

Dartmoor Species Action Plan for Deptford Pink

The Deptford pink (*Dianthus armeria*), is an attractive biennial, or occasionally annual flower, which has undergone one of the most rapid declines of any British plant species over the last 60 years. Having been widespread throughout southern England and Wales (261 10km squares before 1950), it has been recorded from only 28 10km squares since 1990. A national survey carried out by Plantlife in 1998 recorded presence at only 24 sites, with the largest colony surviving on two sites near Buckfastleigh. Deptford pink is included on the priority list of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and a national Action Plan was produced for the species in 1998. It has been added both to the IUCN Red Data Book Red List (where it is classed as 'Endangered'), and to Schedule 8 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act*, which makes it illegal to intentionally pick, uproot or destroy this species.

Current status on Dartmoor

Deptford pink has recently been recorded from two areas within the National Park. One is located on the north-eastern edge of Buckfastleigh, and supports a large population of flowering plants which has numbered 4-8,000 in recent years. The population can be found over four distinct sites with different management issues. One of these sites is at Rock Farm, a nature reserve owned and managed by the Vincent Wildlife Trust.

The second area is on the southern edge of Ashburton, where plants were recorded in 1997. Three plants were found here in 1999, but there have been no records since.



© Phil Wilson

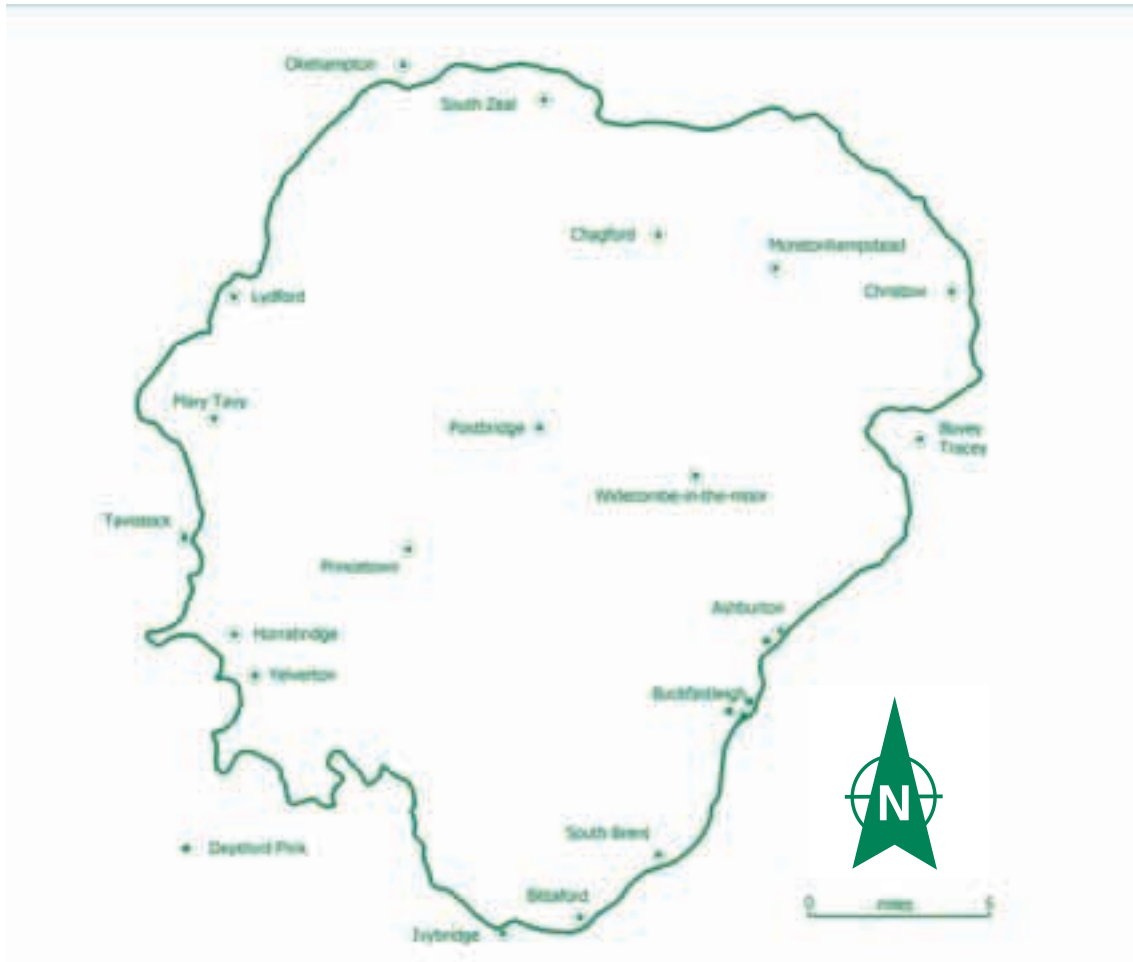
Deptford pink

Current factors affecting the species on Dartmoor

The main factor affecting this species is succession to grassland and scrub. In two of the four sites at Buckfastleigh, recent bank cuttings have provided an ideal habitat for the plant. However, these sites are already showing signs of succession to grassland and bramble, with a consequent decrease in distribution and numbers of Deptford pink. One of these sites has been suffering from rapid invasion by bracken, bramble and gorse, despite some scrub management and annual grazing taking place. The two remaining sites require annual management through grazing and strimming to maintain open conditions.

Factors affecting the Ashburton site are unknown.

Dartmoor Deptford Pink Distribution Map



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Dartmoor National Park Authority Licence No 100024842 2007.

Current action on Dartmoor

A local volunteer, working with the Action for Wildlife Project, has been carrying out very valuable annual monitoring of 3 Buckfastleigh sites, showing clear changes in plant numbers and distribution. DNPA staff have carried out annual strimming at one site and periodic scrub management with volunteers at another. The road cutting is now partly managed by DCC Highways Department whilst carrying out normal verge cutting in this area. At Rock Farm, a study using permanent plots to study the Deptford pinks' phenology, population dynamics and response to management has been undertaken by Plantlife.

