

## Red-tipped cudweed (*Filago lutescens*)



This is an annual plant of disturbed light soils, flowering in late summer and autumn. Formerly most commonly reported from arable fields, it is now largely confined to track-sides, set aside fields, sand pits and heathland.

### 1 Current Status

#### 1.1 National

It has always been confined to the south-eastern corner of England, but over the last fifty years Red-tipped cudweed has suffered a major decline, leaving Surrey and Suffolk with the largest and most stable populations at the present time.

#### 1.2 Local

Red-tipped cudweed has been recorded from five sites in the Sandlings in recent years and it has just been found in four nearby areas of Breckland in Suffolk. It has persisted for over ten years in a field at Snape, where it was originally introduced.

#### 1.3 Natural Areas

Suffolk Coast and Heaths, Breckland.

#### 1.4 Protection

It is fully protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

## **2 Current factors causing loss or decline**

- Conversion of marginal arable land to permanent grassland or intensive crops.
- Earlier summer harvests followed by cultivations that destroy plants before they flower and set seed.
- Reduction in rabbit population following myxomatosis outbreaks, resulting in loss of soil disturbance on heathland.
- Habitat neglect, resulting in loss of open areas for regeneration.
- Changes to trackside habitats due to reduction in grazing and disturbance; fertiliser run-off and hard surfacing.

## **3 Current action**

- Regular monitoring of all sites.
- Annual management by rotovation at Westleton Heath and Minsmere RSPB.
- Scarification of Breckland Forest sites as required.
- Ragwort pulling as required at Hollesley.
- Continue scientific experiments on introduction site at Snape Hall to find effects of different cultivation regimes.
- Further new sites may be found as a direct result of the county-wide survey in progress for a new Suffolk Flora.
- All natural sites, with the exception of Snape (Sailor's Path), are protected by SSSI designation.

## **4 Action plan objectives and targets**

### **4.1 National targets**

1. Achieve viable populations at all extant sites
2. Achieve the natural colonisation of new sites.
3. Restore or establish populations of red-tipped cudweed to three suitable sites by 2003

### **4.2 Local targets**

- 1 Seek to ensure viable populations exist at all current sites
- 2 Apply the results of management research to all sites as appropriate.
- 3 Ensure suitable habitat is available for colonisation close to existing sites.
- 4 Re-establish the colony at Snape Sailor's Path

**5 Red-tipped Cudweed: Proposed Action with Key Local Partners**

Action	Date	Partners
<b>A. POLICY AND LEGISLATION</b>		
<b>B. SITE SAFEGUARD AND MANAGEMENT</b>		
Continue rotovation at Westleton Heath and Minsmere sites	2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	<b>Plantlife, RSPB, SWT, EN</b>
Rotovate an adjacent suitable site at Snape Sailor's Path to recover the species at this site.	2005	RSPB
Pull Ragwort as necessary at Hollesley	2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	<b>SWT</b>
Co-ordinate and continue monitoring at all sites	2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	<b>Plantlife, RSPB, SWT, EN, FE</b>
Encourage low key disturbance of soils in potential areas for establishment	2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	<b>EN, RSPB, FE, SWT,</b>
Scarify Breckland Forest sites as necessary. Reduce shading and leaf litter on Elveden site by cutting back of adjacent hardwoods.	2005 2006	<b>FE</b>
<b>C. SPECIES MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION</b>		
Continue to encourage the uptake of agri-environment agreements which provide grants for appropriate management	2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	<b>FWAG, Defra</b>

<b>D. ADVISORY</b>		
Ensure landowners and managers are aware of and are alert to the possibility of the re-appearance of Red-tipped cudweed in arable headlands and set-aside	2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	<b>FWAG, EN, SWT,</b>
<b>E.. RESEARCH AND MONITORING</b>		
Continue regular annual monitoring at all sites		<b>Plantlife, RSPB, BSBI, SWT, EN, FE</b>
Continue research on experimental plots at Snape Hall and Minsmere	2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	<b>Plantlife, RSPB, SWT</b>
Encourage local research and survey, especially where it is linked to heathland management	2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	<b>EN, SWT, BSBI, FWAG</b>
Investigate 1942 record from Honington	2005 2006	<b>SBRC</b>
Consider re-introduction on land adjacent to Westleton Heath on land managed for Arable Stewardship as an alternative to the extinct site that is heavily rabbit grazed.	2005	<b>Plantlife, RSPB, EN</b>
<b>F. COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY</b>		
Raise awareness among landowners and managers of the importance of Red-tipped cudweed and the need to notify conservation bodies of new sites	2005	<b>FWAG,EN, SWT</b>
Provide advice on identification to separate it from Common cudweed	2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	<b>Plantlife, SWT</b>