

***Eryngium campestre* L.**

Field Eryngo

Archaeophyte

GB & England: Near Threatened

Schedule 8

Section 41

GB Rare

VC5 Rare; VC6 Lost

A perennial herb found in old pasture and coastal grassland, or as a casual on roadsides and other disturbed areas, usually on neutral or calcareous soils. In VC5 only ever known at one site, in rough pasture near Waterrow, where it was first found in 1969. In 1989, approximately 300 flowering spikes were recorded in a circular patch, about 10m across; it was suggested that the population was a vegetative clone. In 2008, 40 flowering plants were seen; in 2009 only 26 plants could be found, growing in rank under-grazed grassland. In VC6, White (1912) listed two sites in Weston-super-Mare: Worlebury Hill, where this species was first reported in 1843, but was never seen by White, the site having "long been covered with buildings"; and "a bit of wild hillside that has never been brought into cultivation" where, by 1895, White could find nothing but foliage. There have been no records at Weston-super-Mare since the publication of White's flora. In 1968, this species was found by R. Hurst at a site near Hinton Charterhouse, but the discovery was not made known to others until 1983 (Green *et al.*, 2000). In 1984, Robert Cropper recorded 45 plants, 13 in flower. Ian Taylor recorded 13 non-flowering plants in 1989 but only one plant in 1990. The field was designated an SSSI in 1991 solely because of this species. The last recorded sighting was in 1998, when Tom Cairns found a single plant. In 2003 the SSSI was declared Unfavourable, No Change; in 2012 it was assessed as Unfavourable, Declining. With only a few sites in lowland southern Britain, and casual occurrences elsewhere, the remaining Somerset site is an important stronghold for this species.

VC5

Hurstone Farm, Waterrow	ST055252	2009	MI	26 plants struggling in rank grassland
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