

***Rhinanthus angustifolius* C.C. Gmel.**

Greater Yellow-rattle

Neophyte/Archaeophyte

GB: Least Concern

England: Least Concern

Schedule 8

GB Rare

VC5 Absent; VC6 Extinct/Error?

A rare annual hemi-parasite of arable fields, grassland, rough ground, bare peat and heathland by the sea. First recorded for Somerset by Thomas Clark (1858) on the turf moors, growing on the banks of the canal and in other parts of the moor. A few plants were found near Shapwick Station in August 1892 by Rev. E.F. Linton (Murray, 1896); however Linton (1909) later clearly doubted his record, writing "I cannot help wondering whether the common species of the meadows [i.e. *R. minor*] can be stimulated by growing in cultivated ground into simulating the much rarer *R. major* [i.e. *R. angustifolius*]" . E.S. Marshall collected several specimens near Edington Junction in August 1915, where he described this species as locally plentiful. A specimen in **SLBI** (see <http://herbariaunited.org/specimen/360695/>) is annotated: "... The violet appendages were those of *major*, not of *minor*. The latter flowers in late May and early June, here! – E.S. Marshall". A comment "Possibly *R. angustifolius*" was added to the specimen in 2008. A duplicate specimen of Marshall's collection, in Herb C.E. Salmon, was confirmed as *Rhinanthus major* by Soó (Willmott, 1942), yet N.Y. Sandwith examined another duplicate specimen at **K** and found it typical of late-flowering forms of *R. minor* (Sandwith & Sandwith, 1950). A specimen (now in **TTN**) collected by H.S. Thompson by a roadside on Kenn Moor in 1918, was also considered by Roe (1981) to be a late-flowered robust specimen of *R. minor*. It is thus uncertain whether this species ever really grew in Somerset: Sandwith and Sandwith (1950) declared that in nearly forty years exploration of the peat moors they had never seen any *Rhinanthus* remotely suggesting the true *R. major* [i.e. *R. angustifolius*]. This species was formerly widely distributed, particularly in England and eastern Scotland (although some older records may have been errors for *R. minor*). It declined dramatically before 1930 and is now restricted to the North Downs of Surrey and Kent and a few other widely scattered sites. If any of the four records for this species in VC6 was correct, they would represent the southwestern edge of this species' distribution in Britain.