

***Coeloglossum viride* (L.) Hartm.**

Frog Orchid

Native

GB & England: Vulnerable

Section 41

VC5 Rare; VC6 Rare

A small tuberous perennial herb, in southern England largely restricted to short calcareous grassland, for example ancient earthworks, disused quarries and spoil heaps, but also occasionally found in damp base-rich meadows. In Somerset this orchid was described as “Rather rare” by Murray (1896) who listed eleven sites. Roe (1981) described it as “Rare and apparently decreasing”, giving only six sites; it is now only known at four. In VC5 it was recorded by J. Sowerby at Hardington (Murray, 1896) and re-found by John Keylock at White Vine Farm, Hardington, where it was last seen in 1969. Although found at High Ham Hill by W. Watson (Marshall, 1914), there have been no further records for that site. Murray (1896) listed one other site in VC5: Templecombe, found by F.A. Lees. This was probably the first record for the only currently known site in VC5: Stout Hill, Milborne Wick, where a healthy population of 57 plants was seen in 2013. In VC6 White (1912) regarded this species as “rather rare”, but listed sixteen sites south of Bristol and Bath, many of them hay meadows. It is now found at only one of these, “Pastures on Mendip above Cheddar”. In 1982, Ro FitzGerald found this species on a roadside bank between Priddy and Cheddar Gorge (Willis, 1984); it still occurs at a site answering this description, although there are no recent records for Ubley Warren Reserve, also above Cheddar, where it was recorded in 1994 by Paul Green. The last records south of Bath were for Binegar Bottom, recorded in 1966 by R.G.B. Roe, Wellow, recorded by Mrs P.H. Rowle in 1975 and Southstoke, found by Robert Cropper in 1988: it has not been re-found at any of these sites. E.J. Hamlin recorded this species on the Polden Hills near Shapwick (Marshall, 1914). In 1946 he recorded it in a wet meadow on Shapwick Heath; it persists in a meadow at Canada Farm, Shapwick Heath. The only other site in VC6 is White Sheet Downs, now in Wiltshire, where 24 plants were recorded in 2012, 166 in 2017 and 50 in 2019. *Coeloglossum viride* has declined considerably across Britain and Ireland, mostly due to loss of species-rich meadows and “improvement” of pastures; this loss has certainly occurred in Somerset.



Coeloglossum viride at Canada Farm, Shapwick Heath (2012). Photo: HJC

VC5

Stout Hill ST6720 2013 SRPG 57 plants scattered on hillside [PRIVATE LAND]

VC6

Canada Farm	SSSI	ST418403	2012	HJC & SBG	38 in damp meadow W of Station Road
Canada Farm	SSSI	ST419403	2012	HJC & SBG	21 in damp meadow W of Station Road
Canada Farm	SSSI	ST419404	2012	HJC & SBG	13 in damp meadow W of Station Road
Priddy, NW of		ST51005218	2017	HJC, FJR	1 pl in super rich grassland on hillside
Priddy, NW of		ST50995218	2017	HJC, FJR	7 pl in small quarried area of rich grassland
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80093512	2019	SRPG	6 in short calcareous grassland on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80103512	2019	SRPG	10 in short grassland on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80103513	2017	HJC, FJR	1 on top of hill in short calcareous grassland
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80113510	2019	SRPG	1 in short calcareous grassland to S of path
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80113511	2019	SRPG	7 in short calcareous grassland on low bank
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80113512	2017	HJC, FJR	10 on low bank on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80123511	2019	SRPG	8 in short calcareous grassland on low bank
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80133511	2019	SRPG	2 in short grassland on low bank, top of slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80143510	2017	HJC, FJR	27 on low bank, on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80143511	2019	SRPG	7 in short grassland on low bank, top of slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80153510	2017	HJC, FJR	3 on slope above path, on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80153511	2019	SRPG	4 in short grassland on low bank, top of slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80163508	2017	HJC, FJR	6 in short calcareous grassland on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80163509	2017	HJC, FJR	3 in short calcareous grassland on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80163510	2019	SRPG	1 in short grassland on low bank, top of slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80173508	2017	HJC, FJR	13 in short calcareous grassland on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80173510	2017	HJC, FJR	1 in short calcareous grassland on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80183507	2012	SRPG	7 plants c. 2m N of small path, in short turf
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80183508	2017	HJC, FJR	19 in short calcareous grassland on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80183509	2017	HJC, FJR	8 in short calcareous grassland on S-facing slope
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80183510	2017	HJC, FJR	22 on E-facing bank W of tumulus
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80183511	2019	SRPG	2 in short grassland on E-facing bank
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80203509	2012	SRPG	1 in bud on E side of eastern tumulus
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80233502	2012	SRPG	1 in bud and 1 in flower N of small path
White Sheet Downs	SSSI	ST80243504	2019	SRPG	1 in short calcareous grassland, S side of path



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