

Highland Saxifrage

NAMES

Saxifraga rivularis

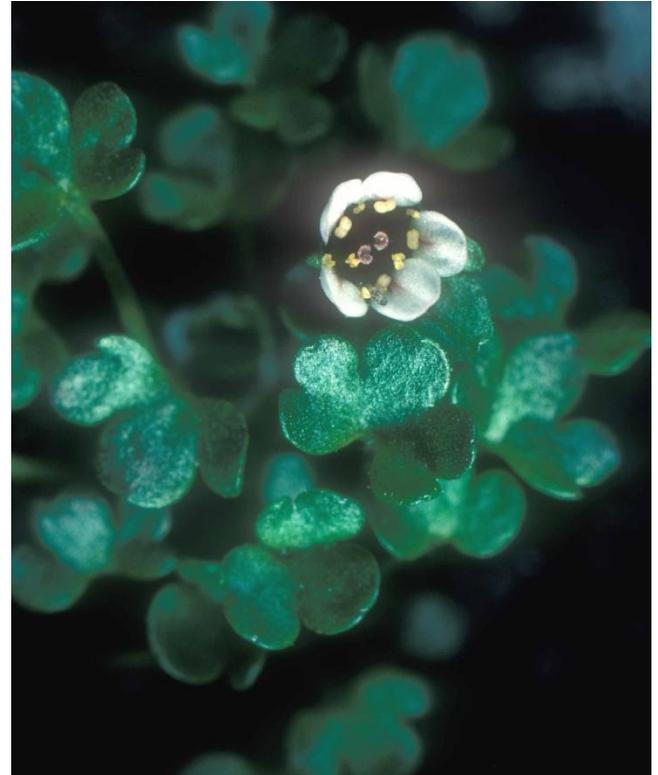
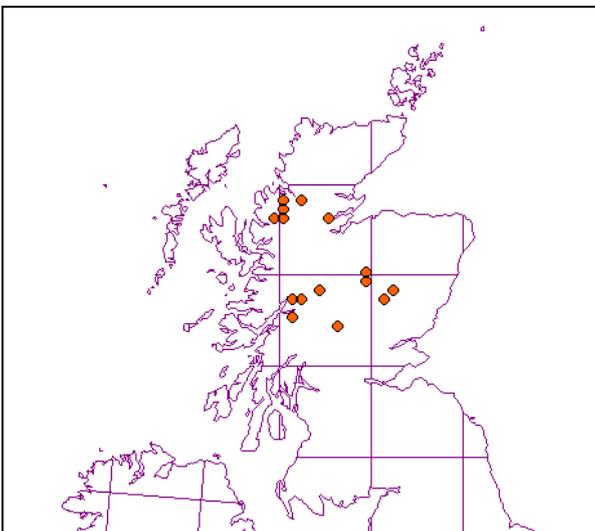
DESCRIPTION

A truly montane species in Scotland, confined to around 20 areas, all with late snow-lie and between around 820m – 1,200m in altitude. It always occurs on sites with a northerly to easterly aspect. Highland Saxifrage grows on rocky slopes, gullies and crags, as well as in mossy flushes. Most colonies are either regularly irrigated or permanently wet. Reproduction is by seed and vegetatively by stolons. In a poor summer some populations may not set seed. Many populations number 50 plants or less, but the largest may number up to around 1,000 plants.

The National Trust for Scotland reintroduced Highland Saxifrage at Ben Lawers from seeds collected from Glencoe, as the population had declined to a single plant by the 1990s. The population at Glencoe appears to be in decline, with counts of 613 in 1995, 411 in 2001 and 371 in 2012. It is the sub-population at the lowest altitude which accounts for the lower counts, from 300 plants in 1995 to 138 in 2001 and only 17 in 2012. Although difficult to prove, this would suggest climate change as the cause.

Although Nationally Rare, Highland Saxifrage is regarded as being of Least Concern. Included on the Scottish Biodiversity List.

DISTRIBUTION MAP



THREATS

Appears to be stable at present, but may be susceptible to climate change. There is evidence that it was much reduced on Ben Lawers due to historical collecting, and in a small number of sites erosion through recreational pressure is possible. Grazing and trampling by sheep and deer has also been recorded.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

Support measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change

FURTHER READING

Wigginton, M.J., 1999. Ed. *British Red Data Books 1 Vascular plants, 3rd edition*. JNCC.

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