



Beech Fern (*Phegopteris connectilis*)



Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiyen-Feie

Background

A species of limited distribution on the Isle of Man.

This Biodiversity Action plan (BAP) has been reformatted from a Rare Species Action Plan, produced by Wildflowers of Mann in 2004, and approved by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in same year.

Description



Beech Fern is a deciduous creeping fern found in shady, damp, rocky places, normally within woodland.

British Isles Distribution

This plant is widely distributed all over the Northern Hemisphere, in northern and mountainous parts. In the UK, it is fairly common in northern and western Britain, where humidity levels are higher. The vast majority of its sites are ancient woodlands.

Isle of Man Distribution

On the Isle of Man, the plant occurs at a few sites around Port Cornaa, as well as in a few recorded upland sites.

Habitat and Ecology

Beech Fern is a deciduous creeping fern, found in shady, damp, rocky places - normally woodland. It normally roots into a skeletal soil, or a thin layer of humus over rock, preferring poor, slightly acidic conditions.

It is a graceful looking plant, up to 30 cm tall, much like a dainty miniature version of the bracken. Its spreading runners can make a clump over 1 m across, with dozens of fronds.

Its main dispersal mechanism is via spores, which it releases in late summer. Whilst new plants are somewhat rare, the Beech Fern is very long lived, so long as a favourable environment is maintained. Shady, rocky and humid sites are probably fairly common, even without the presence of trees. But many of these sites will be within the reach of sheep, which would graze the plant.

The Victorian national glens are a likely safe habitat for Beech Fern, with many rocky, shaded, damp sites and a lack of grazing.



Legal protection		
Listed on Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 and amber-listed under <i>Plants of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2022</i> .		
Threats		
Increases in shade have probably led to the loss of the Churchtown population, but other populations appear stable.		
Reason for BAP		
A species with a very restricted distribution, due to grazing pressures. With less grazing over woodland areas, the species has many potential sites, but has limited natural dispersal abilities.		
Aims		
To increase the number of sites occupied by this species.		
Linked BAPS		
Woodland Biodiversity Action Plans and Woodlands for Wildflowers Action for Wildlife project.		
Delivery Options	Active	Challenges
Ballaglass and Dhoon Glens would seem to be the most likely receptor sites due to their proximity and environmental similarity to Cornaa.		
Delivery Plan		
Strategy		Lead
Two new populations in Manx National glens will be established in the northeast of the Island near to its current population around Cornaa. Establishment next to humid river sides should be fairly easy, however growing the plants from collected rootstock will be a slow process, and so introductions could happen at a rate of just one per annum.		Manx Wildlife Trust
Action	Timing	Responsibility
Find source plants	Summer 2005	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Collect and propagate stock	Summer 2005	Wildflowers of Mann
Grow on/divide stock	Spring 2006-10	Wildflowers of Mann
Identify receptor sites	Summer 2010	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Plant out	Autumn >2010	Wildflowers of Mann
Monitor	Summer >2011	Wildflowers of Mann



Review	Summer 2012	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Annual Updates		
Year		
2006/2007/2008	Searches for Beech Fern failed to discover historic sites (Dhoon Glen and Churchtown).	
2010	Colonies found at Cornea and Glen Roy as part of the ancient woodland inventory.	
2013	Two colonies found around Sulby Reservoir.	
2016-present	Ongoing efforts to make suitable habitat in Hairpin Woodland Park (Claughbane Glen) to enable first translocation.	

