DESCRIPTION

A rare orchid that is restricted to poorly drained pastures on the west coast and Hebridean islands. It frequently occurs amongst Purple moor-grass in pastures grazed by cattle or ponies. It only very rarely sets seed and reproduction is mostly vegetative in our area. Recent genetic research has shown that it is genetically impoverished, because there are too few populations left in Scotland and this is thought to be limiting its capacity to produce viable seed in Scotland.

This is an oceanic Boreal-montane plant, which in Europe is restricted to western Scotland and Ireland. It is more widespread in N. America and Canada.

It is a nationally scarce species and is listed on the Scottish Biodiversity List.

DISTRIBUTION MAP

THREATS

In Scotland the capacity of this plant to build sufficiently large populations to survive into the long term is limited by its impoverished genetics. In order to address this problem, plants from different sites need to be brought together to see if seed production can be increased. Initially this experiment should be limited to plants with a Scottish origin. Traditional grazing management at key sites needs to be maintained, with a break in summer to allow flowering. Rabbit control is also required.

ACTION REQUIRED

1. Sign up as a Flora Guardian to help monitor this rare species at www.plantlife.org.uk/scotland
2. Maintain support through rural development programmes to maintain traditional grazing patterns on the west coast and islands, ideally using cattle.
3. Ensure the species is included in the living collections at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and Ben More.
4. Invest in a carefully designed translocation programme to build genetic diversity back into Scottish populations.

FURTHER READING

http://www.plantlife.org.uk/scotland/wild_plant_species_scotland/?ent=253


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