gains of any species between 2000-05 and the latter had most gains 2002-05).



In the Bluebell survey, recorders were asked to look for the native Bluebell, the Spanish Bluebell and Bluebell hybrids in both urban and rural areas. The results showed that the majority of records received were of native Bluebells but that one in six broadleaved woodlands had a misture of native and hybrid/Spanish Bluebells. This highlights the possible threat to our native Bluebell from hybridisation, which is being further researched at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh.



Percentage of species showing change in range through the Local Change Survey

# **BSBI** Local Change results

At least 750 botanists took part in the Local Change survey, BSBIs Local Change survey gathered 196,792 distinct records, which were computerised and will be shared with the National Biodiverity Network Gateway, In excess of 90% of the Local Change data were received electronically. This project has enabled many plant recorders to computerise their records for the first time, enabling the flow of data from local recorder to actional database to run smoothly.

The full results of the survey are presented in a separate report 'Change in the British Flora 1987-2004' published by BSBI, as part of the Making It Count for People and Plants programme.

# How many species appear to have changed their range?

The results of the survey refer to change at the tetrad scale on which the recording is based. If larger or smaller areas were surveyed, there would inevitably be differences in the results. At this tetrad scale, the majority of species show no significant change. We concentrate in our report on the changes detected in the survey, but this emphasis on change should not overshadow the fact that many distributions of flowering plants and ferrs are stable.

At this tetrad scale, just over half of the species show no significant change, but for the more widespread species the changes detected are at the fringes of their distributions where populations are low. It follows that the total populations of widespread species may be little changed even where their distributions show significant change in this survey. For scarcer species changes in distribution may reflect large population changes (see chart left).

# Loss of species in infertile habitats

Local Change has shown that the species of chalk/limestone grassland and heather moorland showed the strongest evidence of decline.



Chalk and limestone grassland - a species-rich habitat, found on calcareous soils and supporting many specialist species.



Heather moorland - these have fewer species but the habitats are of great landscape value in areas of acidic soils.



Greater Knapweed Centaurea scabiosa, is a typical calcareous grassland species. The results of the survey indicate its decline in range by about 26%.



Calcareous grassland being encroached by scrub

### Conclusion

Both calcareous grassland and heather moorland are nutrient-poor habitats. Although many large areas are protected, small patches are still being lost to agricultural change or building land. Chalk and limestone grassland is also vulnerable to increases of soil-nutrient levels, which have risen partly by deliberate fertilisation and partly by drift from fertilisers sprayed on adjacent land or from other airborne pollutants. Changes in grazing may have a major effect on both habitats. If heather is overgrazed grasses are at an advantage and the moorland gradually changes to grassland. If grazing of chalk or limestone grassland is too light, it becomes overgrown, losing many species, or reverts to scrub.

# Eutrophication of wetlands



Marsh Marigold Caltha palustris, shows a clear decline of about 15%, concentrated in the south and east. The reasons are unclear but may include falling water tables and eutrophication.



Bulrush Typha latifolia, has showed an increase of about 19%, dramatic in many northern and western areas. Although it may be planted, its wind-dispersed seeds are an effective means of dispersal and it is favoured by eutrophication.

# Conclusion

Although no overall change has been detected in the species of wetland habitats, the nature of wetland vegetation is changing as nutrient levels rise in response to increasing nutrient inputs from polluted water and perhaps also from aerial pollution. Species preferring nutrient-poor conditions have fared less well than those of nutrient-rich habitats.



The results for Lousewort Pedicularis sylvatica, show how the range of the species is being eaten away at the edges, where remnants of moorland are disappearing. It has declined in range by about 15%.

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# Species responding to climate change

Since the 1987-88 survey, Britain has become a warmer place. The mean Central England Temperatures for 1987 and 1988 were 9,05°C and 9,77°C, compared with 10.50°C and 10.51°C in 2003 and 2004. This typifies recent changes: between 1900 and 1987 fewer than one year in six had a mean temperature above 10°C, but nine of the 11 years between 1994 and 2004 exceeded this threshold.

The survey identifies the effect of warmer temperatures on the British flora, the first time this has been apparent in a national survey. In several habitats, including woodland, chalk and limestone grassland, neutral grassland and built-up areas and gardens, those species favoured by higher temperatures (particularly higher winter temperatures), show an increase compared to those of more northern climates. The spread of two orchid species, Bee Orchid and Pyramidal Orchid, has been a particularly striking feature. Several winter-green ferns have also done very well.

It is more difficult to point to species that have suffered because of climate change. This may reflect a timing difference: species shown to be preading are those which are readily dispersed and may spread rapidly, while species shown to be in decline may be very persistent and only start to die out from some of their localities long after conditions have turned against them. The decline of northern species shown by the survey is probably related to the loss of natural habitats over a long period of years.



Bee Orchid Ophrys apifera, is a member of a Mediterranean group of orchids; it has almost doubled in frequency, expanding northwards and westwards since 1987, sometimes appearing on infrequently mown garden lawns or disturbed sizes.



