

Lesser Whirlpool Ramshorn Snail: European Protected Species

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Distribution

The Lesser Whirlpool Ramshorn snail has always had a very localised distribution in Britain. Since 1965 it has been recorded at about fifteen sites, in Norfolk, Suffolk, Middlesex and Sussex. It occurs in unpolluted, calcareous water in well-vegetated marsh drains and ditches. The marshlands of east Suffolk and Norfolk and Pevensey Levels in Sussex hold the principal UK populations. In Suffolk it is found in Carlton Marshes (Suffolk Wildlife Trust Reserve) and in North Cove. In Norfolk the Waveney valley is the main stronghold for the species.

The IUCN Red Data Book for Invertebrates (Bratton 1991) places this ramshorn snail on the vulnerable list.

UK Distribution



Courtesy of JNCC

Habitat and Lifecycle

The Lesser Whirlpool Ramshorn snail is a small aquatic snail with a flattened spiral shell rarely more than 5mm in diameter. The snail is only found within grazing marshes that are drained by ditches or dykes. It is associated with a rich assemblage of plants and other species of molluscs that are rare and vulnerable, including *Segmentina nitida*. It often floats on the surface amongst duckweed *Lemna spp.* It shows a preference for ditches or channels that are greater than 3m in width and over 1m in depth with a diverse flora but with a moderate emergent vegetation. Ditches that are either completely cleared of vegetation or are choked with weed and silt are unsuitable.

Legislation

This species is listed on Annex II and Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. From 1 October 2008 the lesser whirlpool ramshorn snail is protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &C.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). As a European protected species the deliberate capturing, disturbing, injuring or killing of this species is prohibited, as is damage or destruction of its breeding sites or resting places (note that this is a simplified summary of the legislation, which can be viewed in full at http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1994/Uksi_19942716_en_1.htm)

Land Management

The main threats include over-frequent ditch clearance, nutrient enrichment due to fertiliser applications and conversion of grazing levels to arable farming with associated water table lowering. As a result the species is declining nationally.

Management practices should ensure the maintenance of water levels and should limit the clearance of ditches to small portions at any one time. For further details regarding land management in areas containing lesser whirlpool ramshorn snail contact the Environment Agency at Juliette.Hall@Environment-Agency.org.uk

Further Details

For questions regarding Wildlife Licensing please telephone 0845 6014523 (local rate) or email wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

Natural England Information Notes are available to download from the Natural England website: www.naturalengland.org.uk