Deptford Pink Key Conservation Objectives and Targets

Deptford Pink Objectives

Objective 1

Ensure that the Buckfastleigh / Ashburton area remains a stronghold for the Deptford pink.

Dartmoor targets

- A** Undertake further searches in suitable habitats around Buckfastleigh and Ashburton to give an accurate distribution of the species by 2002.*
- B** Ensure all site owners are aware of the species presence and its habitat requirements by 2001.*
- C** Seek agreements where appropriate, to achieve management that will enhance the number of flowering plants by 2002.*
- D** Monitor sites annually to record the number of flowering plants, involving local groups where possible.
- E** Maintain the range of this species over the Dartmoor sites.
- F** Achieve annual populations of at least 1,500, 1,500, 500 and 50 plants at respectively the 2 cuttings, Rock Farm and the natural grassland site by 2008, maintaining these numbers thereafter.

Objective 2

Achieve a better understanding of the ecology of the Deptford pink.

Dartmoor target

- A** Encourage research into the ecology of this species, especially in relation to seed viability and habitat management by 2011.

* Target from original (2001) version of the BAP that has already been achieved and therefore not taken forward in the revised Action Plan.

Abbreviations used in this table:

BSBI – Botanical Society of the British Isles, AfW – Action for Wildlife Project, DBRG – Dartmoor Biodiversity Research Group, DNPA – Dartmoor National Park Authority, NE – Natural England, VWT – Vincent Wildlife Trust, DCC – Devon County Council

Actions for Deptford Pink on Dartmoor

Monitoring responsibility: Dartmoor National Park Authority

Action	Meets Objective/ Target	Deliverer		Complete by					Date achieved
		Lead	Partners	2007	2008	2011	2016	On-going	
Policy and Legislation									
Include protection policies for all sites in all relevant statutory plans when reviewed	1	DNPA							●
Site Safeguard									
Safeguard sites against direct threats through planning controls and other consultation procedures	1	DNPA							●
Establish management agreements on sites where possible	1	DNPA							●
Habitat Management									
Liaise with bodies undertaking works near existing sites to maximise the potential for further spread	1	DNPA	Plantlife						●
Carry out control of scrub and rank vegetation on all sites when necessary	1E, 1F	DNPA, VWT, DCC							●
Encourage annual grazing at the natural grassland site	1E, 1F	DNPA							●
Establish a rotational scarification programme on both cutting sites by 2008	1E, 1F	DNPA, DCC		●					
Research & Monitoring									
Survey Ashburton site to see if Deptford pink still survives here	1E	DNPA	BSBI	●					
Encourage research into the ecology of the species through the Dartmoor Biodiversity Research Group and/or Plantlife	2A	DBRG, Plantlife	DNPA, VWT						●
Monitor the Buckfastleigh populations annually, using local school groups or individuals where possible	1D, 1F	DNPA, Plantlife	AfW, VWT						●