



## Wood Vetch (*Vicia sylvatica*)



### Biodiversity Action Plan | Cummey Yannoo Beiyen-Feie

#### Background

A woodland plant, confined to a small part of the Island (Glen Maye Area of Special Scientific Interest).

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



This is a finer plant than most vetches, with smaller leaflets on larger leaves, giving a smoothly textured appearance to the plant. The early summer flowers are a mauve-white, although they look white and decorative from a distance. Seed pods follow in late summer.

#### British Isles Distribution

Wood Vetch is a European plant found, occasionally, over much of the British Isles.

#### Isle of Man Distribution

On the Isle of Man, it is found on one site at Glen Maye, where at least half a dozen plants survive in good health. The species has been recorded (Allen 1984) on two sites nearby, but the lack of recent records would indicate that the plants have disappeared since.

#### Habitat and Ecology

Wood Vetch is a perennial climber/scrambler of coppice woodlands, woodland edge, scrub, mountains, coastal cliffs and shingle. It is part of the large genus of vetches, within the legume family.

It is hard to generalise about habitat requirements, for a species which occupies such a range of sites. However, its Manx site is a sheltered cliff base, over a river, and within 200 m of the mouth of the river and the sea. It grows among rank vegetation and below scrub. The plants hang down over the river, so the bulk of the vegetation is free of competition. This would seem to be a site which is similar to most of the plants of this species, that grow on the west coast of the British Isles.

The Wood Vetch has almost certainly been uncommon on the Island for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. For a plant with quite catholic tastes as to habitat, and a wide UK distribution, the reason for its rarity is hard to determine. But a lack of grazing, and no permanent shade or rank vegetative competition, is likely to be an important factor in its survival.



Its positive response to coppicing, often after a long period of neglect and absence, indicates that it is able to survive for a long time in the seed bank.

Wood Vetch does have threats to its survival, as its riverside habitat is being invaded by Japanese Knotweed. There is also the remote chance of flood events, washing away the population. The site is very gradually (slowed by proximity to the sea), scrubbing over and becoming woodland. Eventually this will lead to the shading out of this colony, without some management.

## Legal protection

Listed on Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act 1990 and red-listed under *Plants of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man 2022*.

## Threats

Habitat change. Invasive species.

## Reason for BAP

Saving this species is a difficult task, as the last remaining colony would seem to be in terminal decline, and other prospective sites are suffering similar habitat changes to the Glen Maye site.

## Aims

Wood Vetch should (ideally) be established at three new coastal sites in the southwest.

## Linked BAPS

Woodland for Wildflowers BAPs.

## Delivery Options

### Active

### Challenges

Possible receptor sites are Glen Wyllin, Glen Mooar and Fleshwick.

## Delivery Plan

### Strategy

Establish a large stock of mature cultivated plants for planting in a range of coastal/river habitat niches. Management of the existing Glen Maye site should be considered a priority.

### Lead

Manx Wildlife Trust

### Action

### Timing

### Responsibility

Collect seed.

Summer 2006

Wildflowers of Mann

Sow/grow seed.

Spring 2006-10

Wildflowers of Mann

Identify receptor sites.

Summer 2009

Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Plant out.

Autumn >2009

Wildflowers of Mann

Monitor.

Summer >2010

Wildflowers of Mann

Review.

Summer 2011

Wildflowers of Mann, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



| Annual Updates |   |
|----------------|---|
| Year           |   |
| 2005           | Seed collected failed to germinate.   |
| 2006           | Seed sown fresh and germination of three plants within two weeks.   |
| 2007           | Plant established in cultivation at St Johns Mill. Seed production good.  |
| 2013           | Old population at Traie ny Vollian rediscovered.  |
| 2017           | 6 plants planted at Hairpin Woodland Park.  |
| 2018-22        | Plants at Hairpin Woodland Park not thrifty. Requires more light and possibly more heat, but a few still surviving.   |
| 2022           | Colony at Glen Maye struggling with Japanese Knotweed suppressing final plants. Plant has become weedlike at University College Man flower borders (where it became established as a pot weed) and where it is spreading by seed and runners. A useful source of fresh native seed. |
| 2023           | Plant established in cultivation at St Johns Mill persisting.   |

