

***Ophrys x pietzschii* Kümpel ex F.J. Rumsey & H.J. Crouch**

(*O. apifera* x *insectifera*)

Bee-fly Orchid

Native

GB Rare

VC5 Absent; VC6 Rare

A rare hybrid orchid of tall stature found on calcareous soils. Discovered growing as a natural hybrid for the first time ever in Leigh Woods [ST5574] VC6 in 1968 when M. Flower, I.D.R Stevens and M.C. Whiting found four flowering spikes on the floor of an old limestone quarry; up to eight were seen in subsequent years, although until 1976 they were thought to be an aberrant form of *O. insectifera* (Willis, 1980). Now considered extinct at that site, last seen in 1992 or 1993 (Willis, 1999). A second site in VC6 was discovered in 2003, when Simon Andrew found three plants on an embankment beside the A303, with both parents present. Recorded here in subsequent years, with number of plants steadily rising to 16 in 2010, dipping to 9 in 2011, increasing to 31 in 2012, 32 in 2013 and 39 in 2014. It appears that hybridisation is ongoing at this site (Rumsey *et al.*, 2012). In 1998 this hybrid was discovered near Arundel in West Sussex (VC13), again on a bank above a road verge. No plants have been seen there since 2001. It is now also known from a site in Gloucestershire; the single site in Somerset is thus one of only two current locations in England.

VC6

Maperton Ridge ST666269 2014 HJC, FJR 39 flowering plants on steep bank, N side of A303



Ophrys x pietzschii at Maperton Ridge (2012). Photo: HJC.