

***Cuscuta europaea* L.**

Greater Dodder

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

GB Scarce

VC5 Rare; VC6 Not Scarce

An annual holoparasite of damp nitrophilous sites, particularly river banks, ditch banks and roadsides. The primary host is usually *Urtica dioica*, more rarely *Humulus lupulus*, but once established this species will parasitise a wide range of secondary hosts. In Somerset, first recorded by Gerard (1597) who stated that it “groweth very plentifully in Sommersetshire upon nettles”. In VC5 records by J.C. Collins for hills above Minehead and Quantock are believed to be errors (Murray, 1896). It was found in 1963 by Mrs M.H.G. Pyke on nettles by the River Yeo, by Bicknell’s Bridge between Huish Episcopi and Muchelney, but not seen again until it was refound by John Poingdestre on nettles by the road from Muchelney to Langport, currently the only VC5 site. In VC6, a specimen was collected by Gapper in 1822 at Charlton, presumably by the River Cary, and by T. Clark in 1848 at Butleigh on a roadside, but there have been no subsequent records for those areas. Murray (1896) reported that T.B. Flower had found it “In the second meadow beyond the Dundas Aqueduct”, and D. Fry had recorded this species “At intervals on both banks of the Avon, from Bathford almost down to Bristol”. The current distribution in VC6 is almost unchanged, extending a little further upstream. All recent VC6 records have been beside the River Avon, where it has been found at Freshford; in the second meadow north of Dundas Aqueduct; at several sites near Warleigh; at Bathampton, Lambridge, Kensington Meadows and Newbridge in Bath; at Newton St Loe, Saltford, Keynsham and Hanham Lock; and at Brislington, East Wood and Eastwood Farm Local Nature Reserve on the edge of Bristol. *Cuscuta europaea* appears to be in decline in some areas, but not in Somerset. Here it is at the western edge of its range in England; it is not found in Wales or Ireland and there are no recent records for Scotland.



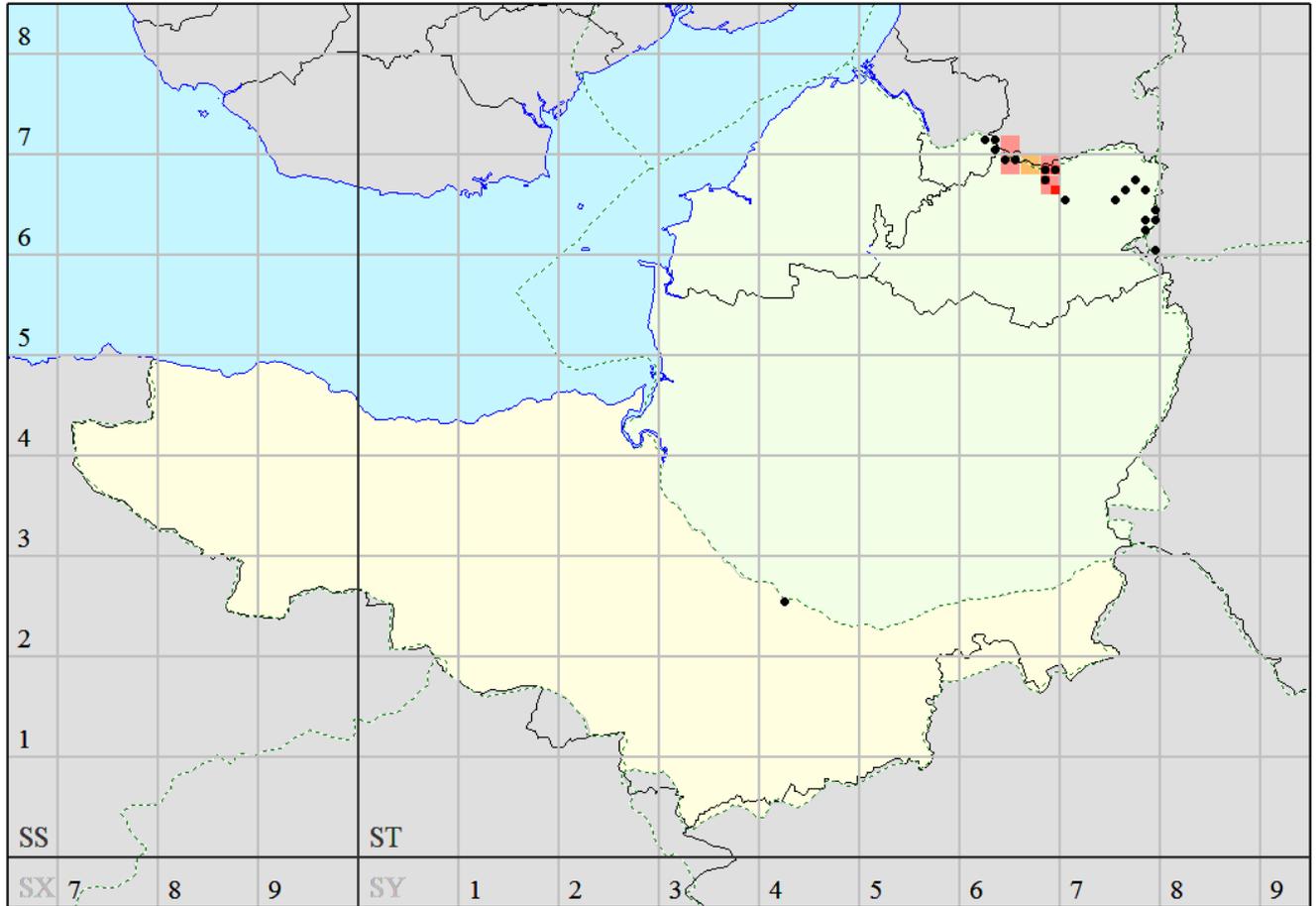
Cuscuta europaea by the River Avon at Warleigh (2007). Photo: HJC

VC5

Muchelney

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For 20m along W side of road just N of Muchelney



Distribution of *Cuscuta europaea* in Somerset, mapped using MapMate.
Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999 records;
sepia squares are pre-1987 records