

NORFOLK BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

STARLET SEA ANEMONE (*Nematostella vectensis*)

A tiny anemone, with the column rarely more than 15mm in length. Translucent and colourless in appearance except for variable patterns of opaque white. Tentacles large in proportion to the body, colourless and translucent with pale tips and with faint transverse bars and irregular flecks of white. The tentacles (9-18) are very strongly adhesive. (from www.marlin.ac.uk)

The anemone is usually found buried upright in soft muds at the edges of creeks in saltmarshes and brackish pools, sometimes attached to sea grasses, reed stems or algae. It feeds on small invertebrates associated with mudflats.

1. CURRENT STATUS

National Status

- The starlet sea anemone occurs in only a few coastal lagoons in the Isle of Wight, Hampshire, and Dorset and along the East Anglian coast. It may also occur in some brackish ponds and ditches. The species is listed as vulnerable by IUCN/WCMC and rare on the GB Red List and is protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981.

Norfolk Status

- This anemone was known to be present at Half Moon Pond, Cley and Salthouse Broad (Bamber 1997) within the North Norfolk Natural Area and Abraham's Bosom in north-west Norfolk (Williams 1987). Current status is unknown.

2. CURRENT FACTORS CAUSING LOSS OR DECLINE IN NORFOLK

- Loss and damage to lagoon and other sheltered brackish water habitats caused by pollution, drainage and other activities. Isolation of pools leading to fragmentation of populations. Coastal defence works and associated filling. Coastal erosion and natural shingle movements. Lagoons at Cley and Salthouse are likely to be affected by changes in shingle bank and inundation regime due to future changes in maintenance of the shingle ridge.

3. CURRENT ACTION IN NORFOLK

- None since the creation of the new lagoon at Salthouse.

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|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Ref 1/S18 | Tranche 1 | Species Action Plan 18 |
| Plan Author: | Norfolk Wildlife Trust | |
| Plan Co-ordinator: | Coastal BAP Topic Group | |
| Plan Leader: | Natural England | |
| Date: | Stage: | |
| 31 Dec 1998 | Final draft | |
| May 2006 | Final revised draft | |
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| | | |

4. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

The aim is to link objectives, targets and actions within this plan to those within the Saline Lagoon Action Plan and ensure that the two plans are compatible.

National

- Maintain viable populations at all known localities.
- If biologically feasible, re-introduce to 5 sites by the year 2005.

Norfolk

- Maintain and protect the viable populations at Half Moon Pond, Salthouse Broad and Abraham's Bosom, subject to natural change.

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| NATIONAL ACTION | | NORFOLK ACTION | ACTION BY: | PARTNERS: |
|-----------------|--|--|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 5.1 | Policy and Legislation | | | |
| 5.1.1 | Seek to ensure that sea defence strategies and structures take account of the requirements of the anemone, including opportunities to create brackish lagoons and ditches. | Seek to ensure that Shoreline Management Plans take account of the requirements of the anemone, including opportunities to create brackish lagoons and ditches. | EA/NE, NNDC, KL&WN | NWT, RSPB |
| 5.2 | Site Safeguard and Management | | | |
| 5.2.1 | Maintain and where possible increase the amount of brackish lagoon habitat and ditches in occupied areas and in areas within the dispersal range of this species, to encourage expansion of existing colonies. | Maintain and where possible increase the amount of brackish lagoon habitat and ditches in occupied areas and in areas within the dispersal range of this species, to encourage expansion of existing colonies. | EA, NE, RSPB, NWT, NT | |
| 5.2.2 | Promote the implementation of practices to encourage the formation and development of brackish lagoons and sheltered brackish water habitats at suitable sites. | Promote the implementation of practices to encourage the formation and development of brackish lagoons and sheltered brackish water habitats at suitable sites. | EA, NE, RSPB, NWT, NT | |
| 5.2.3 | Continue programme to conserve lagoon habitats under the EC Habitats Directive, to benefit this species. | No action proposed. | | |
| 5.2.4 | Consider the need to notify sites for this species as SSSI. | Promote the inclusion of starlet sea anemone as a conservation objective in SSSI designations and condition assessments. | NE | |

