

***Euphrasia arctica* Lange ex Rostrup x *micrantha* Rchb.
(=*E. x difformis* F. Towns.)**

Native

VC5 Rare; VC6 Absent

A hemiparasitic annual, variably intermediate between its parents. Hybrids resembling *E. micrantha* are slender like that parent, but with broader corollas, larger capsules, broader, often sparsely glandular hairy floral leaves, and more flexuous branches which are longer and arise lower on the stem. Hybrids more closely resembling *E. arctica* are more richly branched from the middle of the stem, have smaller, strikingly purple corollas and narrower upper cauline leaves than that parent. In Somerset this hybrid was found for the first time in 2015 by Chris Metherell, Fred Rumsey and Helena Crouch, on a grassy roadside bank on Withypool Common. *E. arctica* was growing nearby; however there have been no records for *E. micrantha* in Somerset since 1987, whilst in the vicinity of Withypool, despite subsequent searches, that parent was last seen in 1952. *E. arctica* is a species of grassland, whereas *E. micrantha* is restricted to heathland and moorland. *E. arctica x micrantha* occurs in heath-grassland mosaics and on grassy banks of roads and streams passing through heathland, but also in short grassland, on dunes and coastal grassland, in hay meadows and on railway embankments. The hybrid is highly fertile and can thus persist in the absence of one or both parents. Most records are from Wales, Ireland, northern England and Scotland; the site in Somerset is one of only two sites in southern England: it has also been recorded on the Lizard, West Cornwall.

VC5					
Withypool Common	SSSI	SS83243447	2015	HJC, CM, FJR	Several plants on roadside, N side of road
Withypool Common	SSSI	SS83333455	2015	HJC, CM, FJR	Several plants on roadside, N side of road



Euphrasia arctica x micrantha at Withypool Common (2015). Photos: FJR (L), HJC (R)