

***Eleocharis acicularis* (L.) Roem. & Schult.      Needle Spike-rush**

Native

GB: Least Concern

England: Near Threatened

VC5 Lost; VC6 Lost

A dainty rhizomatous perennial which can form extensive patches at the margins of lakes, ponds, reservoirs and slow-moving rivers and canals. In VC5, this species has only been found once, at the sides of the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal below Maunsel in 1907 (Marshall, 1914). The earliest Somerset record was for VC6: North Somerset was included in the list of localities for this species by Watson (1874), who cited an unlocalised record by G.H.K. Thwaites. In 1893 it was found by D. Fry in many places along the edge of the canal between Bath and Claverton where the water had been lowered and the mud was partially dry (White, 1912). It was last seen in VC6 by Major R. Orme, flowering in shallow waters of the canal at Bath in 1926 (White, 1927). Roe (1981) and Green *et al.* (2000) give 1945 as the date of the last record for this species, but this cannot be substantiated and may be an error. *Eleocharis acicularis* has a scattered distribution in Britain and Ireland but has declined throughout its range, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century.