

## ***Pyrola minor* L.**

## **Common Wintergreen**

Native

GB: Least Concern

England: Near Threatened

VC5 Lost; VC6 Lost

A rhizomatous, evergreen, perennial, mycorrhizal herb found in damp woodland in southern England, elsewhere on damp heaths, plantations, rock ledges and sand dunes (F.J. Rumsey in Preston *et al.*, 2002). In Somerset, formerly known from three sites, but long extinct at all. In VC5, recorded from Tetton Wood, by W. Tuckwell and F.J. Hanbury (Murray, 1896), but not reported since. Known to White (1912) at two sites in VC6. First found by R. Baker in 1883, who observed it “in a wood in the vicinity of Clifton, on the Somersetshire side of the river. The plant was distributed over an area of about twenty square yards; sparsely in places, but in others more thickly” (White, 1883). In 1885, White was conducted to the site by Mr Baker, later describing it as “Wood between Abbotsleigh and the tan-pits under Failand” (White, 1912). By 1885 it grew over a larger area than first suspected, extending 100 yards, but in subsequent years the quantity diminished as the wood thickened, until none could be found (White, 1912). An annotation in a flora says: “*Pyrola media* [a mistake for *P. minor*], The Preserves, Sandy Lane, Leigh, June 14 1894 (pers. comm. C.M. Lovatt, 2010). This is clearly the same site; there are no later records. A second site, in Leigh Woods, was given by White (1912), recorded by G.B. Thompson “in one of the side glades to the left of the big oak”, but this record has not been confirmed by further observations. Miller (1933) wrote “I do not think this plant is now to be found at Tetton ... If the Leigh Woods station becomes, or has become, extinct, the species is lost to Somerset”. Although this implied that there had been sightings since the publication of White’s flora, Roe (1981, 1986) was clearly not aware of any later records and gave 1912 as the date of the last record. This species has declined throughout its range as a result of changes in woodland management or sites becoming too dry. Locations in Somerset were within the former range; however, there are now no remaining sites in southwest England.