

Rare Species Guardians

This year a new project has been gathering pace in Bedfordshire, the Rare Species Guardians. The project aims to monitor and protect the rarest fauna and flora across the whole of Bedfordshire, and is in collaboration with the Bedfordshire Natural History Society's Flora Group, The Greensand Trust and the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre (BRMC).

For each species and site they're located at, a guardian is assigned. They check on their species throughout the year if they're threatened, or just annually if the population is stronger. They help to identify what can be done to boost each species or discover what is causing their decline. We currently have over 10 volunteers monitoring around 20 species such as the Green-winged Orchid, the Bog Pimpernel and the Marsh Violet, and would always welcome more volunteers.

Our focus started small, with a handful of plants picked from a long list. We are now building momentum, with organisations from each area picking their own species. At the moment the focus is on plants, but we hope to expand this to include fauna as well as flora.

On top of the work our Guardians will be carrying out, we'll also be intensely monitoring particularly threatened species, with a group of volunteers gathering detailed information on the population (seedlings, flowering rates etc.) as well as trialling interventions to protect the population.



Pasqueflowers

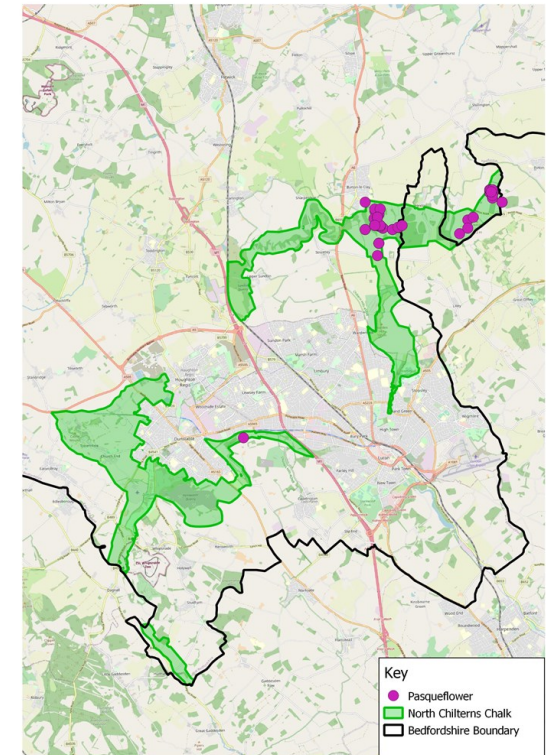
We're starting at home with this project, taking a close look at the Pasqueflowers on one of our biggest reserves, Pegsdon Hills, where our sheep have taken a distinct liking to the purple flowers. Not a great way of conserving the population to say the least!

We have put metal tags next to every known plant so that they can be found with a metal detector, and have put chicken wire cages around them to stop them being grazed off. This coming year we are planning on putting a small electric fence around the area to see if any more come up.

Fingers crossed that we will start to see more individuals in the future!

If you're interested in becoming a Guardian or would like to invite a Guardian to monitor a Rare Species on your land, please contact the Wider Countryside team at: T: 01234 364213; E: bedfordshire@wildlifebcn.org

If you would like to invite the Flora Group to undertake a survey at any particularly interesting areas of your land please contact: John Wakely; vetjw@me.com



Known distribution of pasqueflowers in the North Chilterns Chalk, 2019