

Back from the Brink – Species summary

Pennyroyal

BftB project: IP01 Dorset's Heathland Heart

Project lead organisation: Plantlife

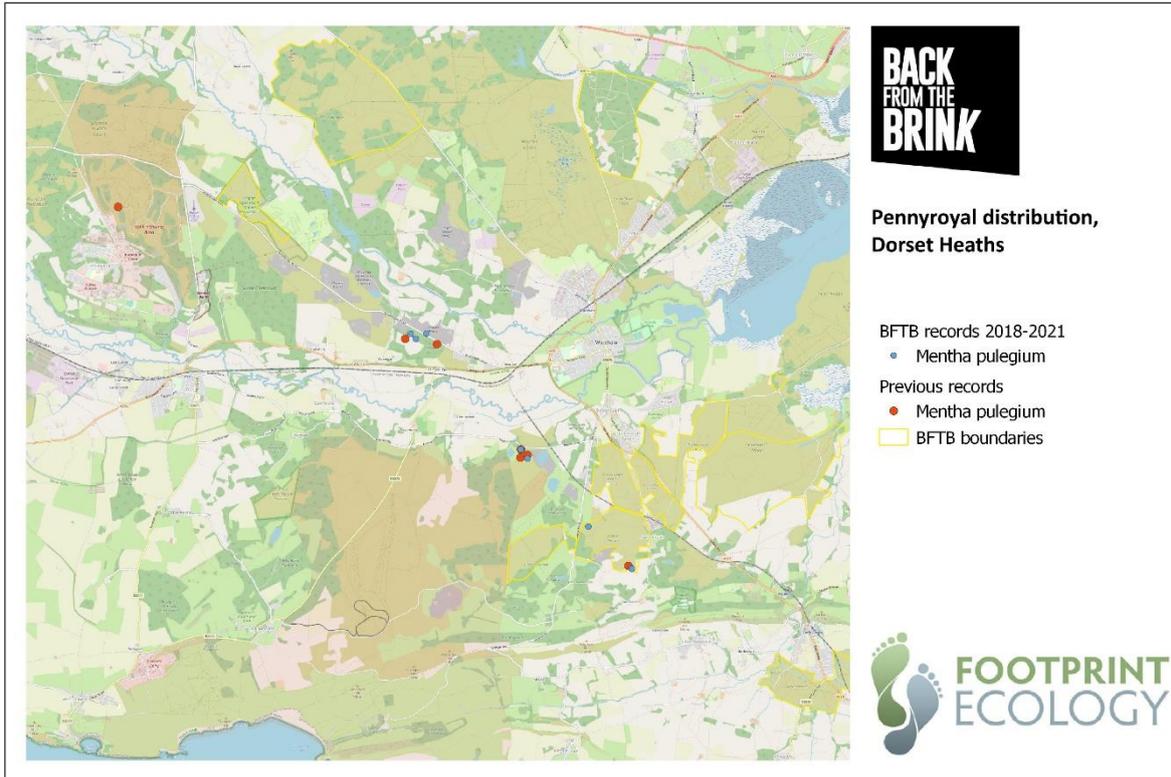
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Species name – common & scientific	Pennyroyal – <i>Mentha pulegium</i>
Photograph	 <p>© Plantlife / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Vascular plant - Lamiaceae
Conservation status	NERC S.41. GB Red listed - IUCN Endangered, Eng Red listed -IUCN Critically Endangered, Rare & Dorset scarce. W&C Act Sch. 8
UK distribution	Historic populations are located near the south coast of England (e.g. Cornwall, Dorset and the New Forest), and the Welsh borders. The natural distribution of Pennyroyal is obscured by centuries of cultivation; it has also been a seed contaminant in amenity grass mixes, and it appears to be spreading.
Habitat associations	Generally found in a heathland context where there is some form of disturbance (including livestock grazing) and an element of silt or clay in the substrate. Favours seasonally inundated situations (pool margins, runnels, wheel ruts, poached areas in short, damp grassland). in Dorset it is now mainly known from tracks associated with quarries. In the New Forest, it is typically found in the poached margins of pools and winter-wet, summer-parched depressions in close-grazed greens and droves. It is also found on river margins and, in some cases, newly sown grasslands.

BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	<p>BFTB surveys were carried out at the existing populations at 2 quarry sites along the Puddletown Road and at Squirrel Cottage.</p> <p>The site of an old record on Creech was also surveyed. Monitoring was carried out at Creech Heath where a targeted intervention was carried out.</p> <p>It was not possible to visit the final population on Bovington due to access constraints.</p> <p>(An introduction was carried out at Silverlake during the project period and is monitored by the BSBI vice-county recorder).</p>
Sites habitat management works	<p>A 5m stretch of clay-rich, winter-wet track was deliberately rutted adjacent to an area of gorse clearance in a location where Pennyroyal has been last recorded in 1996.</p>
Technical advice provision	<p>Advice has been provided to ARC and a private landowner. Discussions were also had with NE about the desirability of increasing grazing pressure.</p> <p>(The Puddletown populations are supervised through the industry ecologist and the Silverlake introduction site by the BSBI vice-county recorder).</p>
Links made with other taxa / conservation work?	<p>In Dorset, Pennyroyal is not immediately associated with other species of conservation concern, as it is found on bare, sand-rich clay tracks that are disturbed in the winter and support few other species. However, at the restoration site, nearby habitat supports BFTB species Pillwort and Southern Damselfly and work for Pennyroyal was carried out as part of a suite of separately targeted but linked interventions for these species.</p>
Wider engagement & advocacy activities?	<p>Talks were given to the Dorset Flora Group, BFTB volunteers, Dorset Recorders and Bournemouth Natural Science Society, provided information and raised awareness about Pennyroyal in Dorset. A factsheet was created for this species.</p>
BftB results obtained:	
Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)	<p>There are current records from 4 sites (see Map 1 – this excludes recent non-BFTB introduction by Habitats First/BFTB vice-county recorder at Silverlake).</p> <p>Pennyroyal was not re-found at a historic site on Creech Heath.</p>
Recorded Abundance of species populations	<p>Pennyroyal is very abundant at the existing sites with over 1000 plants at 2 sites and nearly 500 at a 3rd.</p> <p>At the BFTB restoration site, 45 plants were recorded 2 years after the micro-habitat creation and are thought to have regenerated from the buried soil seed bank that was exposed by the intervention. The species had not been recorded on this site since 1996.</p>
Species Recovery Curve progress made	<p>1 – 8 Species Recovery (<i>limited</i>) (note that the baseline is considered to be an underestimate as there was good understanding about the species and its distribution and monitoring underway in Dorset prior to the project starting).</p> <p>The species has recovered at the site where interventions were planned and carried out. This is in the context of flourishing populations at 3 other sites and an introduction at a 4th.</p>

Recommendations for future work:-

Ongoing disturbance will be required for the population to persist long-term at Creech Heath, however this is likely due to the location (track) and grazing is in place (although, for this species, an increase would be beneficial). The populations on the remaining (non BFTB) sites are very strong (1000s). Landowners are aware of the species and monitor it at two sites, and the landowners at the third is engaged and has recommendations to continue current beneficial management. This, together with the translocation project at Silverlake means that the species is likely to be secure in Dorset in the medium term.



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Map 1: The distribution of Pennyroyal across the Dorset Heaths (note that DERC holds records for the Silverlake introduction not shown here).