



Celery-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*)



Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yanno Beiy-Feie

Background

Celery-leaved buttercup is a much-declined species on the Island.

This Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been reformatted from a Rare Species Action Plan produced by Wildflowers of Mann in 2016, and approved by the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture in same year.

Description



A wetland annual plant, germinating in late summer, spending the winter as a floating-leaved plant in flooded conditions and flowering in late spring when water levels drop.

British Isles Distribution

The tolerance of rather fertile, base-rich soils makes this species a common plant of intensively farmed parts of lowland England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, especially ditches near the sea.

Isle of Man Distribution

Allen (1984), states that Celery-leaved Buttercup was recorded commonly on the coast, from Gansey to Ronaldsway, with outliers in Lonan and potentially the Calf. It has not been recorded from the coast since the mid-1990s but was certainly common above the Langness saltmarsh until recent decades. The last known wild sites for the species is Ballahott Dub near Billown, where it has been recorded in 2002 and 2022.

In 2015, many seedlings were seen in a newly created garden at the Isle of Man College (Douglas). Soil testing revealed a pH of 7, which would mean the soil was probably imported from the southeast of the Island (maybe during the construction of the College in the 1970s). It can be assumed that Celery-leaved Buttercup seeds, were brought in with the soil at this time, and have lain dormant since. The plant has proved vigorous here, and has become something of a weed, but is maintained among the garden flowers for seed collection by Wildflowers of Mann.

Habitat and Ecology

Celery-leaved Buttercup is a much-declined species on the Isle of Man. Of the diverse *Ranunculus* genus, this species has probably one of the more exacting and interesting life cycles. It tends to grow in rather fertile and base-rich soils - sites such as ditches that dry up in the summer but remain underwater in winter/early spring. Its salt tolerance also allows it to thrive in grazed upper saltmarshes or coastal pastures.



It will only germinate in bare, disturbed soils associated with soils poached by grazing animals or in mechanically cleared ditches. This biannual germinates in late summer, when its habitat has dried out and it rapidly grows a buttercup like rosette of leaves. In the autumn its habitat tends to become flooded, and the plant rapidly sends up floating leaves more closely resembling a waterlily than a buttercup. As the water level decreases in late spring, the aquatic leaves die away and a 50 cm tall flower spike with dozens of small flowers appear. These quickly go to seed and the plant dies, normally having produced many hundreds of small seeds. The seeds would appear to be very long-lived.

Legal protection

Listed on Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 and black-listed under *Plants of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2022* (since refound).

Threats

The past stronghold of the species in Langness, is now rendered mostly unsuitable for the species. This is due to the removal of grazing from the upper saltmarsh areas, leading to rank growth of Hemlock Water-dropwort and False Oat-grass.

Reason for BAP

Critical decline.

Aims

To provide secure new location(s) for this species.

Linked BAPS

Farm Ponds Action for Wildlife
Pink Water Speedwell, Golden Dock, Greater Spearwort and Greater Tussock Sedge BAPs.

Delivery Options	Active	Challenges
No plans are in place to resume grazing management to this part of Langness. The presence of an easy seed source at the University College Isle of Man gives good opportunities for a reintroduction program.		
Alternative sites require seasonal inundation, regular disturbance and reasonable fertility. Lough Gat e Whing meets the first and second criteria.		The fertility could be too base-poor for the species to thrive. However, given that the seed is plentiful and the introduction process very simple (scattering fresh seed on bare ground in summer) it would be worth a try.
The Wildlife Park meets the first criteria. The second criteria of disturbance may be over catered for and indeed the wildfowl may destroy plants through mechanical damage (they are not palatable).		While the site is eutrophic, it is not necessarily base-rich. As at Lough Gat e Whing, introductions to the Wildlife Park will be viable on the basis of the low inputs needed.



Delivery Plan		
Strategy		Lead
The strategy over the next five years therefore will be to see if introductions to Lough Gat e Whing and the Wildlife Park are viable. Further sites should be assessed and opportunities grasped as they occur.		Manx Wildlife Trust
Action	Timing	Responsibility
Maintain seed in cultivation at the University College Isle of Man.	2016 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann/Isle of Man College
Sow seed in bare inundated areas in Lough Gat e Whing, the Wildlife Park and other assessed sites.	2016 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann
Monitor.	2017-2021	Wildflowers of Mann
Annual Updates		
Year		
2017-8	Introduced to Wildlife Park with large numbers of seed but failed to establish and many wet muddy areas subsequently filled in with sand.	
2021	Introduced to small pools at Billown from potted plants but eaten by rabbits before seeding.	
2022	Introduced to draw-down zone of big pool at Billown. Many plants maturing and seeding. Re-found at Ballahott Dub (adjacent to Billown) by E. Charter.	
2023	Single plant growing in small pools area at Billown - setting seed. Seedlings appearing in drawdown zone of large pool (July/August).	

