

***Thesium humifusum* DC.**

Bastard-toadflax

Native

Least Concern

Nationally Scarce

VC5 Absent; VC6 Extinct

A low-growing perennial with herbaceous shoots from a woody rootstock, hemiparasitic on various herbs and occurring in short, closely cropped calcareous grassland. In Somerset, never recorded for VC5; once restricted to a small area in VC6, but now extinct. First recorded by T.B. Flower in a field behind the Sham Castle Wood on Claverton Down, Bath (Babington, 1839). Later collected from Hampton Down, Bath by A.E. Burr, who sent specimens to J.W. White in 1886 and 1888 (White, 1912). In 1890, Mr D. Fry wrote: "The *Thesium* occurs abundantly over a limited space of ground on the edge of Hampton Down" (White, 1912). Claverton Down and Hampton Down merge and are now the sites of the University of Bath and Bath Golf Club (respectively): it is likely that these later records were made at the same site as the original. Including this species in his list of "Plants with a precarious hold in the county" Miller (1933) wrote that it "occurs only in one limited area near Bath, but is not at present in danger of extinction". There have been no records of this species since then. *Thesium humifusum* was lost from many sites before about 1930, following scrub encroachment, ploughing of downland and nutrient enrichment (F.J. Rumsey in Preston *et al.*, 2002). The site in Somerset was at the western edge of the distribution of this species of central southern and eastern England.