

Results of the Common Plants Survey, 2007

*'Unique and vital',
'an exemplary initiative ... that must be extended into the future'*
Expert scientist on vegetation change

It has taken a while, such is the nature of nature, but with seven years of findings under our belts your hard work is paying off. We now have 17,728 records in total from the Common Plants Survey. No wonder the scientists are full of praise.

The aim of the survey is to gather information about the health of our countryside. This is done by repeated recording of a selected group of 65 plant species that are used to represent the major habitat types found in Britain and Northern Ireland. The Survey still remains the only one of its kind in the UK and the information gathered by you is of great importance, regardless of how many or how few of the 65 plants you find.

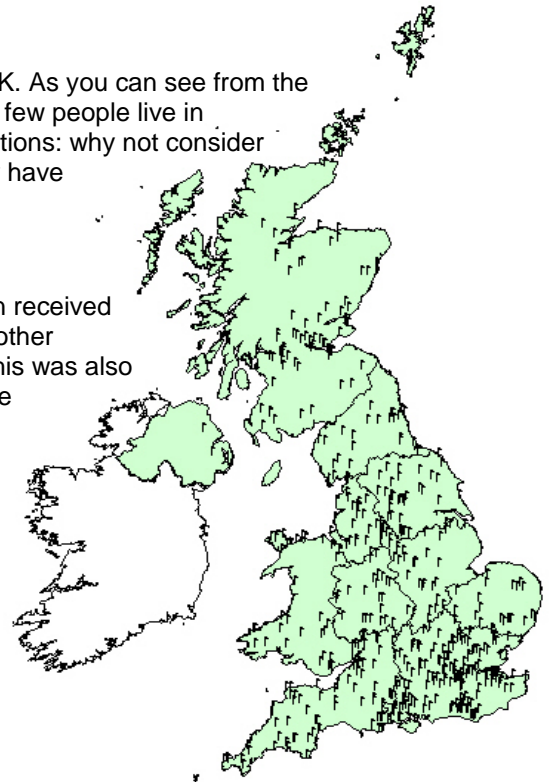
In 2007, 519 1km squares were surveyed right across the UK. As you can see from the map, some areas are still under-recorded, often because so few people live in these parts. Many of these areas are perfect holiday destinations: why not consider adopting a square if you regularly go on holiday in the UK or have family members who live out in the sticks?

And the news is ... nettles, nettles and more nettles!

Except for the Centre plots in 2002, more records have been received each year for the Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* than for any other species. This might not be a big surprise to you. However, this was also the case in the additional habitat plots where you can choose areas of interest within your 1km square.

Aside from nettles, the 'Top10' species (those spotted most frequently) in 2007 were: Cleavers, Cow Parsley, Ribwort and Greater Plantains, Hawthorn, Lesser Celandine, Bluebell, Red Clover and Herb-Robert.

Meanwhile, Long-Headed Poppy and most marsh species were sighted very rarely.



Trend Data: 2002 to 2007

Trends are useful to show changes in vegetation over time. We now have enough information to start to look for trends, although for some species and habitats we still need more. If your square has any built up areas, standing open water, inland rocky outcrops, bracken, conifer woodland, coastal habitats, heathland, marsh, fens, bogs or swamps, we would be delighted if you would consider surveying part of them as an additional Habitat Plot (the H1 – H5 on the survey form).

In 2006 we had sufficient information for 24 of the 65 species in the Survey to undergo trend analysis. Now, just 10 species remain with too few records to enable this level of scrutiny.

Trends were analysed using a freeware programme called TRIM (Trends and Indices for Monitoring Data) developed by Statistics Netherlands. TRIM analyses a time series of counts using Loglinear Poisson Regression (a form of generalised linear modelling, if that helps!) and produces estimates of yearly indices and trends.

CPS Winners: **Lords and Ladies** and **Lesser Celandine** showed a **Strong Increase** while **Traveler's Joy** and the **Common Nettle** showed a **Moderate Increase**. A 'strong increase' suggests a significant increase of more than 5% per year which would amount to a doubling in abundance within 15 years.

CPS Losers: **Common Chickweed, Tufted Vetch, Harebell, Butterbur and Red Clover** all showed a **Steep Decline**. A 'steep decline' means a decline of more than 5% per year – or a halving in abundance within 15 years if the trend continues. A **Moderate Decline** (a significant decline, but not more than 5% per year) was seen for **Bugle, Scarlet Pimpernel, Foxglove, Teasle, Red Dead-Nettle, Greater Plantain, Meadow Crane's-Bill, Common Bird's-Foot Trefoil, Common Poppy, Colt's Foot** and **Brooklime**.

The difference between the species listed as 'losers' or 'winners' over time and those that were most or least recorded 2007 was show just how important the Common Plants Survey is. Systematic Government surveying of the countryside happens just once every 6-10 years. The Common Plants Survey can help show whether their survey year was typical and so help avoid drawing inappropriate conclusions or recommendations. It can also provide warnings about worrying trends a lot sooner than the less-regular surveys.

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