

***Helianthemum x sulphureum* Willd. ex Schltld.
(*H. nummularium* (L.) Mill. x *apenninum* (L.) Mill.)**

Native

VC5 Absent; VC6 Rare

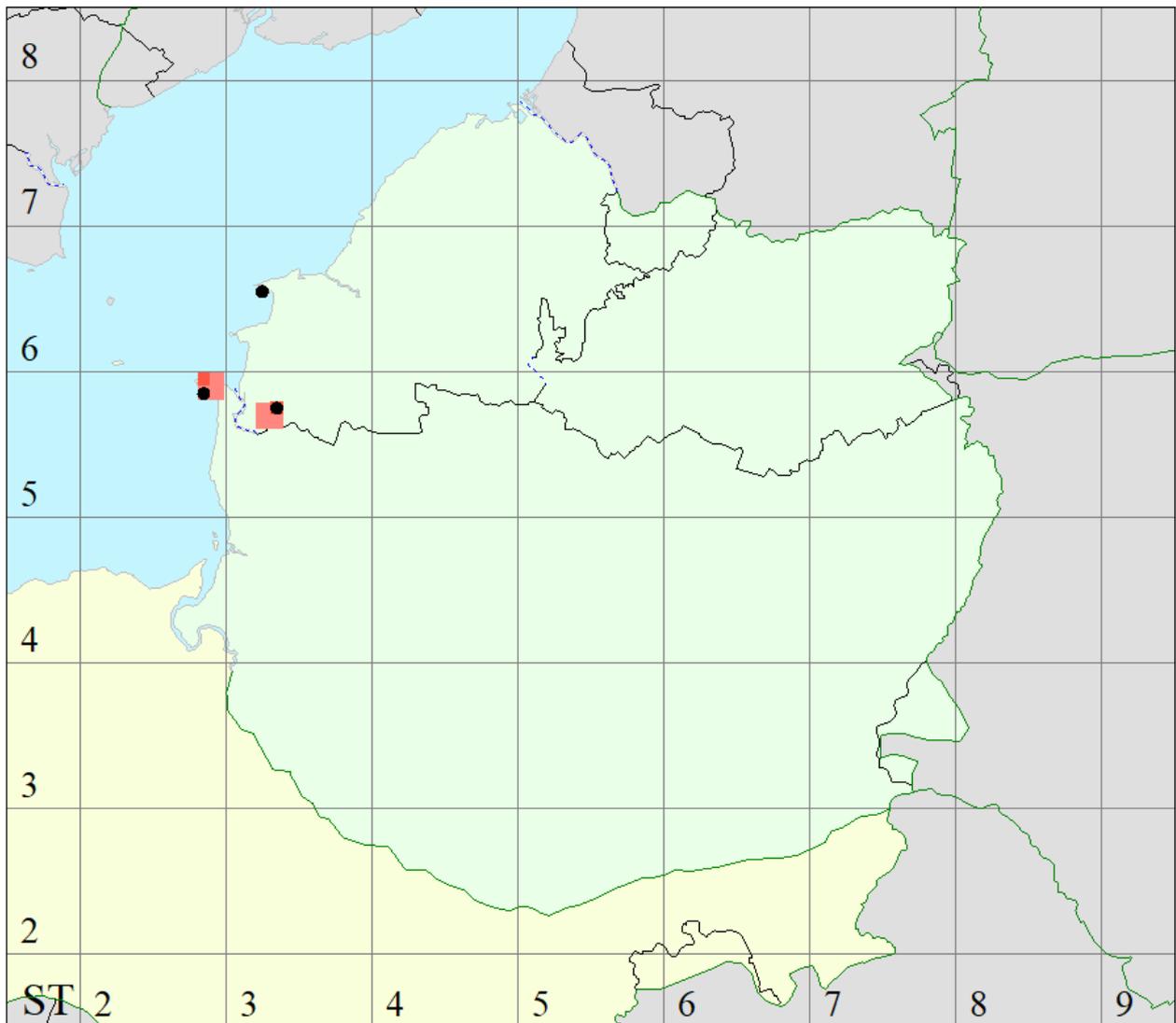
A perennial, procumbent sub-shrub found in habitats intermediate to those of its parents. Whilst *H. apenninum* is restricted to the driest rocky limestone grassland on south-facing slopes, the hybrid is found in turf over slightly deeper soils. The earliest record for this hybrid was made at Purn Hill, Bleadon, by H.S. Thompson in 1888 (White, 1912); it still occurs at this site, with both parents. Early reports of this hybrid at Brean Down, where *H. apenninum* occurs most extensively, were unconfirmed (Roe, 1981); however in 1980 it was found by C.M. Wilson in fairly closed vegetation almost at the crest of the down on a south-facing slope (Willis, 1982). Plants seen in 2017 were in a site which exactly matches that description. There have been a few records for Brean Down since 1980; however the plants are only ever found in small quantity (see eg McDonnell, 1998). In 1955 *H. apenninum* was introduced to Goblin Combe as part of an experiment by the University of Bristol (Hope-Simpson, 1987). The species was last recorded at Goblin Combe in 1989 by Ian Taylor; there is a record for the hybrid in that hectad (ST46) in 1987-99, almost certainly for Goblin Combe. It has not been seen there since. In 2016, two plants of this hybrid were discovered on the steep south-facing cliff on the south side of Sand Point. *H. apenninum* was previously known here, introduced at the site of a former cottage, first recorded in 1984, but last seen in 1993 (Willis, 1995). Outside Somerset, this hybrid is only known from South Devon, where it has occurred at four sites at which only one parent is native, probably as a result of deliberate introduction of the missing parent; it persists at one site, Fishcombe (Smith *et al.*, 2016).



Helianthemum x sulphureum at Brean Down (2017). Photo: HJC

VC6

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|----------------|------|------------|------|--------------|--|
| Brean Down | SSSI | ST25Z | 1997 | EJMcD & BSBI | 1 plant where both parents grow |
| Brean Down | SSSI | ST28565897 | 2017 | SRPG & SANHS | 3 plants on anthills S of path along ridge |
| Brean Down | SSSI | ST283590 | 1991 | PRG | 2 plants, S side of path |
| Sand Point | SSSI | ST32846593 | 2016 | SANHS & WFS | 2 plants on steep rocky S-facing cliff |
| Purn Hill | SSSI | ST33205727 | 2005 | AS | |
| Purn Hill | SSSI | ST33195726 | 2011 | SRPG | Scattered plants on W-facing side of hill |
| Purn Hill | SSSI | ST33205720 | 2011 | SRPG | Good patch on W-facing side of hill |
| Purn Hill | SSSI | ST33225713 | 2011 | SRPG | Few on W-facing side of hill with both parents |
| Purn Hill | SSSI | ST33205716 | 2015 | HJC & FJR | 2 plants in flower on SW-facing rocky slope |
| [Goblin Combe] | SSSI | ST46 | DC3 | | |



Distribution of *Helianthemum x sulphureum* in North Somerset (VC6), mapped using MapMate. Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999 records. The hectad record for ST46 in DC3 (1987-1999) is not shown.