

# Back from the Brink – Species summary

## *Basil Thyme*

**BftB project:** IP04 Limestone’s Living Legacies

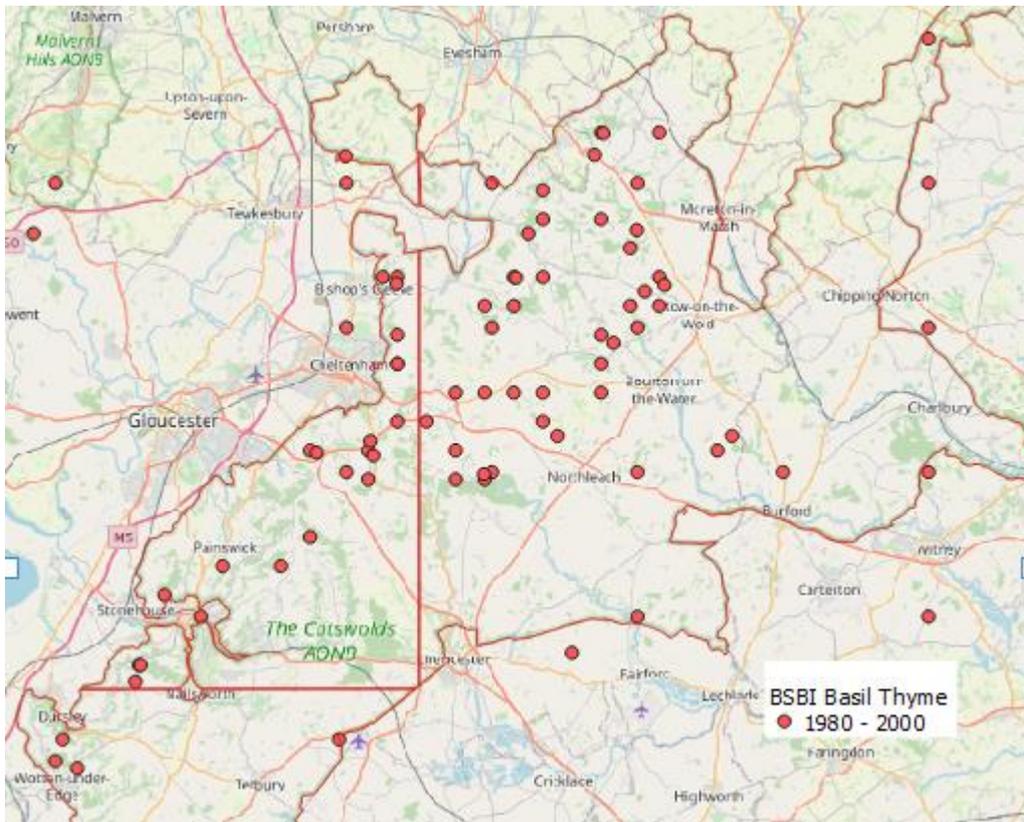
**Project lead organisation:** Butterfly Conservation

