

Spargula arvensis L.

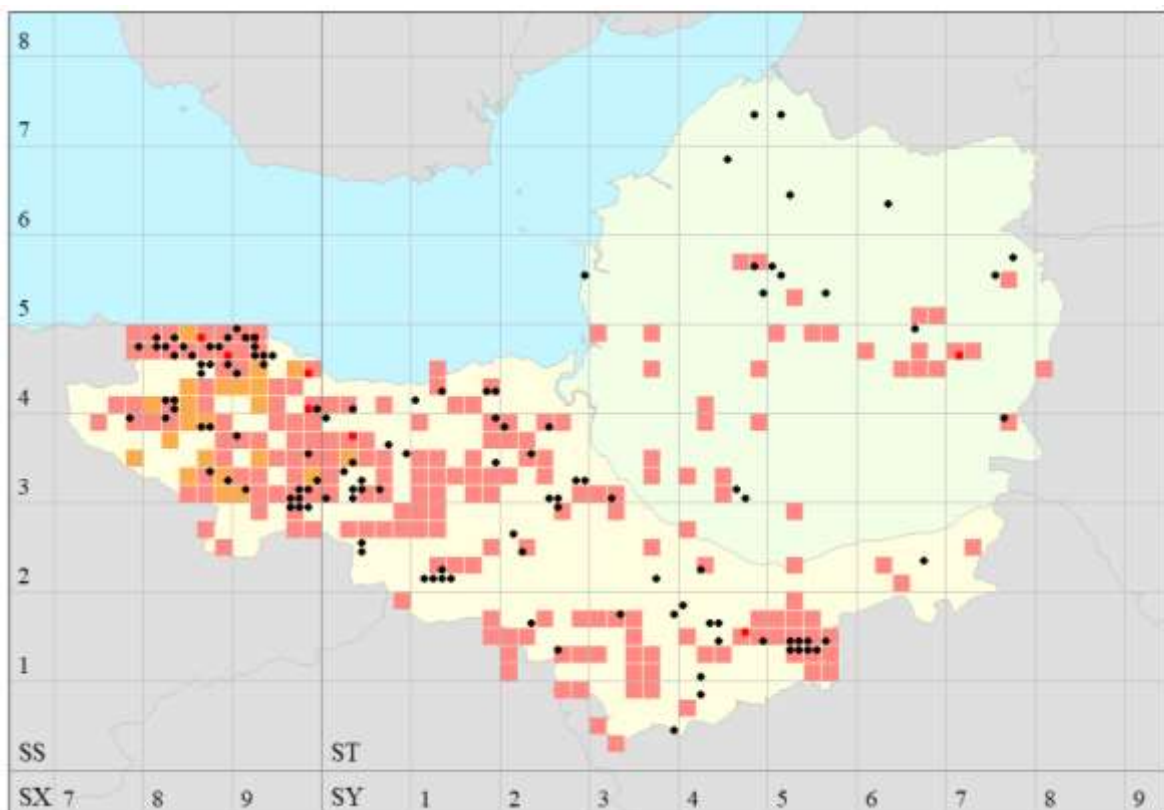
Corn Spurrey

Archaeophyte

GB & England: Vulnerable

VC5 Not Scarce; VC6 Not Scarce

An annual of arable fields, also found on other disturbed ground including the seashore, roadsides and waste ground. This species usually grows on light well-drained acidic soils, particularly sandy or loamy substrates, rarely occurring on calcareous soils. Murray (1896) described it as "rather common" in Somerset, but Roe (1981) reported that it was common in the west and south but rather rare on calcareous soils and on the Levels. The map in Green *et al.* (1997) showed it still common in the west and south in VC5, but absent from large tracts of VC6 (red squares on map below). It has clearly declined further in Somerset, although when found it may be in great quantity. In VC5 post-2000 records are clustered along the Exmoor coast between Malmesmead and Minehead, with other sites on Exmoor, and it is particularly found around Wimbleball Lake and Clatworthy Reservoir; otherwise it is scattered across South Somerset. In VC6 there are few post-2000 records: it has been recorded in arable fields at Witham Park, Holcombe, Hinton Charterhouse and Hassage in the east; near Wraxall and Chelvey in the north; beside a path on Fetlham Common and on disturbed tracks around Charterhouse and Cheddar Head; in newly sown leys at Compton Common and Somerton Moor; and on dune grassland by the beach at Brean. *S. arvensis* has declined in Somerset, as it has in other parts of Britain and Ireland. The decline is due to agricultural intensification, particularly the increased use of broad-spectrum herbicides and an increase in winter-sown crops, and also loss of arable land, especially in upland areas.



Distribution of *Spargula arvensis* in Somerset, mapped using MapMate.
Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999 records;
sepia squares are pre-1987 records.