

Tower Mustard (*Arabis glabra*)

Tower Mustard is a biennial member of the cabbage family which generally favours nutrient-poor sandy soils. It is thought that plants germinate in spring, spending one season in a vegetative state before flowering the following May-June. It can produce abundant seeds, which appear to remain viable for many years with plants often reappearing on old sites after long periods of absence. It favours disturbed/waste ground and open conditions, where it can behave like a weed.

The UKBAP Priority Habitats of particular importance to this species are: lowland calcareous grassland, lowland heathland and lowland dry acid grassland.

Current status

National status

Tower Mustard was formerly recorded from 142 10km squares, but has been recorded from only 31 of these since 1970. However, it is a mobile and opportunistic species and has been able to colonise areas of newly created habitat in Breckland, and here it may actually be increasing in numbers. There are 12 known sites in Norfolk, five sites in south-east England and several elsewhere in south-west. This species is classified as *Vulnerable* in Great Britain and receives general protection under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Tower Mustard is a UKBAP Priority Species and has an individual species action plan within the Tranche 2 Action Plans.

Status on the network

The species is known to occur on the M50 in Gloucestershire and is also likely to feature on road verges in Breckland (in particular on the A11) and elsewhere in East Anglia. It may also occur on suitable sandy heathland/calcareous grassland verges in Surrey and north-eastern Hampshire.

Current factors affecting the species

Habitat destruction

New road developments and road improvement schemes may lead to direct loss of areas of suitable calcareous grassland/heathland mosaic and disturbed road verge habitat.

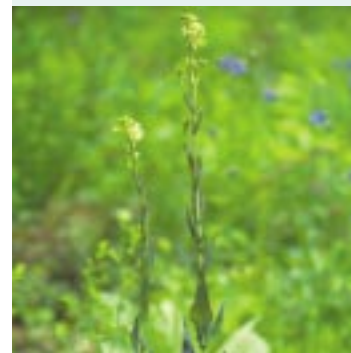
Inappropriate management/deterioration of existing habitat

Lack of management may reduce the open ground available for regeneration and the development of coarse competing vegetation. However, in Gloucestershire, the two known sites suffer from inappropriate management as part of the routine verge maintenance and at the roadside site, plants may be at risk from invasion of Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) from the adjacent field edge.

Current action

One Gloucestershire site has a management regime agreed with the Highways Agency, and the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust advise on appropriate management and monitor plants annually. The other Gloucestershire site has been identified as a Key Wildlife Site. Both sites are listed in the 1989 Register of Conservation Roadside Verges.

Ongoing conservation work for this species is being carried out as part of Plantlife's 'Back from the Brink' project. In Hampshire and Surrey, a survey has been undertaken of all known sites, habitat management has been undertaken and seed has been collected and kept in cultivation.



Objectives

The aim of the Highways Agency Species Action Plan for Tower Mustard is to implement appropriate management where this species

occurs and to ensure that new road developments avoid or adequately mitigate any potential impacts on this species and its habitat.

	Objective	Proposed actions
A	To avoid impacts of new road schemes or improvements on Tower Mustard.	5
B	To mitigate unavoidable impacts on Tower Mustard and its habitat and to consider options for habitat enhancement.	6
C	To monitor all road verges where this species is known to occur and safeguard through appropriate management.	4, 7, 8
D	To raise the awareness of HA staff, Managing Agents and consultants regarding the significance of Tower Mustard on the soft estate.	1, 2, 9
E	To develop a greater knowledge of the distribution of Tower Mustard across the soft estate	2, 3, 4

Proposed action

The following table lists the actions required to achieve the objectives set out in this Plan. For some of the actions, potential partners have

been assigned as likely sources of cooperation. Targets are provided to give an indication of the timescale for the proposed action.

	Action	Potential partners	Target
	<i>Policy, guidance and advice</i>		
1	Provide detailed information to local area managers within network areas 3, 6 and 9 (and any other areas where this species may occur) regarding management of roadside verges for the benefit Tower Mustard.	Plantlife	2004
2	Liaise with the relevant organisations regarding any new records for this species and best practice management regimes.	Plantlife, WTs, EN	2003
	<i>Surveying</i>		
3	Survey all areas of suitable verge habitat for Tower Mustard and record results on the Environmental Database.	-	2007
4	Monitor existing populations and identify possible locations for the establishment of new populations of Tower Mustard.	WT, EN,	Ongoing

	Action (continued)	Potential partners	Target
	<i>Mitigation</i>		
5	For all new road schemes and road improvements in network areas 3, 6 and 9, include search for records of Tower Mustard in desk study at stage 1 and in surveys at stage 2.	-	Ongoing
6	Where impacts of new schemes and road improvements on Tower Mustard habitat are unavoidable, consider the options for re-establishment at adjacent/former sites.	-	Ongoing
7	Ensure that existing sites known to support Tower Mustard are managed appropriately to maintain and enhance their value for the species.	-	Ongoing
8	Implement management regimes, including scrub clearance, coppicing and ground disturbance, to enhance eight former and/or potential Tower Mustard sites.	-	2012
	<i>Communications and publicity</i>		
9	Information on Tower Mustard should be included in environmental training for HA staff and Managing Agents.	-	2003

Links with other plans

This plan should be read in conjunction with the HAPs for grassland and heathland.

There is a Species Action Plan for Tower Mustard in the Gloucestershire LBAP.

Lead partner

The lead partner for Tower Mustard is Plantlife.

