

Back from the Brink – Species summary

Spring Speedwell

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

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| Species name – common & scientific | Spring Speedwell <i>Veronica verna</i> |
| Photograph |  <p data-bbox="740 1370 1222 1402">© Andreas Rockstein / Back from the Brink</p> |
| Taxon group | Vascular plants Family: Plantaginaceae |
| Conservation status | Endangered |
| UK distribution | Spring Speedwell is entirely confined to the Brecks of Norfolk and Suffolk (Figure 1). There is one 1914 native record from the Waveney Valley in East Norfolk, and a few further flung places where the plant is believed to have been introduced, but otherwise all records are from vice-counties 28 West Norfolk and 26 West Suffolk. Even here, the plant is rare, and now only known from a handful of sites. Other populations in East Anglia and introduced populations in Devon appear to have been lost (see page 8 of the Portfolio for more information). |
| Habitat associations | Open, disturbed, grazed ground (see pages 5-7 in the Portfolio for more information) |

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| BftB work carried out: | |
| Survey & Monitoring | <p>Populations are monitored by the Breckland Flora Group, who share findings with the Shifting Sands project.</p> <p>Bespoke surveying method. Surveying undertaken once annually in April/May in five locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avenue Farm - Deadman's Grave - Icklingham Triangle - Eriswell Low Warren - Weeting Heath <p>(See pages 10-11 and 14-17 in the Portfolio for a brief description, longer description, case study and survey form.)</p> |
| Sites habitat management works | <p>Works undertaken at Lakenheath Warren, Eriswell Low Warren and Deadman's Grave to benefit Prostrate Perennial Knawel may also benefit Spring Speedwell. Turf stripping, rotovation and ploughing to reinstate disturbed open ground conditions (e.g. fallows, early succession grass-heath) has been done at historic sites in Breckland. This does not cover the full range of historic sites.</p> |
| Conservation 'interventions' incl. reintroductions & translocations | N/A |
| Technical advice provision | <p>Species dossier produced by Tim Pankhurst for the Colour in the Margins project.</p> <p>NE Brecks advisors have received a copy of the dossier produced by Tim Pankhurst for the Colour in the Margins project.</p> |
| Links made with other taxa / conservation work? | <p>Spring speedwell potentially benefits from works undertaken for Prostrate Perennial Knawel.</p> |
| Wider engagement & advocacy activities? | |
| BftB results obtained: | |
| Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas) | <p>12 sites have been surveyed for Spring Speedwell and it has been recorded at 8 locations:</p> <p>Avenue Farm US Airbase Lakenheath Deadman's Grave Icklingham Triangle Icklingham Plains South Foxhole Heath, Eriswell Codson's Hill Weeting Heath, Arable Weed Reserve</p> <p>In winter 20/21 there were 3 confirmed sites but this increased to 8, due to the new survey method developed by BFG which means it can be surveyed when it is not in flower. Note: this was not done outside of the BFTB programme.</p> |
| Recorded Abundance of species populations | <p>Breck population and status well-understood, though may still be under-recorded (because it is so tiny).</p> |

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| Other results documented? | New discovery made by BFG during project that the species can be confidently identified whilst it is not in flower, meaning that several old sites could be surveyed that have not been accessible for many years (due to presence of Stone Curlew during survey period). This is a significant discovery for this species and increased the known number of sites from 3 to 8. |
| Species Recovery Curve progress made | The Species Recovery Curve score has increased from a 2 to a 3 within the lifetime of the projects. However, there is the potential that it could reach step 4 five years after the project has finished if further research on the autecology can be undertaken. |
| Other measures of species recovery progress? e.g. FCS | Breckland Flora Group long term monitoring will show flux in all populations over time. |
| Recommendations for future work:- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research into the seed longevity of Spring Speedwell would help us understand the viability of seed at historical locations and whether restoration attempts could be a solution. • Soil nutrient levels are not well known at extant sites as there were just a few samples taken and there are so few populations. This information is useful when considering sites for reintroduction. • Spring Speedwell could benefit from keystone species (rabbit) restoration. |
| Overview of plans for future monitoring:- | Breckland Flora Group will continue to monitor Spring Speedwell annually or biannually at all known sites. |

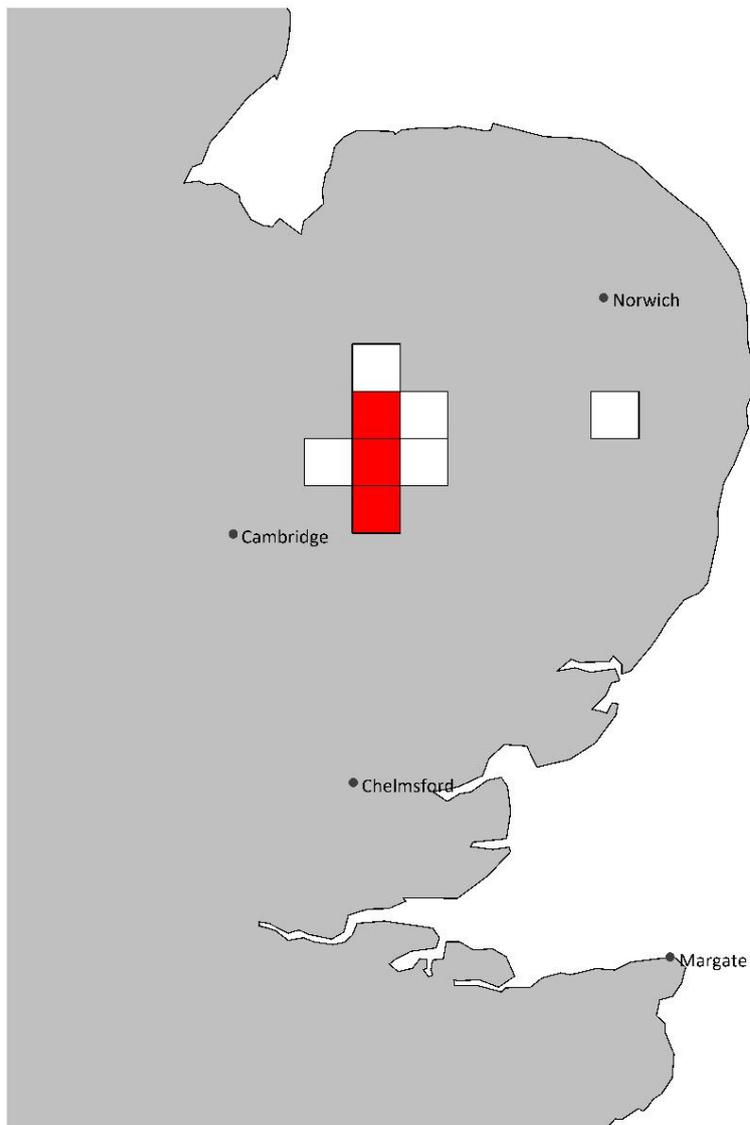


Figure 6: Spring Speedwell *Veronica verna* distribution in Britain and Ireland. The data used to create this map has been provided under licence from the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) and accessed from the Society's online database.