



***Salvia pratensis* (Meadow Clary) at Stonesfield Common Report for 2018**

Management

Sheep (10-12 animals) were on the common in the winter 2017–18. The 3-ft-high temporary fence, erected by Richard Morris at the beginning of April, protected the majority of the plants from rabbits, which may nibble off the flowering stems as they develop.

A new enclosure has been erected in April 2018 around a new colony of 30 young plants raised from seed collected from Stonesfield Common in 2017.

A further 3 small patches of scarified soil were sprinkled with seed in 2017, and have no protection. Yellow rattle has been introduced by seed taken from a local field, to reduce the vigour of the grasses. The scrub clearance a few years ago has been very beneficial. Ideally, the site could do with increased grazing pressure, earlier in the autumn, to reduce the thatch and vigour of the grasses, to create the short sward that is ideal for Meadow Clary and other calcareous grassland plants.

Surveying

1 April

Gill Barrett conducted a clump count on 1st April, and found only 21 clumps, down from 39 last year. The plants were very much smaller and some may have been covered by rough grass. This may be attributed to the late spring this year.

26 June

This year, the Wychwood Flora Group were joined by several local residents to help count the flowering stems. Thanks to Lucy Butterwick, Caroline Friend, Brian Jones, Lucy Martin, Richard and Dale Morris, apologies to those whose names I have missed.

Wychwood Flora Group members: Sally Abbey, Judy Anders, Gill Barrett, Ken Betteridge, Maggie Collins, Margaret Cochrane, Genny Early, Christine Marsh, Julia Reid

Above the enclosure (towards the gate)

51°50'37'' 01°26'08''

1 clump: 3 flowering stems

1 big clump: 6 flowering stems

51°50'36'' 01°26'08''

1 nonflowering plant

1 clump: 1 flowering stem

1 clump: 1 flowering stem

1 clump: 5 flowering stems + 1 broken

1 clump: 2 flowering stems (eaten off)

1 clump: 2 flowering stems (eaten off)

Inside the enclosure

Top

2 big clumps: 67 flowering stems

1 very big clump: 69 flowering stems (1 eaten off)

1 big clump: 75 flowering stems

Middle

1 big clump: 68 flowering stems

1 clump: 8 flowering stems

Bottom:

1 big clump: 53 (and 1 pyramidal orchid)

A total of 340 flowering stems, down from 393 in 2017, 339 in 2016. Anthills appeared to have severely disrupted growth of some big clumps noted in 2017. However, they also appear to have provided closely cropped habitats for the establishment of some new plants, so it appears the anthills can be both detrimental and beneficial.

Below the enclosure

51°50'36'' 01°26'08''

4 young plants

51°50'37'' 01°26'06'' (beside the diagonal footpath running NNE):

One plant with 5 flowering stems.

New enclosure

51°50'40'' 01°26'04''

30 young plants; 1 flowering spike. The new plants appear to be establishing well, and even one flowering in its first year.

Final total for Stonesfield Common for 2018 is 366 flowering stems

Comments

A further new plant has been identified up Brook Lane, a mature specimen with 3 flowering spikes which have been broken off.

The successful initial introduction of new seedling plants of Meadow Clary is a hopeful sign that the Meadow Clary can spread further on Stonesfield Common. The large southfacing bank is an ideal habitat, now that the scrub clearance has taken place. Richard Morris hopes to get more stock on the site earlier in the autumn to graze the site more heavily. It may also be possible to do some manual clearance/scything and removal of material.

Genny Early
for the Wychwood Flora Group

copies to:

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