Pyramidal Orchid Anacamptis pyramidalis, has almost doubled in frequency within its native range. Large populations have appeared on newly made roundabouts and roadside verges. The number of 'losses' is remarkably



Hart's-tongue Fern Phyllitis scolopendrium, has also increased between the surveys, in its case by about 21%, and whereas it was once typically found only in shaded and sheltered habitats towards its northern limits, it increasingly occurs in more exposed habitats such as walls and quite open woodland.

# Are our arable weeds recovering?

Arable weeds declined more than any other group of species in the years of agricultural intensification following the Second World War. Species that were once familiar to every botanist disappeared from large areas within a few decades. Remarkably, the results of the Local Change Survey indicate that this decline has been halted, and even suggest a possible modest increase in the group as a whole (although the rarer species are excluded from the analysis and are still under threat). This probably shows the effect of agri-environment options such as set-aside fields and uncultivated headlands, which have been introduced since the 1987-88 survey, coupled with increase disturbance to roadsides and other non-agricultural habitats. However, this modest increase is from a very low base, and in some cases may simply represent casual occurrences of species arising from a long-lived seed bank rather than self-sustaining populations.



Long-headed Poppy Popaver dubium, is frequent in eastern Scotland and central England. The results show an increase of about 15%. The evidence of increase is across the whole of its range and the species has probably been assisted by agri-environment options.



Corn Marigold Chrysanthemum segetum, has continued to decline, with further losses of about 32%. It matures only slowly and in cereal crops, where it is easily controlled by herbicides, and is now confined to unsprayed corners and marginal strips and is more frequent in

fields of root crops.



# Dramatic spread of some roadside plants

Many of the more dramatic changes have been in the plants of roadsides. These are frequently disturbed and species can spread along them relatively freely, perhaps aided by seed dispersal on tyres or in the slipstream of cars and lorries.



Great Lettuce Lactuca virosa, has probably been favoured by higher summer temperatures. It has increased about threefold between the two surveys, with the related Prickly Lettuce L seriola, showing similar gains.



Grass-leaved Orache Atriplex littoralis, is one of a small group of coastal plants that have spread inland on the edge of salted roadsides. It has tripled in frequency between the two surveys, an even more recent expansion than the other species in the group.



# Conclusions

Through this project volunteers have been recruited to carry out plant recording within both new and established projects. Co-ordination of existing specialist volunteer networks has improved and popular access to our plant heritage has been widened and enhanced.

Plantific's Single Species Surveys have been very successful at encouraging new people to get involved with plant recording and educating about key issues surrounding plant conservation. The Bluebell Survey was incredibly popular with schools and the public, and in Plantifie's County Flowers campaign in 2002, the Bluebell was overwhelmingly voted Britain's fovourite flower.

For the Plantific Common Plants Survey, a statistically robust yet easy method for randomly sampling small plots within the wider countryside has been developed. The method is accessible to new volunteers and the data collected will soon be able to provide trends of common species. However, initial results show impacts from eutrophication (increase of Nettde and decrease of Bird's-foot-trefoil), a decline in wetland species, species-poor plots in intensively farmed areas (with Common Poppy utilising other habitats such as roadsides to survive) and one in six woodlands with a mixture of native and hybrid/Spanish Bluebells, highlighting the possible threat to our native Bluebell from Inbridisation.

The BSB Local Change project has demonstrated key results about recent changes in the UK's flora. Species of infertile habitats, particularly grassland, are losing ground. The balance of species in wetlands is changing with an increase of nutrients in the environment. There are indications that some species are responding to climate change. There are distinct changes occurring in our arable flora and there is a notable spread of many roadside plants.

County Rare Plant Registers are one of the cornerstones of the BSBIs plans for the decade after the completion of the New Atlas in 2002, and the Making it Count for People and Plants project has given a great boost to progress. At the start of the project few counties had work underway, although one or two registers were already published. There were good, agreed criteria in place at the beginning, but these have been greatly refined through the course of this project. As of March 2006, there were twelve published, another three on websites and roughly another nineteen well enough advanced to have a realistic prospect of being available in some form by March 2007, in addition, a further ten were past the very early stages. The increasing momentum has persuaded other supporters to come forward and help with specific elements, and the whole concept is now well established.



# How to get involved

If you are interested in any of the vital on-going work in this report, please get in touch, take part and help us to make wild plants count. More volunteers are desperately needed to keep these surveys going and to enable us to keep a watchful eye on the UK's flora.

# Single Species Survey and Common Plants Survey

Please visit the Plantlife website at www.plantlife.org.uk, email enquiries@plantlife.org.uk or phone the survey hotline on 01722 342755. You can also write to us at Plantlife, 14 Rollestone Street, Salisbury,Wiltshire, SPI 1DX.

# Local Change and County Rare Plant Registers

Find out more about BSBI at www.BSBI.org.uk, email admin@BSBI.org.uk or write to: BSBI, Department of Botany, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD. Telephone 0207 942 5002.





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