

## *Rumex palustris* Sm.

## Marsh Dock

Native

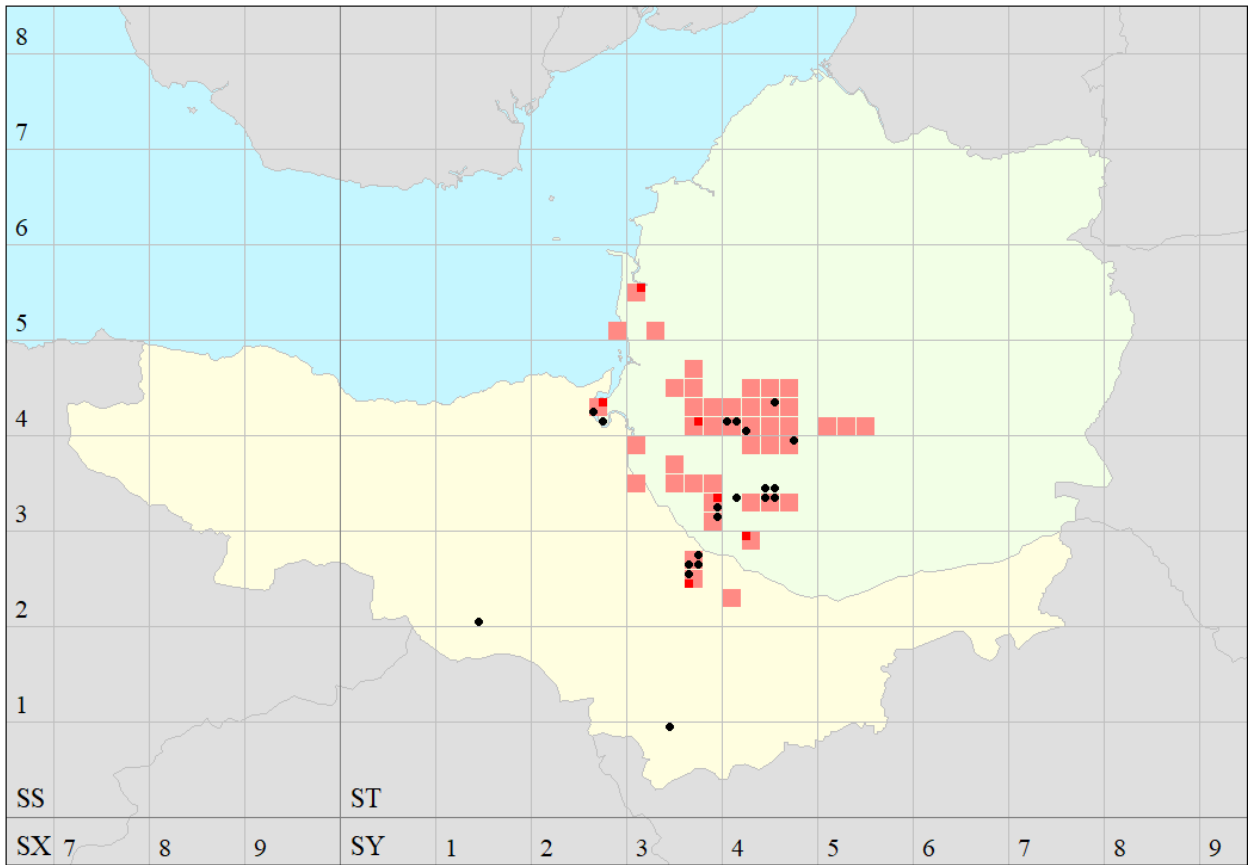
GB & England: Least Concern

VC5 Scarce; VC6 Not Scarce

An erect annual, biennial or perennial found on wet mud beside ditches and ponds, and in marshes, peat cuttings and gravel-pits. In Somerset, described by Murray (1896) as "Very rare and local". Green *et al.* (1997) noted that it was often the dominant plant of newly abandoned peat cuttings. In VC5, the earliest record is for North Moor (District 3), where it was collected in 1857 by T. Clark (Marshall, 1914). In 1992 Robert Cropper recorded it north of North Moor, at Huntworth (ST33C), but there have been no further records for that area. Marshall (1914) recorded this species as plentiful at the south end of Chard Reservoir; it was refound here in 2019 by John Poingdestre on the east shore of the reservoir. In 1972 H.W. Boon found a single plant by the roadside near Hawkridge Reservoir, Spaxton (ST204358) where it was considered a casual (Roe, 1981), and a single plant was also found by Stephen Parker in a pot in a garden in Wellington in 2007. In 1987, Sidney Fisher recorded this species by the River Isle at Midelney, but it has not been seen there again. All other records for VC5 have been around West Sedgemoor, where this species was first recorded below Burton Pynsent in 1930 by Walter Watson (TTN) and still occurs. In VC6 *Rumex palustris* is Not Scarce, although it appears to have declined considerably in the last thirty years. Known to T. Clark in 1856 as "Plentiful in the neighbourhood of Burtle, and occasionally in other parts of the moor: it is still to be found in that area and at other sites on the Levels, but its distribution has contracted considerably. Formerly also on the North Somerset Levels, recorded at Tickenham Moor in 1906 by C. Bucknall, on Kenn Moor in 1921 by Miss I.M. Roper and at the Kenn side of Nailsea Moor in 1941, where it had "long been known", by C. and N. Sandwith. Also found at Ashton Gate, Bristol in 1911, one very large plant on waste ground. In 1906 E.S. Marshall found several plants at Berrow, on a roadside green a short distance inland: it was refound nearby in 1987 by Paul Green, in reed beds on Berrow Dunes. For the Atlas Flora of Somerset (Green *et al.*, 1997) it was also recorded on the bank of the River Axe inland from Brean, and on the bank of a ditch at Brent Knoll but there have been no further records for that area, or for sites on Queen's Sedge Moor, between Glastonbury and Wells. The only recent records for VC6 away from the central area of the Somerset Levels have been at Pawlett Hams. *Rumex palustris* appears to have declined in Somerset in recent decades, particularly in VC6. This may be due to reduction in available habitat, as there are fewer newly abandoned peat cuttings. Akeroyd (2002) noted that the "apparent increase in Somerset is attributed to better recording rather than a real increase": the apparent decrease may reflect poorer recording effort since then. This species is particularly distributed in lowland eastern England; sites in Somerset are at the southwest edge of its range in Britain.

### VC5

Wellington	ST140200	2007	SJP	In a flower pot in a garden
Paintmoor	ST34000993	2019	JP	Several plants on E shore of reservoir
Burton Pynsent	ST367248	1992	JP	12 plants on pond margins
West Sedgemoor	ST363254	2016	SJP	7 plants in wet grassland
West Sedgemoor	ST361260	2016	SJP	Few plants in wet grassland and ditch edge
West Sedgemoor	ST370265	2016	SJP	20 plants along edge of drove
West Sedgemoor	ST37512785	2019	JP	1 fruiting plant at edge of wide rhyne
Huntworth	ST33C	1992	RSC	
Midelney	ST42B	1987	SRF	River Isle



Distribution of *Rumex palustris* in Somerset, mapped using MapMate  
 Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999 records