

## Arable Flowers SAP



### Objectives

1. To maintain existing arable plant communities within the National Park, both those supporting less common species and those with good assemblages of species that are still relatively widespread
2. To collect, propagate and make widely available seed and plants of arable flowers still present in the National Park in order to extend known sites and restore potentially good habitat areas for arable plant communities
3. To encourage wider appreciation of arable plants and their essential role in retaining ecological diversity

### Introduction

Unusually for the north of England, some arable land in the National Park supports rich arable plant communities, including two rare UKBAP species, red hemp-nettle and shepherd's-needle.

In 1999, the Carstairs Countryside Trust (CCT) bought a 10-hectare field near Silpho with NPA assistance as a refuge for threatened local arable flowers and to demonstrate to others what can be achieved. Ryedale Folk Museum (RFM) in Hutton-le-Hole created a nursery and a small arable field to provide a seed source for restoration projects and to give information to visitors. A five-year Cornfield Flowers Project began in 2005 with a partnership between the NPA, CCT, RFM and local naturalists. The project employed a part-time officer who coordinated volunteers, growing on seeds and developing contacts with local farmers. In 2010, funding for a new five-year project was secured from the North York Moors Sustainable Development Fund, LEADER and Heritage Lottery Fund. In April 2010 two Project Officers were appointed for the next five years, Tom Normandale and Chris Wilson and a new partner became involved in the project, the North Yorkshire Moors Association.

### Progress (2008-2012)

- Plant surveys and advice were provided to 11 farms.
- Nine farms with known arable plant communities were protected through ES schemes/NPA agreements.
- Local provenance seeds were collected from all SAP target species along with a further 15 nationally or locally rare species within the NP.
- Plants were propagated in controlled locations and seed made available for reintroduction schemes.
- Propagated plants and seed were introduced to protected arable margins at five farms including Mushroom Field and Silpho Field.
- Red hemp nettle (national status is critically endangered and local status is rare) and sharp-leaved fluellen (local status is rare) have been successfully established at one new location.
- A farm event was held to promote good management for arable plants.

- FWAG and CFE were contracted by CFP in 2010-11 to promote the uptake of arable wildflower margins / conservation headlands on local farms, with an event held in the NP.
- A Demonstration Cornfield and nursery/demonstration plant beds with interpretive materials was maintained at Ryedale Folk Museum from 2008 to 2012.
- One public event was held at Ryedale Folk Museum to promote the importance and identification of arable wildflowers.

## Case Study

### Highlights of the Cornfield Flowers Project

CFP have provided advice and carried out surveys to help set up several Agri-environment and National Park conservation agreements to protect our arable plant communities. This is an on-going process which will continue to help maintain all known arable margins, which include rare arable flowers along with those areas with good assemblages of species that are still relatively widespread.

CFP successfully collected seeds from all SAP target species growing in the National Park (Red hemp-nettle, Corn buttercup, Shepherd's needle, Night-flowering catchfly, Fine-leaved fumitory, Venus's-looking-glass) along with a further 15 nationally or locally rare species. Plants that CFP first started work on have now established self-sustaining populations on several sites. Red hemp-nettle was introduced to several sites between 2003 and 2010. It is now self-sustaining on six sites, including the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust site at Wharram Quarry.

CFP have placed 2000 seeds each of Large-flowered hemp-nettle, Red hemp-nettle, Shepherd's-needle, Corn buttercup, Night-flowering catchfly and Hairy buttercup in the Millennium Seedbank which conserves seed from rare plant species across the globe, acting as a safeguard against extinctions. It holds stocks for 90% of UK plant species.

The Demonstration Cornfield and nursery beds at Ryedale Folk Museum provided an informative and enjoyable experience to members of the public, increasing awareness and appreciation of arable plants. Bigger nursery beds are currently being established and will be open to the public. A slideshow has been installed inside the museum sharing the success of the CFP. In December 2012 the first set of 'Species Cards' became available on the North York Moors National Park website. These cards are designed to help you understand more about these unique plants, their context in north-east Yorkshire and the experiences CFP has had with them.

CFP is working with a number of schools, some close to but not within the National Park boundary, who are hosting cornfield beds. This has been very successful with schools such as Hunmanby, now providing an invaluable source of Corn marigold and Cornflower seeds. CFP also have arable plant display beds at North Yorkshire County Council's County Hall in Northallerton, Flamingo Land Zoo and at the North York Moors National Park offices in Helmsley, as well as in the private gardens of a number of keen supporters. Whilst helping to showcase some of these rare plants they also act as an 'insurance policy' for plant growth and seed production.

One of the most significant achievements in 2012 was the CFP photographic exhibition at Kew's Millennium Seedbank at Wakehurst Place, West Sussex. The exhibition attracted a national audience during the summer and recognised the work of CFP as a complementary project acting to conserve local flora. This exhibition is now available in a number of formats for local display.