

## ***Leymus arenarius* (L.) Hochst.**

## **Lyme Grass**

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

VC5 Scarce; VC6 Not Scarce

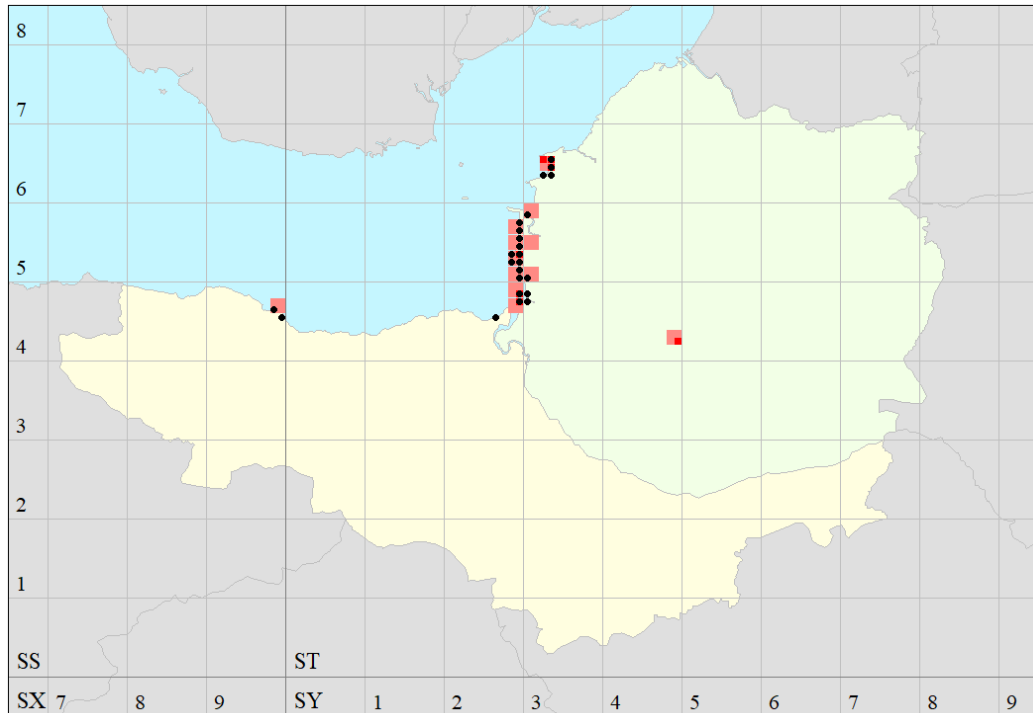
A perennial rhizomatous grass of sand dunes and shingle at the coast, occasionally found as a garden escape inland. In VC5 first recorded by J.C. Collins at Steart, the only site known to Murray (1896). Although there have been no subsequent records for Steart itself, in 1974 this species was found by Robert Cropper on Stert Island, where it persists, and a small patch was recently recorded at nearby Wall Common. In 1920, found by W. Watson at Minehead: it still occurs at scattered sites along the dunes at Minehead Warren. In VC6 records for *Leymus arenarius* from Burnham and Berrow were included by J.C. Collins in his list for Watson's Supplement to the New Botanist's Guide in 1837 (White, 1912). This species has many recent records along the coast from Burnham-on-Sea to Brean Down. Further north, it was recorded by Miss Mules in 1898 in the sand between Weston Esplanade and Brean Down (White, 1912): it still occurs at Uphill Dunes. It was found very sparingly near Sand Point in 1890 by T. Allin (Murray, 1896): it now thrives on the sand dunes of Sand Bay, south of Sand Point. In 1881, J.W. White found a small patch on shingle in a cove near Woodspring Priory, but the plants were later destroyed by cattle (White, 1912). There have been no subsequent records any further up the Severn Estuary than Sand Point. In 1992 Ian Green found this coastal grass on a road bank at Upper Godney (ST491426), some 20km inland: this may have been a garden escape. White (1912) regarded *Leymus arenarius* to be "Very rare, and with no permanent station". Miller (1933) included it in his list of "plants with a precarious hold in the county", stating that it was "Almost extinct as a Somerset plant". This species occurs around the coasts of Britain and Ireland, but is absent from large areas of southern England and the south and west of Ireland. Although there have been some losses in southern England (S.J. Leach in Preston *et al.*, 2002), it has clearly increased and spread on the sand dunes of Somerset.



*Leymus arenarius* at Sand Bay (2020). Photo: HJC

## VC5

|                 |      |            |      |                    |                                     |
|-----------------|------|------------|------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Minehead Warren |      | SS98454648 | 2011 | SRPG               | Small patch by footpath             |
| Minehead Warren |      | SS98464647 | 2018 | GEL, RFitzG        | Frequent along sand dunes           |
| Minehead Warren |      | SS98504649 | 2012 | SJP                | Large patch at the top of the beach |
| Minehead Warren |      | SS98514649 | 2020 | GEL, RFitzG        | Frequent on sand dunes              |
| Minehead Warren |      | SS98564648 | 2015 | AS                 | A few                               |
| Minehead Warren |      | SS99574589 | 2015 | AS                 | Large patch                         |
| Wall Common     | SSSI | ST26294551 | 2018 | SRPG               | Small patch on sandy ground         |
| Stert Island    | SSSI | ST29124816 | 1998 | TD                 |                                     |
| Stert Island    | SSSI | ST29144821 | 2014 | HJC, RGC, SJP, ITS | Large patch on dunes                |
| Stert Island    | SSSI | ST29154824 | 2014 | HJC, RGC, SJP, ITS | Large patch on shingle              |
| Stert Island    | SSSI | ST29244776 | 2014 | HJC, RGC, SJP, ITS | Scattered in 10x10m area of dunes   |



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



*Leymus arenarius* at Berrow Dunes (2014). Photo: HJC