

# Back from the Brink – Species summary

## Basil Thyme

BftB project: IP04 Limestone’s Living Legacies

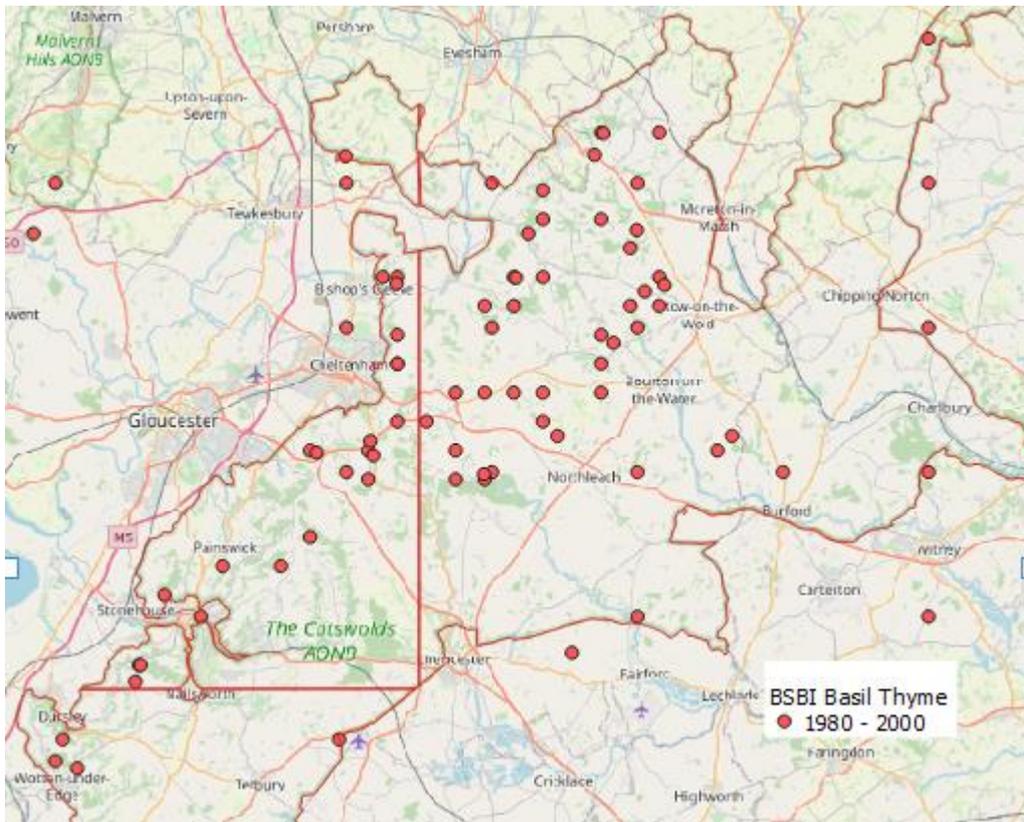
Project lead organisation: Butterfly Conservation

Contact: [info@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:info@butterfly-conservation.org)

