



Quaking Grass (*Briza media*)



Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiyen-Feie

Background

Quaking grass is a native grass with highly reduced distribution across the Island.

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 the same year.

Description



Perhaps the most attractive of the native Manx grasses, it was known locally in the north of the Island as 'shaking grass'. Anecdotal reports indicate that it was popular and common enough to be picked as a cut flower 50 years ago.

British Isles Distribution

This is a common European species found throughout the British Isles, but somewhat rare in the Highlands, Orkney and Shetland. It is not considered native to the Hebrides.

Isle of Man Distribution

The species has been recorded in all but two 10km squares on the Isle of Man where it is considered native. Records for the past five years are restricted to one site at Ballavarran between Sandygate and Jurby. Other comparatively recent records around Langness and Jurby East, have been resurveyed for the species in 2006/7 but no plants were found.

The Ballavarran meadow site has now just one plant remaining. In 2007 it yielded seven flower spikes, but seed collected was found to be sterile.

Habitat and Ecology

A perennial herb normally found on dry, infertile, calcareous soils. It can also be found occasionally in infertile mire communities. Quaking Grass grows to about 40cm and favours a light sward, thus it is most commonly found in meadows and extensively grazed unimproved grassland. However, other amenity and coastal swards will also support this species, as well as skeletal soils found around quarries and eroding cliffs.

The species flowers in May and June, followed by seeds within papery seed heads that are mostly dropped by August. The species has been found to be non-self-fertile.



Legal protection		
Not listed on Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 and red-listed under <i>Plants of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2022</i> .		
Threats		
This species would seem to be within a few years of extinction on the Island. It is not self-fertile and there would seem to only be one plant remaining. Thus, the population will only last as long as the life span of the single plant.		
Reason for BAP		
To reverse population, decline and prevent Island extinction.		
Aims		
Increase population size and introduce quaking grass to other conservation sites.		
Linked BAPS		
All Shaking Grass Action for Wildlife BAPs.		
Delivery Options	Active	Challenges
Delivery Plan		
Strategy		Lead
<p>As action has been considered urgent, a cutting of this plant has been taken and propagated in nursery conditions where four healthy plants now exist. To gain a viable population, seed has been collected from County Fermanagh which will allow cross-pollination and, in 2008, the production of viable seed. The Irish plants will be destroyed once they have been used.</p> <p>The progeny will be used in 2009 for backcrossing and will also be destroyed. Only seed from the maternal line will be used. The third-generation plants will then be bulked up in a seedbed, to be used as seed and plug plants in conservation schemes.</p> <p>Liaison with the owner of the Ballavarran meadow should help return this site as to a suitable condition for the species. The meadow has undergone a prolonged period of neglect - the resultant rank vegetation and willow growth would probably explain the decline of this formally abundant species here. This meadow is also an important site for three species of orchid.</p>		Manx Wildlife Trust
Action	Timing	Responsibility
Backcross to Manx plants.	Summer 2009	Wildflowers of Mann
Identify receptor sites.	Summer 2010	Wildflowers of Mann
Establish in receptor sites.	Autumn 2010	Wildflowers of Mann
Monitor and review.	2011 onwards	Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



Annual Updates	
Year	
2008	Seed from Manx and Ulster populations grown.
2010	Two plants found on gravel path near Eary Cushlin.
2019	Significant recovery of species at Sandygate due to some positive management by landowners. Lots of seed collected and grown on. Stock from Ulster backcrossed plants destroyed as not needed.
2020	In cultivation and doing well.
2021	Planted at Rosehill ASSI (10 plants).
2022	30 plants planted at MWT Billown Nature Reserve extension site.
2023	Billown plants (ASSI and Extension) doing well, but rabbits taking most flower spikes in extension site).

