

***Centaurea calcitrapa* L.**

Red Star-thistle

Archaeophyte & Alien
GB & England: Endangered
Section 41
GB Rare
VC5 Lost; VC6 Lost

A biennial herb of dry grassland and banks, waste ground and tracksides. Although considered native in some sites, it has also occurred as a weed or birdseed alien. In VC5, Murray (1896) noted two sites: near Wellington, where a single plant was found by Miss F. Elworthy (no date given), and Ham Hill, discovered by Z.J. Edwards. J. Sowerby wrote in 1883 that it was "Still found about the base of Ham Hill, in scattered patches, chiefly on the W and SW base". Murray considered this plant possibly native here. There have been no subsequent records for either of these sites. In VC6 there have only been a few casual records. White (1912) gave two sites: "In the station-yard, Portishead, on mill refuse, every year since 1905" and in an old lias quarry near Twerton (Bath), where it was found in 1903 by Miss Martin and Miss Peck. Mrs C.I. Sandwith saw this species in Bedminster in 1926 (Sandwith, 1932) and this has been taken to be the last record for VC6 and for Somerset. Roe (1986), however, reported a casual record in 1980 for this species, yet there are no details in his comprehensive card index and it was not mentioned in the later floras for Somerset. This species has declined dramatically in Britain and has only been seen in a few areas recently.