

Hypericum elodes L.

Marsh St John's-wort

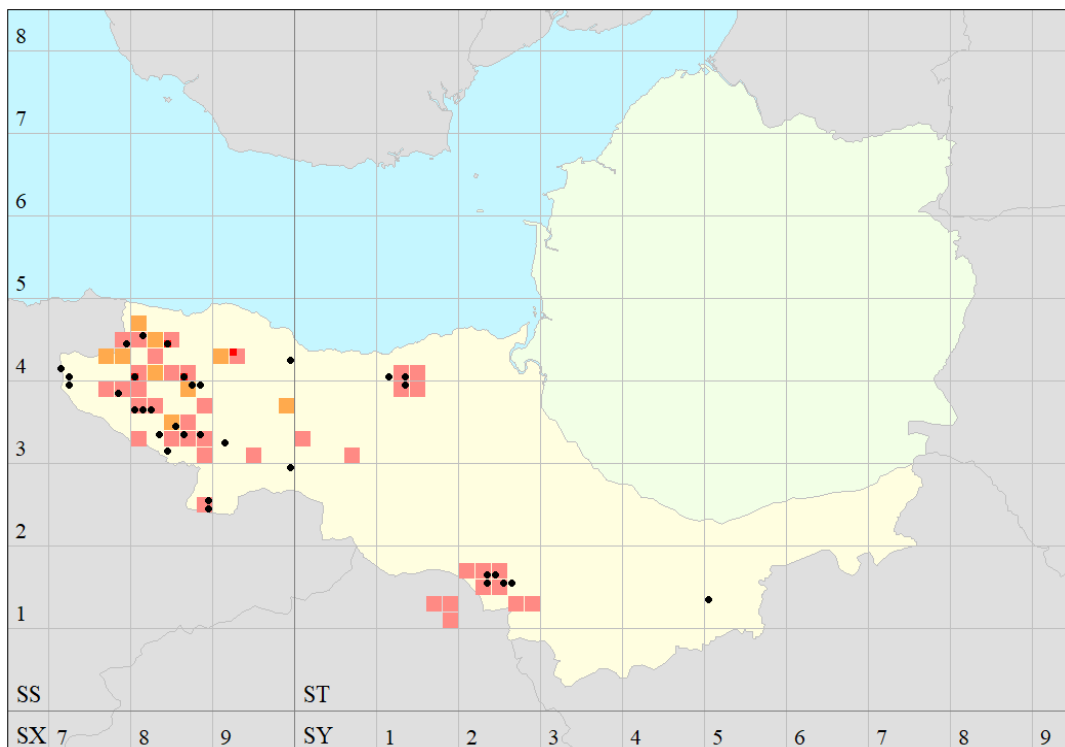
Native

GB: Least Concern

England: Near Threatened

VC5 Not Scarce; VC6 Lost

A stoloniferous perennial herb of wet acidic nutrient-poor soils, in bogs, edges of ponds and streams, and along wet runnels and seepages in mires. In Somerset described by Murray (1896) as "Rare, and almost confined to the west of the county": he listed sites for VC5 on Exmoor, the Quantocks and the Blackdown Hills, and also Chard Common. In 1916 it was found by Dr H. Downes at Chard Reservoir, but there have been no further records for that area. Green *et al.* (1997) described this species as locally common on Exmoor, the Quantocks and the Blackdowns, but rare on the Brendon Hills. There have been no recent records for the Brendons and it appears to have declined on Exmoor, the Quantocks and the Blackdowns. In 2013 *Hypericum elodes* was recorded by members of Somerset Botany Group in West Coker Fen (ST5013), a completely new site for this species. In VC6 Murray (1896) noted that it had been found towards the eastern end of the moor by T. Clark but had not been seen lately. A specimen in Herb. Clark collected in 1863 from the turf moor about a mile east of Ashcott railway station was the last record for VC6 until 1910, when it was re-found by Miss Winifred Mather near Ashcott Station (White, 1912). In 1914 this species was found on the Glastonbury peat moor by T.W. Green and seen by White (1915); there have been no subsequent records for VC6. *Hypericum elodes* is one of a suite of species of infertile acid bogs which have declined in lowland England due to loss of habitat, drainage and eutrophication: this decline has clearly occurred to some extent in Somerset.



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