Partner organisation for species: Plantlife

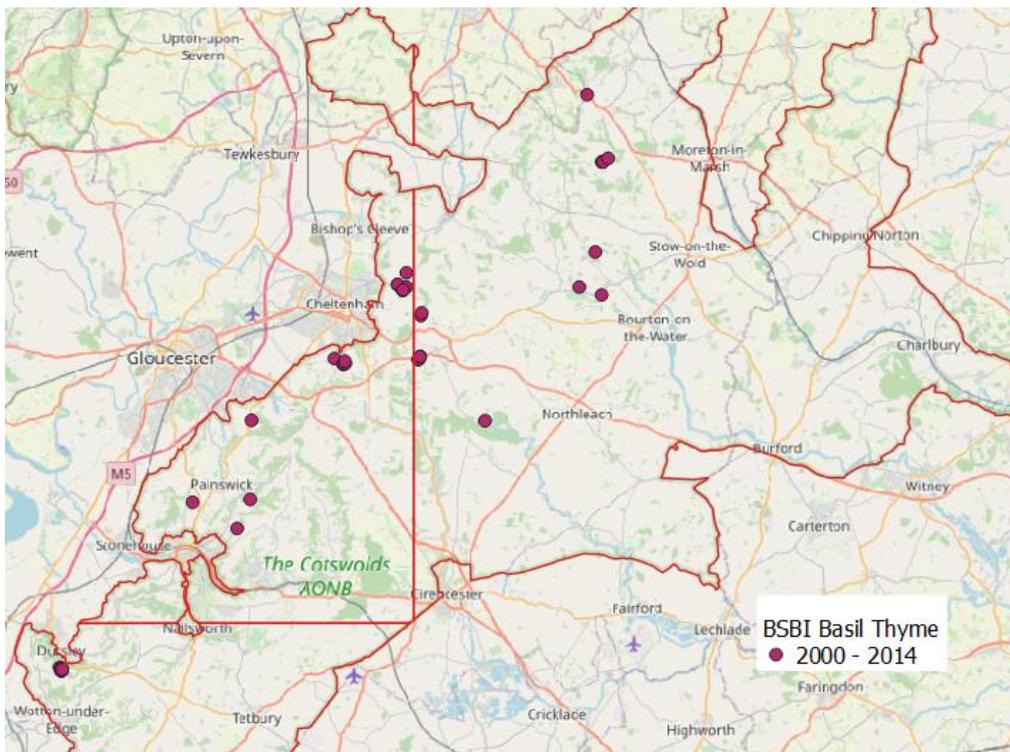
Species name – common & scientific	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Basil Thyme</b> <i>Clinopodium acinos</i></p>
Photograph	 <p style="text-align: center;">© Alex Hyde / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Family Lamiaceae (dead-nettles)
Conservation status	Classified as ‘Vulnerable’ in The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain 2005
UK distribution	Mainly grows in southern and eastern England, very rare in Wales, Scotland and northeast England. Its distribution closely follows underlying chalk and limestone rock. Considered an alien species where it occurs in Eastern Ireland. It has suffered a substantial decline, particularly in arable situations, and across all habitats in peripheral parts of its range such as in the northeast and southwest of England.
Habitat associations	Now considered extinct as an arable weed due to herbicide use and loss of bare ground, rare populations have found refuge on high quality calcareous grassland with bare ground habitats.
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	<p>Surveys carried out in 2019 at Rough Bank, Snow’s Farm and three other privately owned sites.</p> <p>Further surveys were carried out in 2020 at Snow’s Farm, Rough Bank and Swift’s Hill.</p> <p>Plants were found at two of the privately owned sites and at Swift’s Hill. No plants were found at the other sites surveyed.</p>

<b>Sites habitat management works</b>	<p>Scrub clearance work (0.2ha) by Cotswold Voluntary Wardens at one site aimed to benefit Basil Thyme and Grizzled Skipper.</p> <p>Scrub clearance by contractors at another privately owned site aimed to benefit Basil Thyme, among other species.</p> <p>The installation of a new water trough at Swift's Hill to allow for an increased number of livestock will help benefit Basil Thyme through more extensive grazing.</p>
<b>Technical advice provision</b>	<p>Site advice visit to Swift's Hill and two privately owned sites re managing for Basil Thyme. <a href="#">Factsheets</a> and advice via email also provided to all three land managers.</p>
<b>Links made with other taxa / conservation work?</b>	<p>Scrub clearance work at one site also to benefit Grizzled Skipper. Scrub clearance work at another privately owned site also to benefit Cotswold Pennycress and Fine-leaved Sandwort.</p>
<b>Wider engagement &amp; advocacy activities?</b>	<p>Species mentioned in project talks.</p>
<b>BftB results obtained:</b>	
<b>Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)</b>	<p>Positive survey results from 3 out of 6 BftB sites surveyed. Positive sites given below. Negative survey results from Snow's Farm, Rough Bank and one of the other survey sites.</p>
<b>Recorded Abundance of species populations</b>	<p>At two of the privately owned sites surveyed, 313 plants were found at one site in 2019, one plant was found at the second site and 23 found at Swift's Hill in 2020.</p>
<b>Species Recovery Curve progress made</b>	<p>Species recovery curve score moved from 1 to 6: Recovery solutions trialled at known Basil Thyme sites and awaiting results. Other remedial solutions need to be trialled including maintenance of conditions following capital works and this was beyond the scope of the Limestone's Living Legacies project as much of this work would need to be undertaken 3-5 years after the scrapes and scrub management.</p>
<b>Recommendations for future work:-</b>	<p>Further scrub clearance could be carried out to further help this species at the two sites where work previously started.</p> <p>Continued monitoring of the sites surveyed above to track Basil Thyme populations would be beneficial.</p>