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

**Partner organisation for species:** Plantlife

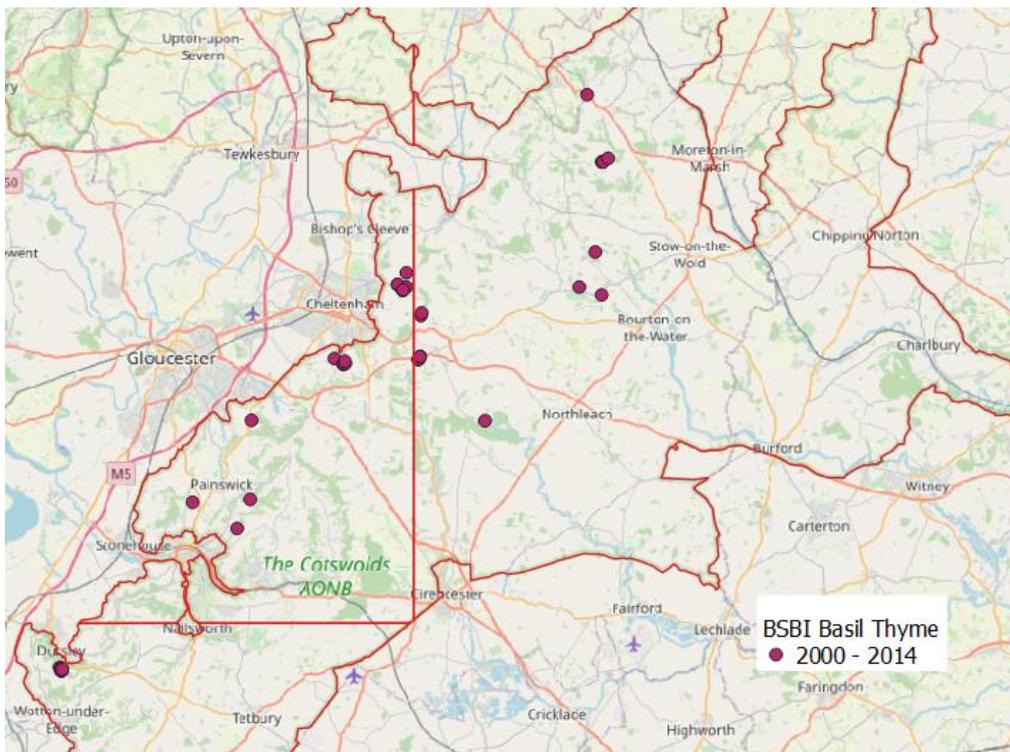
<b>Species name – common &amp; scientific</b>	<b>Basil Thyme</b> <i>Clinopodium acinos</i>
<b>Photograph</b>	 <p>© Alex Hyde / Back from the Brink</p>
<b>Taxon group</b>	Family Lamiaceae (dead-nettles)
<b>Conservation status</b>	Classified as ‘Vulnerable’ in The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain 2005
<b>UK distribution</b>	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.
<b>Habitat associations</b>	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.
<b>BftB work carried out:</b>	
<b>Survey &amp; Monitoring</b>	Surveys carried out in 2019 at Rough Bank, Snow’s Farm and three other privately owned sites. Further surveys were carried out in 2020 at Snow’s Farm, Rough Bank and Swift’s Hill. Plants were found at two of the privately owned sites and at Swift’s Hill. No plants were found at the other sites surveyed.

<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>



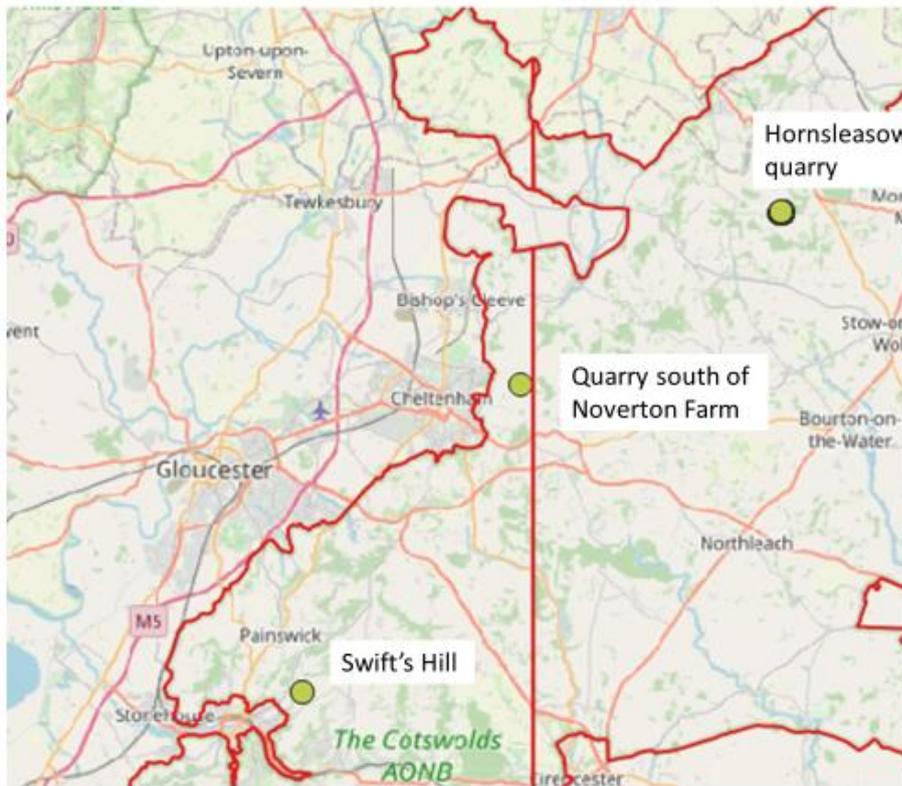
Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right, 2021

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.



Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right, 2021

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



Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right, 2021

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.