

LADY'S-SLIPPER ORCHID *Cypripedium calceolus* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

DESCRIPTION

Now one of Britain's rarest orchids, lady's-slipper orchid *Cypripedium calceolus* was once more widespread (although local) in northern England. Historically, as a wild plant, it was to be found on open, sloping ground in oak, ash and hazel woods on limestone. In Britain the plant survives as a single clump in limestone grassland over well-drained soil on a fairly steep slope adjacent to woodland. It is a showy and striking plant with usually one flower per stem. These are a combination of maroon perianth segments and a bright golden-yellow lip, which is hollow and formed into a pouch or 'slipper', hence the plant's colloquial name.

LOCAL BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANCE

This species was formerly recorded from the limestone districts of Derbyshire, Durham and Cumbria as well as Yorkshire. Collected for garden and herbarium specimens, lady's-slipper orchid disappeared from most of its former haunts during the 19th Century. The last remaining wild plant is now to be found within the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANCE

It is listed as critically endangered in the British Red Data Books: 1 Vascular Plants; Appendix II of the Berne Convention and Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive. It is protected under Schedule 4 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, Etc) Regulations 1994 and Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Lady's-slipper orchid is a UK BAP National Priority Species.

CURRENT ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

The main threats to this species are uprooting by gardeners and botanical collectors and habitat destruction from inappropriate levels of grazing.

All conservation action for this species is co-ordinated by the National Steering Group (known as the *Cypripedium* Committee).

Since 1992 lady's-slipper orchid has been the subject of an English Nature Species Recovery Programme. This has included specific habitat management and wardening at the one remaining native site. Additional research and *ex situ* propagation and cultivation of plants has enabled seedlings to be introduced at both the native site and other suitable reintroduction sites, a number of which are within the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

AIMS OF THE SPECIES ACTION PLAN

- To ensure that there is no further decline in the current population of lady's-slipper orchid in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.
- To increase the current population and distribution of this species.
- Enhance and safeguard the genetic variation of wild plants.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve these aims we need to:

Support the work of the Cypripedium Committee, and assist with the following:

- Maintain the current habitat management and annual wardening of the remaining native and reintroduction sites.
- Continue the ongoing programme of reintroduction at suitable sites.
- Continue the ongoing *ex situ* research and conservation programme.
- Maintain seed at the national seed bank at Wakehurst Place.

ACTIONS & TARGETS

To achieve these objectives the following actions should be carried out and the targets achieved within the time-scale given:

Actions	Target date	3 year cost £
Maintain the current population of lady's-slipper orchid at the existing sites through habitat management and wardening.	Annual	No additional cost
Where appropriate, continue reintroduction programme to restore populations of lady's-slipper orchid to locations where the species was previously recorded, or where present habitat is suitable.	2004	No additional cost
Maintain the current <i>ex situ</i> conservation program including micro-propagation techniques, cross pollination techniques and maintenance of genotypes of wild origin.	Ongoing	No additional cost
Maintain seed at Kew, the national seed bank, Wakehurst Place.	Ongoing	No additional cost

Note: All the above actions are co-ordinated by the Cypripedium Committee. All funding required to implement the work is in place. All action is ongoing.

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTION PLAN?

Lead Agency	Key Partners
Cypripedium Committee	English Nature Joint Nature Conservation Committee Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew Landowners and managers Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority