

Carex echinata Murray

Star Sedge

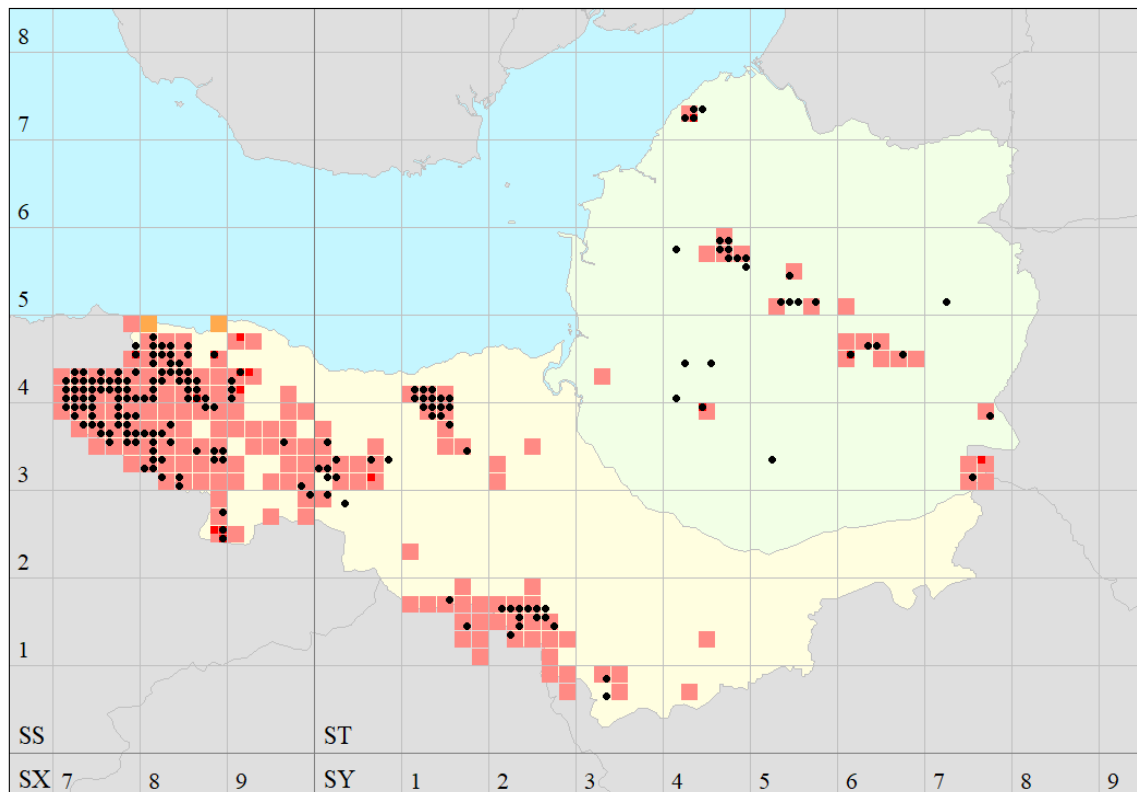
Native

GB: Least Concern

England: Near Threatened

VC5 Not Scarce; VC6 Not Scarce

A tufted perennial of wet meadows and heaths, bogs and marshes, and occasionally wet woodland rides, usually on acidic soils. Described by Murray (1896) as “common” in Somerset and by White (1912) as “frequent”, this species had probably declined by the second half of the twentieth century. Roe (1981) reported it as common on the western moors, the Blackdown Hills and the eastern borders, peat moors and the Mendip sandstone, but rare elsewhere. By the end of the twentieth century it had become very rare on the peat moors (Green *et al.*, 1997) and was described as “only frequent on Exmoor and the Blackdown Hills”. In VC5 this species is still widespread on Exmoor, the Blackdowns and the Quantocks, although appears to have declined, and been lost from sites away from those areas. In VC6 it is found at Ashcott Plot, Westhay Moor, Canada Farm and Tadhams Moor on the Levels, at sites along the Mendips where Old Red Sandstone outcrops, in the Gordano Valley in the north and at a few sites on the Greensand of the eastern border. In 2016, two plants were found at an outlying site at Buckland Down (ST7251), growing beside a bund of woodchip next to a sawmill, probably growing from seed transported to the sawmill with logs. *Carex echinata* was lost from many lowland sites in England before the twentieth century, with further losses since then due to drainage and agricultural improvement; this pattern of loss has occurred in Somerset, where this species has particularly declined on the lower ground of the peat moors.



Distribution of *Carex echinata* in Somerset, mapped using MapMate. Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999 records; sepia squares are pre-1987 records