

***Eryngium maritimum* L.**

Sea-holly

Native

GB: Least Concern

England: Near Threatened

VC5 Lost; VC6 Lost

A perennial herb of coastal sand dunes or shingle. A century ago, White (1912) remarked that although “formerly a conspicuous and abundant ornament” of the Somerset coastline, this species had “been largely destroyed by excursionists, holiday folk and golfers”. Its decline continued and for 23 years this species was unknown in Somerset. Former sites in VC5 include Minehead, Stolford, Steart Point and Stert Island, the last plant being seen by Robert Cropper at Steart Point in 1974. Previously known in VC6 from Burnham-on-Sea, Berrow (last seen 1982), Brean sands (White, 1912), Uphill (last seen 1983) and Kewstoke Bay (recorded in 1907). In 2006, a single flowering plant was found by Helena Crouch and members of Somerset Rare Plants Group at Sand Bay (Kewstoke Bay), on the seaward side of the main dune (ST33046388); it was still present in 2007 but by 2008 it was gone. Although formerly distributed around much of the coast of Britain, this species has declined throughout its range, the loss of sites in Somerset being part of the general pattern of decline.