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| NATIONAL ACTION | | NORFOLK ACTION | ACTION BY: | PARTNERS: |
|-----------------|---|--|-------------|-----------|
| 5.3 | Species Management and Protection | | | |
| 5.3.1 | Following feasibility assessment and identification of suitable sites, seek to reintroduce at least 5 populations to formerly-occupied localities once conditions are suitable. | Following feasibility assessment and identification of suitable sites, seek to reintroduce to formerly-occupied localities once conditions are suitable. | NE | |
| 5.5 | Future Research and Monitoring | | | |
| 5.5.1 | Promote surveys to determine the full extent of the species distribution especially in brackish ponds and ditches. | Undertake a survey (including in brackish ponds and ditches) to obtain up-to-date species status information by 2008. | NE | |
| 5.5.2 | Seek to identify former sites suitable for reintroduction. | Seek to identify former sites suitable for reintroduction. | NE | |
| 5.5.3 | Encourage regular monitoring of existing populations and identify any further threats to the species. | Encourage regular monitoring of existing populations and identify any further threats to the species. | NE | |
| 5.5.4 | Pass information gathered during survey and monitoring of this species to JNCC or BRC so that it can be incorporated in national databases. | Undertake monitoring in accordance with national guidelines. | NE | |
| 5.5.4 | Pass information gathered during survey and monitoring of this species to JNCC or BRC so that it can be incorporated in national databases. | Pass information gathered during survey and monitoring of this species to JNCC, NBRC and site managers. | NE | |
| 5.6 | Communications and Publicity | | | |
| 5.6.1 | Use this species to highlight the conservation value of lagoons. | Make sure species is featured on any new interpretation for saline lagoons. | NE, NWT, NT | |

NORFOLK DISTRIBUTION

Subject to re-checking, this species is believed to be present at three sites: Half Moon Pond; Salthouse Broad; and Abraham's Bosom.

MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

(This guidance is a general summary; for detailed information or advice, please consult the references or contacts below.)

Little is known of exact management requirements for the species itself. However, it is assumed that management to enhance the saline lagoons where it is presently found would be beneficial for the species. Suggested management requirements for saline lagoons (see Appendix 5, English Nature Research Report 235, Assessment of Saline Lagoons within Special Areas of Conservation, 1997) are protection of the seaward edge of the lagoons from shingle encroachment for Half Moon Pond and Salthouse Broad. In view of the likelihood of a re-profiled shingle ridge, which will be subject to natural coastal change, protection of the lagoons and hence habitat for the species is more likely to involve works to ensure that the lagoons can move landwards. Linking of lagoons with the adjacent dyke system may also allow the species to migrate. At Abraham's Bosom, suggested management for the lagoon is control of adverse recreational impacts and control of reed encroachment.

REFERENCES AND CONTACTS

Bamber, R.N. (1997). *Assessment of Saline Lagoons within Special Areas of Conservation*. English Nature Research Report 235.

Shearer, M., Suwailem, A. M. and Rowe, G. A. (1997). The anemone, *Nematostella vectensis*, in Britain: Considerations for conservation management. *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems* **7**: 13-25.

Williams, R. B. (1973). The significance of saline lagoons as refuges for rare anemones. *Trans. Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society* **22**: 387-392.

Williams, R. B. (1976). Conservation of the sea anemone *Nematostella vectensis* in Norfolk, England and its world distribution. *Trans. Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society* **23** (5): 257-266.

Williams, R. B. (1983). Starlet sea anemone: *Nematostella vectensis* Stephenson 1935. In: *The IUCN Invertebrate Red Data Book*, pp. 43-46.

Williams, R. B. (1987). The current status of the sea anemone *Nematostella vectensis* in England. *Trans. Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society* **27** (5): 371-374.

See also: www.nematostella.org