

Back from the Brink – Species summary

Pale Dog Violet

BftB project: IP01 Dorset's Heathland Heart

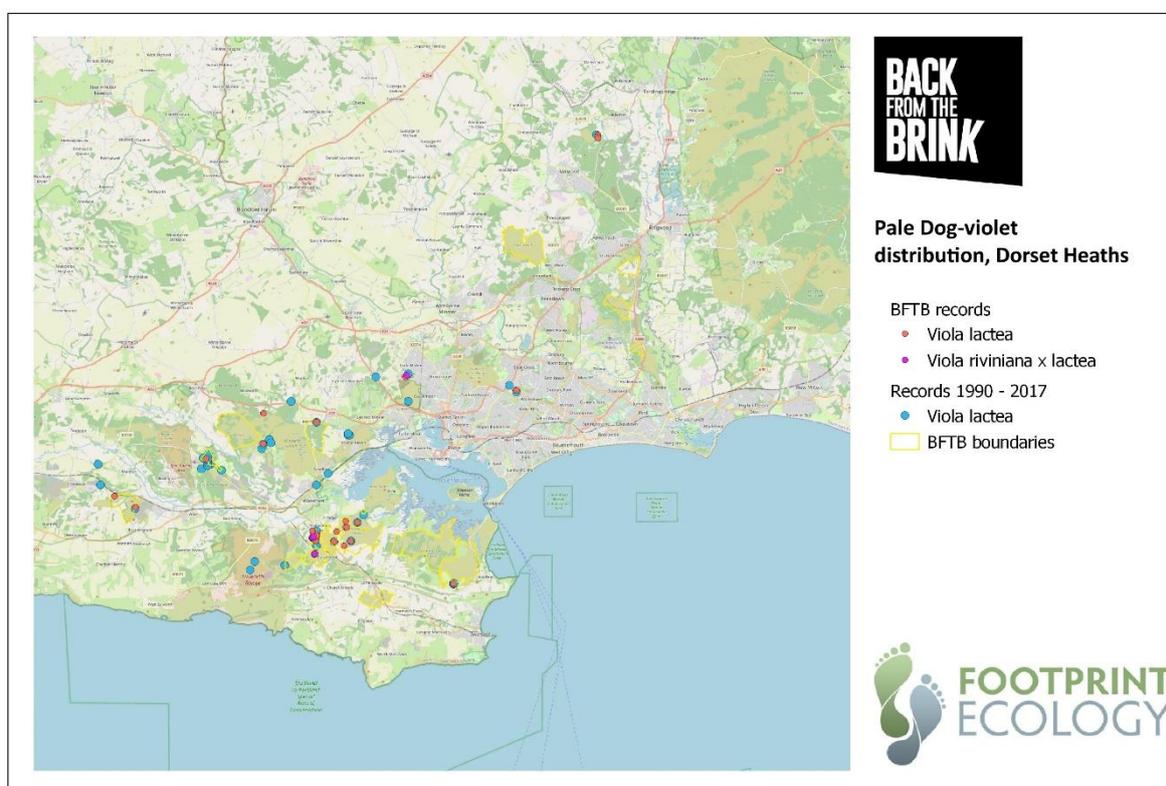
Project lead organisation: Plantlife

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Species name – common & scientific	Pale Dog-violet - <i>Viola lactea</i>
Photograph	 <p data-bbox="783 1357 1131 1384">© S Lake / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Vascular plant – Violaceae.
Conservation status	NERC S.41, GB Red listed - IUCN Vulnerable, Eng. Red listed - IUCN Endangered, Nationally & Dorset scarce.
UK distribution	An oceanic species with a south-western distribution from Anglesey down the west coast of Wales and along the south coast of England - its main concentrations are now in the New Forest Dorset, Cornwall and Pembrokeshire.
Habitat associations	Found in lowland and maritime heath on damp, acid, often slightly enriched soils, generally in short vegetation with some disturbance such as along tracks, on the edge of gorse thickets or in grassy patches. It regenerates readily from the seedbank, for example where gorse has been cut.

BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	<p>Following training, volunteer surveys were carried out at 27 locations across 16 sites (Godlingston, Stoborough RSPB, Stoborough NE, Arne, Grange, Creech, Tadnoll & Winfrith, Higher Hyde, Upton and Slepe Heaths, Wareham and Hethfelton Forests, Cranborne and Turbary Commons and Hartland Moor) where the species had previously been recorded. Volunteers also carried out ad hoc recording across the Dorset Heaths.</p> <p>More detailed monitoring (multiple years) was carried out at two sites where targeted interventions were carried out (Stoborough and Godlingston).</p>
Sites habitat management works	<p>0.8 ha of targeted gorse clearance/prescribed burns were carried out on Stoborough Heath (2 locations)</p> <p>0.03ha of targeted gorse clearance was carried out adjacent to Godlingston Heath.</p>
Technical advice provision	<p>Advice relating to livestock grazing and the need for periodic gorse cutting was provided to landowners through direct discussion and a handover pack at the end of the project.</p>
Links made with other taxa / conservation work?	<p>Pale Dog-violet benefits from early successional habitat creation on damp heathland – an intervention that also improves prospects for Silver-studded Blue, another BFTB species in Dorset.</p> <p>It is a dynamic species, appearing for a few years following disturbance events or management. Work was carried out in the context of the new Purbeck Heaths NNR, including the joined-up grazing unit, should may allow this species to remain dynamic.</p>
Wider engagement & advocacy activities?	<p>Awareness was raised through volunteer survey events and training. Talks including information about the species and work undertaken were given to the BFTB volunteer group, Wild Purbeck partnership meetings, Dorset Flora Group, Dorset Recorders and Bournemouth Natural Science Society. A factsheet was created and disseminated for this species:</p>
BftB results obtained:	
Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)	<p>See Map 1 for full distribution. Pale Dog Violet was re- recorded from 12 locations where it has previously been recorded. New records were made at 8 locations. It was not re-found at 7 locations. 10 locations with records between 1990-2017 were not re-surveyed due to access constraints.</p>
Recorded Abundance of species populations	<p>In total 74 Pale Dog-violet records were made between 2018 and 2021. Considering the maximum count for each location (e.g. if monitoring took place in more than one year), the total was 1902 flowering plants (including the hybrid where volunteers were not confident in separating it).</p>
Other results documented?	<p>Following habitat management, the count at Stoborough Heath increased from management 97 to 778, then gradually declines, although still twice as abundant as prior to management.</p> <p>At Godlingston, the count increased from 0 to 7 flowering plants the following year.</p> <p>Pale Dog-violet also appeared at a location where targeted management was carried out for Yellow Centaury.</p>

<p>Species Recovery Curve progress made</p>	<p>1 – 8 (partially). The species is recovering within the two project sites where management was undertaken, and was also recorded at 8 new sites where disturbance had taken places (see under Recommendations for note about dynamic nature of populations) The baseline score is considered to be an underestimate.</p>
<p>Recommendations for future work:-</p>	<p>This species is dynamic, and populations are likely to fluctuate according to changing conditions (e.g. gorse regrowth, localised grazing intensity). Overall, extensive grazing and rotational cutting are likely to maintain the number of populations, but more focussed management will be required sporadically if population size is to be maintained at key sites. Monitoring across site boundaries in the new Purbeck Heaths NNR should help provide an overview of how individual populations are contributing to the overall Purbeck Heaths population.</p>



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Map 1: The distribution of Pale Dog-violet across the Dorset Heaths (pre-project data provided by Dorset Environmental Records Centre).