

***Zostera marina* L.**

Eelgrass

Native

GB: Near Threatened

England: Vulnerable

VC5 Extinct; VC6 Extinct

Marine herbaceous perennial growing on coastal or estuarine fine gravel, sand or mud in the intertidal or subtidal zone. In VC5 only ever recorded at Stolford, where it was first found in 1957 by D.S. Ranwell at ST2445. In 1969, H.W. Boon, following a record that year by the Nature Conservancy, found it on the shore at ST238458. The card index of R.B.G. Roe adds "Opposite Catsford, within an area of about 5 acres, in drainage runnels with mud and pebble bottoms", a comment which may have come from the original Nature Conservancy record. In VC6, first recorded at Burnham by J. Poole (Watson, 1837). It was subsequently found by T. Clark in the tidal Brue by White House in 1859, seen there by Murray (1896); in muddy pools near Brean Down (St Brody, 1856); and on the shore between Brean and Burnham, recorded by J.W. White (Murray, 1896). In 1916 Mrs C.I. Sandwith and Miss I.M. Roper recorded *Zostera marina* var. *angustifolia* at low water in Kewstoke Bay (White, 1919). In 1921 H.S. Thompson found a very little in two pools on the new saltmarsh (now gone) which had developed between Burnham and Berrow (Thompson, 1929). In 1928 Miss Miller found leaves cast up on Brean Sands, whilst Mr Gibbons found some in Sand Bay, Kewstoke (White, 1929). W.D. Miller collected a specimen (**TTN**) off Stert Island in 1929. There have been no further records for VC6, although a leaf stranded on the beach at Burnham was found by Helena Crouch and Fred Rumsey in 2015. Some past records were clearly for stranded leaves rather than rooted plants, making it difficult to be certain when this species was last known to grow in VC6. *Zostera marina* has declined throughout its European range as a result of disease; however it is a problematic species to record *in situ* and, with some records representing stranded leaves only, it is difficult to know to what extent the mapped distribution reflects that of rooted populations (Preston *et al.*, 2002).