

Ononis spinosa L.

Spiny Restharrow

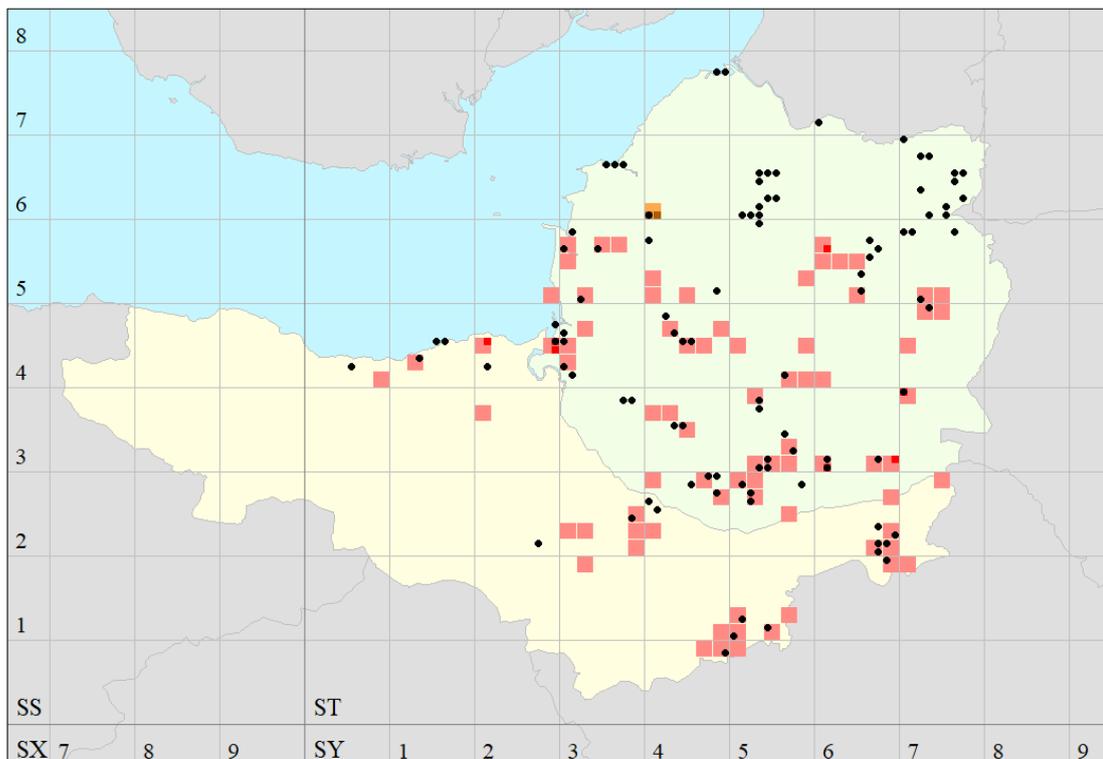
Native

GB: Least Concern

England: Near Threatened

VC5 Not Scarce; VC6 Not Scarce

An erect spiny shrub of well-drained calcareous soils, found on often steep grassland slopes and banks and on sea walls at the coast. In VC5 always a limited distribution and absent from the west and southwest. Watson (1837) listed this species as common in cornfields near Quantock on the authority of J. Poole. Still to be found at sites near the coast at Cleeve Hill, East Quantoxhead, and further east at Lilstock, Hinckley Point and near Stogursey, but no recent records at Bridgwater, where found by H.S. Thompson (Murray, 1896). Recorded by Murray (1896) as abundant on the hillside below Curry Rivell [sic]. Still present around Curry Rivel, but apparently lost from some sites further west, where recorded by Green *et al.* (1997), although re-found at Thurlbear, where first recorded in 1918. Recorded by Murray (1896) between Chard and the Junction, but not seen there since. Known to J. Sowerby at Yeovil (Murray, 1896): still found at scattered sites south of Yeovil, including Sutton Bingham and Hardington Moor. Murray (1896) also recorded this species at Templecombe, in the east of VC5; it is still to be found at several sites just west of there, around Milborne Wick and Milborne Port. In VC6, *Ononis spinosa* is more widespread, with particular concentrations between Somerton and Shepton Montague in the south, around Bath, and north of the Chew Valley. *Ononis spinosa* is a lowland species found particularly in south and central England, south and north Wales, and at scattered sites north to southern Scotland. There are very few sites further south-west than Somerset, where it appears to have declined in recent years, probably due to agricultural improvements.



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