

## ***Vicia orobus* DC.**

## **Wood Bitter-vetch**

Native

GB: Near Threatened

England: Vulnerable

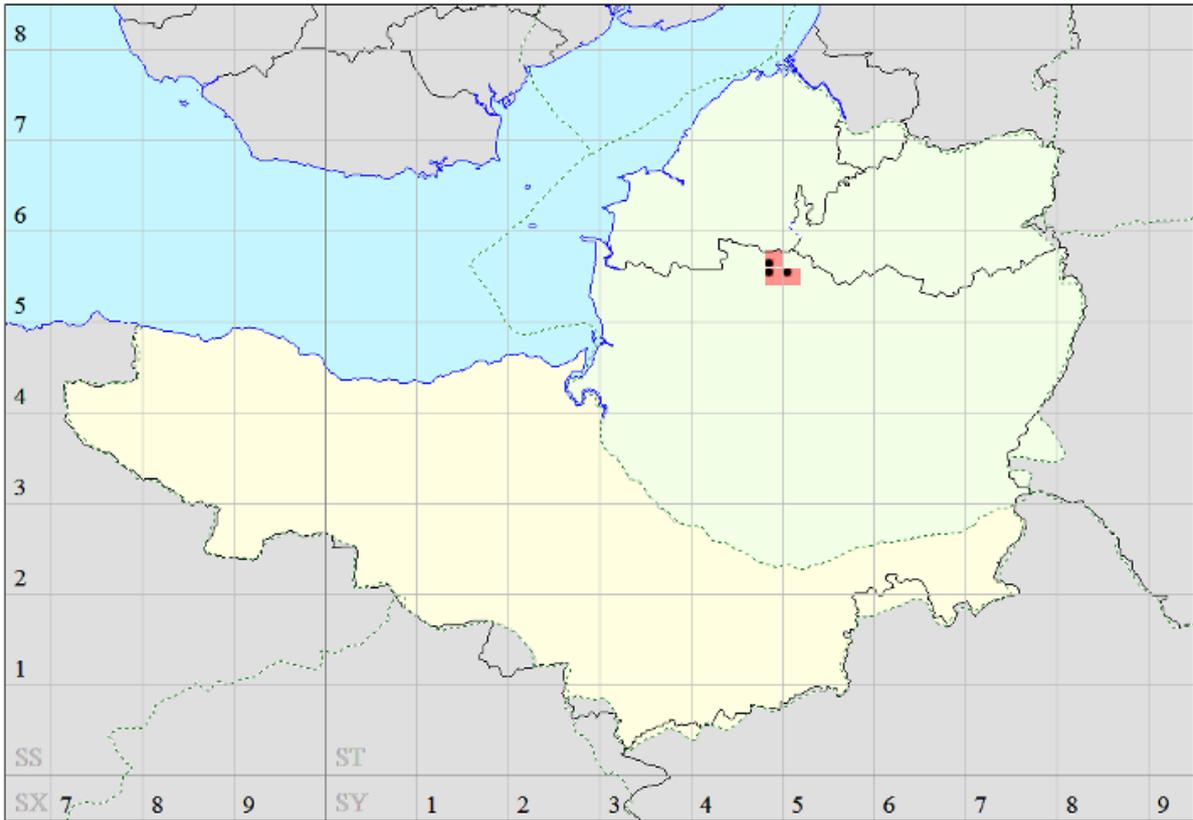
GB Scarce

VC5 Absent; VC6 Rare

A perennial herb of rough grassy slopes, found on banks or at the margins of fields. Absent from VC5 and now restricted to a small area of the Mendips in VC6. Recorded by Sole in a dry pit on Mendip near Emborough Ponds (Turner & Dillwyn, 1805), and still known there by T.B. Flower in 1859 (White, 1912); however Murray (1896) stated that it was no longer found in this place. Found in 1902 by Miss C.E. Horner between Stoke St Michael and Coleford, two or three miles upstream from Mells (White, 1912), but not seen again at this location. Collected in 1850 at East Harptree and again in 1859 by T.B. Flower "In a field called "Buckleys" in the parish of East Harptree" (White, 1912); not recorded again at this site. The only records during the last century have been made around Priddy and Charterhouse. Discovered near Priddy in 1963 by Miss R. Blomfield in Nine Barrows Lane; last seen at this site by R.M. Burton in 1977. White knew this species in two fields on Tynings Farm under Blackdown and in another near Cheddar. Miller (1933) could find only six plants at Tynings Farm in 1927. The field where the plant flourished was apparently ploughed in about 1954 and the plant exterminated there (Roe, 1981). Recorded in a pasture between Lower Farm and Charterhouse in 1915 by H.S. Thompson; it is still to be found at a site which fits that description and also on a nearby S-facing grassy slope NW of Lower Farm. Found in 1979 by R.B.G. and I.G. Roe on the N side of the track at the top of Velvet Bottom. No plants have been seen by the track since 2004; however a few plants persist over the wall on the rough sloping edge of a field. Green *et al.* (1997) also gave a record for a grassy slope S of Manor Farm, Charterhouse; however there are no recent records for this site. In Somerset, this species has always been rare and Miller (1933) listed it amongst "Plants with a precarious hold in the county"; the situation has not changed. *Vicia orobus* has declined in Britain and Ireland due to over-grazing, under-grazing or pasture improvement. It has a largely western distribution: sites in Somerset represent the southern edge of the native range.

### **VC6**

Charterhouse, W of		ST48785596	2012	HJC	Several plants on bank by track, near gate
Charterhouse, W of		ST48845594	2012	HJC	6 large clumps on bank by track
Charterhouse, W of		ST48895595	2012	HJC	1 plant on slope above new fence to N of track
Charterhouse, W of		ST489559	2009	HJC, FJR	Few clumps in bracken on slope W of footpath
Charterhouse, W of		ST48445616	2016	HJC, MAW	Many plants on steep S-facing slope
Charterhouse	SSSI	ST45Y	1990	EN	On grassy slope S of Manor Farm
Velvet Bottom		ST501554	2013	HJC, IPG	5 plants on S-facing slope at S edge of field
Velvet Bottom	SSSI	ST501555	1993	IPG, PRG	Several on N bank above track and in field
Velvet Bottom	SSSI	ST501556	2004	MJY	



Distribution of *Vicia orobus* in Somerset, mapped using MapMate  
 Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999, monad or tetrad



*Vicia orobus* near Charterhouse (2012). Photo: HJC