

***Gagea lutea* (L.) Ker Gawl.**

Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

VC5 Absent; VC6 Scarce

A bulbous perennial, found in woods on calcareous soil. Formerly more widespread in Somerset, where it was first noted by Lobelius in 1570. Recorded in 1828 in St Anne's Wood, Brislington, but believed to have been extirpated at that site by construction of the Great Western Railway (White, 1912). Found in a copse on Failand Hill in 1891, where it was still present in 1907 (White, 1912); the last sighting in the Bristol area was on the border of a wood by Markham Bottom, recorded by C. Trapnell in 1925. Once known from several sites around Bath: found in Twerton Wood in 1847, still present in the grounds of Twerton Wood House in 1893; seen at both Smallcombe Wood and a wood near Midford in 1901-2 by Miss Martin; known at Collett's Wood on Claverton Down by A.E. Burr, last seen there in 1887; and found in a wood NE of Charmy Down by Broome and Inman (White, 1912). It was also found by Wright at Hinton Blewett (Murray, 1896). There have been no further records for any of these sites. *Gagea lutea* is now only known from four sites. It was first recorded at Murder Combe, near Mells, in 1887 by D. Fry, seen by White in bud in 1900, then not recorded here again until 1992, when refound by Ian Green. It persists in small quantities, rarely flowering. First recorded at Bonnyleigh Wood, at Oldford near Frome, by Murray (1896), the species persists there at scattered sites but has not flowered for many years. Found in Lily Combe near Litton, by Robert Cropper in 1987. It was believed to have been destroyed in 1989 by use of the combe for landfill, however a search by Mark Jannink in 2009 revealed the second largest population in the county. One plant was seen in flower in Lily Combe in 2010. In 1988 this species was discovered by T. Andrews on rocky ledges above a disused quarry near Stoke St Michael. Thousands of plants can be seen at this site, with usually a few in flower. *Gagea lutea* has declined in Somerset, where it is at the southwest limit of its British distribution.

VC6

Lily Combe	ST58235354	2010	HJC, EMcD	Several clumps, one large, at base of trees
Lily Combe	ST58245355	2010	HJC, EMcD	Small clump at edge of wood near holly
Lily Combe	ST58145354	2010	HJC, EMcD	3 small patches on rocky outcrop by gate
Lily Combe	ST58185350	2010	HJC, EMcD	2 clumps on mossy boulders
Lily Combe	ST58165356	2010	HJC, EMcD	Hundreds on top of large limestone outcrop
Stoke St Michael	ST66944747	2012	HJC, GHR	Thousands on ledges of disused quarry
Stoke St Michael	ST66954746	2012	HJC, GHR	Thousands on ledges of disused quarry
Stoke St Michael	ST66954747	2015	HJC, GHR	Thousands on ledges of disused quarry
Murder Combe	ST74674869	2018	HJC, FJR	37 leaves on mossy rocks above stream
Murder Combe	ST74664870	2018	HJC, FJR	88 leaves on rocks of bank above stream
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST78985062	2018	HJC, FJR	2 clumps on old track
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST78985064	2018	HJC, FJR	Small clump below tall ash, near fallen conifer
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST78985065	2018	HJC, FJR	2 small clumps, base of sycamore on fence line
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST78995063	2018	HJC, FJR	3 small clumps at base of ash trees above track
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST79005060	2008	HJC, MJ, BL	Clump of 50 leaves on little path below track
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST79005062	2008	HJC, MJ, BL	Few clumps at base of tall Ash above track
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST79025060	2008	HJC, MJ, BL	Few clumps at base of tall Ash at field edge
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST79035054	2008	HJC, MJ, BL	23 leaves at base of multistemmed tree
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST79035055	2008	HJC, MJ, BL	3 leaves
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST79035056	2008	HJC, MJ, BL	4 leaves at base of tall thin Ash
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST79035059	2018	HJC, FJR	Small clump at base of hazel near top of slope
Bonnyleigh Wood	ST79035060	2018	HJC, FJR	2 clumps by hazel at top of slope



Distribution of *Gagea lutea* in Somerset, mapped using MapMate
 Black dots are post-2000 records; pink squares are 1987-1999 tetrad records



Gagea lutea at Stoke St Michael (2006). Photo: FJR