

# Back from the Brink – Species summary

## Field Wormwood

**BftB project:** IP07 Shifting Sands – Securing a future for the Brecks

**Project lead organisation:** Natural England

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**Partner organisation for species:** Plantlife

<b>Species name – common &amp; scientific</b>	Field Wormwood ( <i>Artemisia campestris</i> )
<b>Photograph</b>	 <p>© Alex Hyde / Back from the Brink</p>
<b>Taxon group</b>	Family: Asteraceae
<b>Conservation status</b>	IUCN: Least Concern Plantatt: Endangered
<b>UK distribution</b>	All UK populations now considered to be in Breckland
<b>Habitat associations</b>	Guilds: Open, disturbed, non-grazed Habitat: Lowland heathland and grassland, open mosaic
<b>BftB work carried out:</b>	
<b>Survey &amp; Monitoring</b>	All known Brecks sites are monitored by Breckland Flora Group – this work began before the project and has continued throughout.

<p><b>Sites habitat management works</b></p>	<p>Turf stripping done to restore suitable habitat on 3 sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brandon Nature Reserve SSSI – turf stripped c. half of area</li> <li>• Lakenheath Warren – 2 areas turf stripped; trees removed</li> <li>• Weeting Heath – turf stripped pit sides</li> </ul> <p>Management regimes changed to benefit the plant and ensure seed heads remain into the autumn (to benefit the Wormwood Moonshiner beetle):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brandon London Road Industrial Estate – Designated as a County Wildlife Site &amp; Roadside Nature Reserve, verge management regime changed</li> <li>• College Heath Road, Mildenhall – Management regime changed to delay cutting annually</li> </ul> <p>Direct protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Icklingham Fields (Stanta) – plants fenced Feb 2019 (this work was not done by the project)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conservation 'interventions' incl. reintroductions &amp; translocations</b></p>	<p>Reintroductions/translocations were undertaken at 5 sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cranwich Camp extension – 6 plants</li> <li>• Three Hills, Mildenhall – 6 plants</li> <li>• Weeting Heath pit - 6 plants - reintroduction</li> <li>• Weeting Heath Car Park – 6 plants</li> <li>• Harling Drove – 11 plants</li> </ul> <p>Only 3 out of 5 of these populations have survived since translocation; Cranwich camp extension and Warren hills did not survive.</p>
<p><b>Technical advice provision</b></p>	<p>A species dossier has been published by the project, which is a technical report outlining everything we know about the species' ecology and conservation.</p>
<p><b>Links made with other taxa / conservation work?</b></p>	<p>The designation of Brandon Industrial Estate verges as a County Wildlife Site in 2019 enhances the protection of this population, particularly as it has facilitated changes to the Local Authority's management plan such that mowing does not take place routinely but only after plants have been allowed to flower and set seed – this makes the plants available in the right condition for its dependent insect, the wormwood moonshiner beetle <i>Amara fusca</i>.</p>
<p><b>Wider engagement &amp; advocacy activities?</b></p>	<p>Miles, P., Pankhurst, T., Jones, J. (2019) 'Bringing the Breckland wormwood back from the brink: reprioritising conservation actions', <i>Journal of Breckland Studies</i>, vol. 3, pp. 43-54.</p> <p>Interpretation boards, featuring Field Wormwood and Wormwood Moonshiner, were designed, and put up at the two key native sites: London Rd Industrial Estate, Brandon, and College Heath Rd CWS, Mildenhall.</p> <p>Before London Rd Ind Estate was designated a CWS, local unit owners and managers were consulted, invited to a meeting, and offered the opportunity to have their logo on the Estate's interpretation board. 3 did so and have expressed delight in the improvement to wildlife on their work doorstep. All were provided with posters for their offices about the importance of the Industrial Estate verge's flora and Wormwood Moonshiner.</p>

<b>BftB results obtained:</b>	
<b>Recorded Distribution</b> (in BftB focal areas)	The industrial estate at Brandon has been, since 2008, the only known native site until the discovery of some 40 odd plants in 2018 at College Heath, Mildenhall. A single plant was then located in an informal car park in Icklingham in 2019.  Reintroduced to 1 site; introduced to 4 others.
<b>Recorded Abundance of species populations</b>	New site discoveries (outlined above) also increased recorded abundance.  Reintroduced 6 plants to 1 site and a total of 24 plants introduced to new sites.
<b>Other results documented?</b>	In the course of works, it was recorded that the plant can persist on grazed sites as a dense woody root mat, producing low-growing, non-flowering shoots which can be overlooked. This has led to plans to resurvey former sites to look for such plants and inform a re-evaluation of those sites. When grazing (or indeed mowing) is relaxed, plants may then produce flowering shoots.
<b>Species Recovery Curve progress made</b>	Baseline: 2 Current estimate: 6
<b>Other measures of species recovery progress? e.g. FCS</b>	BFG monitoring into the future will chart any flux in population levels.
<b>Recommendations for future work:-</b>	<b>Management recommendations</b>  The dynamic systems for which Field wormwood appears to be adapted are difficult to simulate through management. The Breck tradition of very long fallow periods would have favoured the plant, as that that practice mimics the highly natural, intermittent instability of long-phase dune systems. The plant has never been associated with the warrening history of the Brecks but, with a shift from rabbits to mainly sheep grazing, perhaps there is potential for the plant to become established in such places.  At sites which are grazed or mown, intermittent withdrawal of management will allow low-growing plants to flower and set seed. One would want however to monitor the condition of plants upon the renewal of grazing, to ensure that such a renewal did not kill off established specimens.  At un-grazed or mown sites, there is likely to be a management requirement to suppress other competitive vegetation, unless the soils are so impoverished or worn that there is no threat in this regard. In the latter circumstance, no management is required.
<b>Overview of plans for future monitoring:-</b>	All known populations will continue to be monitored annually by Breckland Flora Group. Reintroductions/translocations done by Shifting Sands will continue to be monitored by Plantlife, Breckland Flora Group and by landowners.