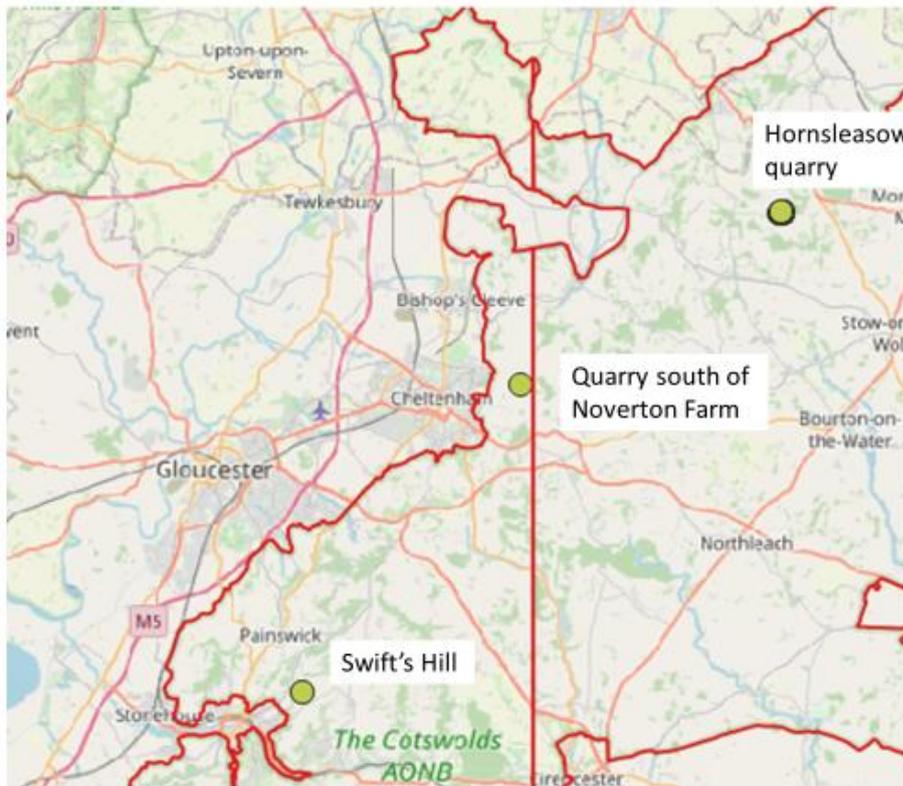
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Figure 1. Cotswold distribution 1980-2000 BSBI data. In the twenty years to the end of the millennium, there was widespread recording of Basil Thyme across the countryside, with 74 Cotswold records.



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Figure 2. In the fourteen years to 2014, there are 38 records, the emphasis on finding the plant at known sites in old quarries.



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Figure 3. BftB surveys updated records at key sites. Thorough surveys of Hornsleasow Quarry in 2019 recorded 313 plants. One plant was found at Noverton Quarry, 23 at Swift's Hill.

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## *Basil Thyme*

BftB project: IPO6 Roots of Rockingham

Project lead organisation: Butterfly Conservation

Contact: [info@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:info@butterfly-conservation.org)

Partner organisation for species: Plantlife

Species name – common & scientific	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Basil Thyme</b> <i>Clinopodium acinos</i></p>
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Habitat associations	Now considered extinct as an arable weed due to herbicide use and loss of bare ground, rare populations have found refuge on high quality calcareous grassland with bare ground habitats.
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	Survey of Site 1 (only project site where plant still known to be present) in 2019 & 2020. Surveys of former locations in the area did not reveal further populations but the plant probably still has a wider distribution on the limestone of Rockingham than currently known.

<b>Sites habitat management works</b>	Site 1: Scrub clearance by volunteers and contractors. Creation of bare ground/early successional habitat using diggers to scrape off scrub and surface vegetation. Light rake through scraped areas (using digger) to cause disturbance which Basil Thyme responds well too.
<b>Technical advice provision</b>	Site advice visit with landowner. Section on managing woodland for plants was included in each of the three landowner workshops.
<b>Links made with other taxa / conservation work?</b>	Bare ground creation and disturbance also beneficial for creating early successional habitat favoured by Dingy & Grizzled Skipper as well as several other plant species and invertebrates.
<b>Wider engagement &amp; advocacy activities?</b>	Identification & survey training workshop, guided walks, photography, print workshop, creative writing workshop, species mentioned in project talks.
<b>BftB results obtained:</b>	
<b>Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)</b>	Positive survey result from Stonepit Quarry. Negative survey results from other former locations in project area.
<b>Recorded Abundance of species populations</b>	At Stonepit Quarry surveys showed an increase in abundance from 26 plants recorded in 2019 to 1184 plants in 2020. Longer term datasets are needed to properly assess the performance of such populations.
<b>Species Recovery Curve progress made</b>	Species recovery curve score moved from 1 to 6: Recovery solutions trialled at known Basil Thyme site. Population showed initial positive response to management work, but longer-term datasets are needed to properly assess the performance of such populations over time.
<b>Recommendations for future work:-</b>	More targeted work is programmed to improve habitat for Basil Thyme at its only known site in the project area and its response to this work will be monitored. Regular work in perpetuity will be needed to maintain this population. Continued monitoring of the sites surveyed above to track Basil Thyme populations would be beneficial.