

Changes to the Inventory of Vascular Plants for the Sefton Coast in 2025

Philip H. Smith, February 2026

The *Inventory of Vascular Plants for the Sefton Coast* lists all species, subspecies and hybrids reliably recorded, both for the 28 km coastal zone between Bootle Docks and Crossens and for the sand-dune system covering 2100 ha between Crosby and Southport, Sefton Borough, north Merseyside (vice-county 59, South Lancashire) (Smith, 2015).

For the first time since 2005/06, no new vascular taxa were added to the *Inventory* in 2024 (Table 1). However, *Mercurialis annua* (Annual Mercury), thought extinct, was rediscovered at Kenilworth Road, Ainsdale and Kirklake Road, Formby by Robert Freeth and Steve Cross respectively (Fig. 1). The Kenilworth Road verge is considered to be a ‘duneland’ site. This ‘southern’ plant was last recorded for the coast in 1947. Also previously listed as “extinct”, a large flowering specimen of *Allium ampeloprasum* (Wild Garlic) (Fig. 2) was found on disturbed ground at Queen’s Jubilee Nature Trail, Southport, by Joyce Jarvis and Ann Anderson. Stace (2019) describes it as a “very local archaeophyte-denizen on rough ground near the sea”. Joyce and Ann also recorded *Rheum* × *rhbarbarum* (Rhubarb) on Hightown dunes; although recorded previously for the coastal zone, it was not known for the dune system. Pete Kinsella photographed the distinctive *Rumex sanguineus* var. *sanguineus* (Wood Dock) at Crosby Coastal Park (Fig. 3). Although varieties do not usually qualify for inclusion in the *Inventory* this “rare garden escape or casual” (Stace, 2019) may justify an exception.

As a result of these changes, the total number of *Inventory* vascular taxa remains at 1448, of which 1283 are recorded for the dune-system (Table 2). About 41% of the coastal zone plants are non-native (38% in the dunes), while the number of regionally and nationally notable taxa is still 243 for the coast and 226 for the dune-system.

Fig. 4 shows the number of vascular taxa added to the *Inventory* annually since 2005/06. In 20 recording seasons, the overall total is 221 taxa at an average of 11.05 per annum. There is a good deal of variation but a significantly declining trend in the number of additions per year ($r = -0.468$, $n = 20$, $p = 0.0374$).

These data confirm the outstanding botanical importance of the Sefton coast (Smith, 2021), further justifying the many national and international conservation designations that apply to the coastal zone in general and the dune-system in particular.

Acknowledgements:

I am grateful to Ann Anderson, Joyce Jarvis, Robert Freeth, Steve Cross and Pete Kinsella for communicating their observations.

References:

Smith, P.H. 2015. A revision of the inventory of vascular plants for the Sefton Coast, north Merseyside (v.c.59, South Lancashire), with particular reference to the 2014 Red List for England. *BSBI News* 129: 36-40.

Smith, P.H. 2021. *Wildflowers of the Sefton Coast*. Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society, Rishton.

Stace, C.A. 2019. *New Flora of the British Isles fourth edition*. C & M Floristics, Middlewood Green.

Table 1. Changes to the *Sefton Coast Vascular Plant Inventory* in 2025.

* = non-native (neophyte) or introduced native taxon; r = rare; **D** = found in the dune system

Taxon	English name	Frequency	Habitat
<i>Allium ampeloprasum</i>	Wild Garlic	r (previously extinct)	Disturbed ground D
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	Annual Mercury	r (previously extinct)	Disturbed ground D
<i>Rheum</i> × <i>rhabarbarum</i> *	Rhubarb	r	Disturbed ground D
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i> var. <i>sanguineus</i> *	Wood Dock	r	Disturbed ground

Table 2. Summary of revised *Sefton Coast Inventory* data. Note: some ‘notable’ taxa occur in more than one category

Category	Coastal zone	Dune system
Total vascular taxa	1448	1283
Species	1226	1092
Subspecies	74	67
Hybrids	148	120
Native taxa	845	787
Introduced taxa	597	488
% introduced	41.2	38.1
Extinct	78	68
Nationally Rare	17	17

Nationally Scarce	23	20
Section 41 species	10	10
Critically Endangered (England Red List, 2014)	1	1
Endangered (UK Red List, 2005)	5	5
Endangered (England Red List, 2014)	7	7
Vulnerable (UK Red List, 2005)	16	14
Vulnerable (England Red List, 2014)	35	32
Near Threatened (UK Red List, 2005)	15	14
Near Threatened (England Red List, 2014)	58	55
Species of Conservation Importance (regionally notable)	178	167
Total notable	243	226



Figure 1. *Mercurialis annua* Kirklake Road, Formby



Figure 2. *Allium ampeloprasum* Queen's Jubilee Nature Trail



Figure 3. *Rumex sanguineus* var. *sanguineus* Crosby Coastal Park (P. Kinsella)

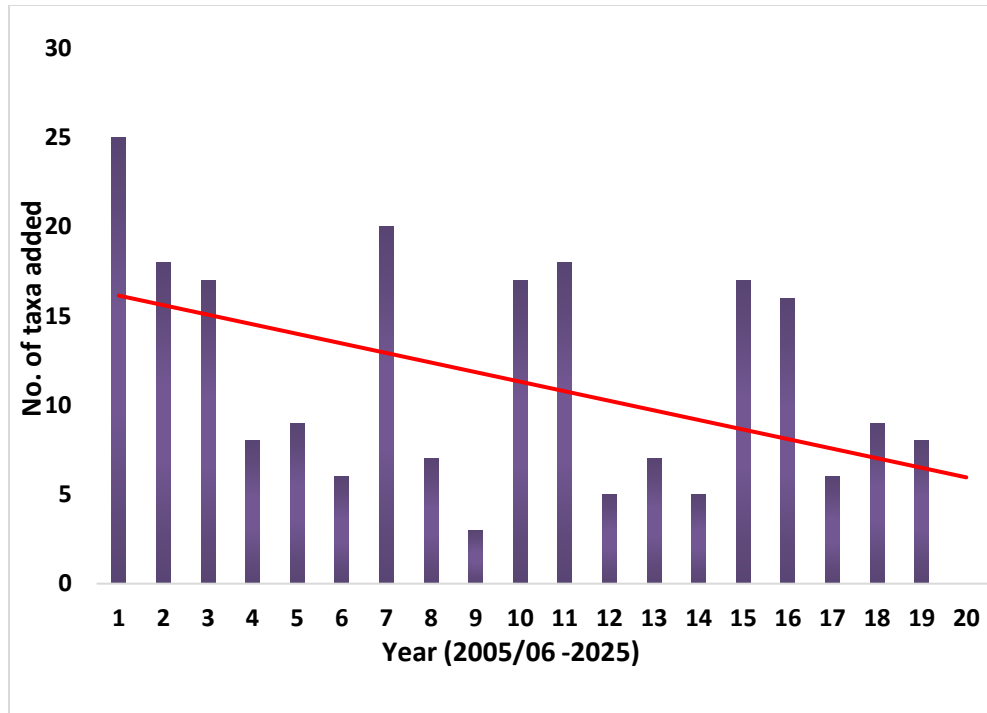


Figure 4. Number of vascular taxa added to the Inventory each year from 2005/06 to 2025 ($r = 0.468$, $p = 0.037$)