

Species Factsheet

the
species
recovery
trust



Asplenium septentrionale

Forked Spleenwort

Red List Status:

Near threatened

Threat of extinction:

In England, very high

Main threats:

Habitat loss and degradation, encroachment and climate change

Description: A small fern with forked fronds that are usually between 4 and 8cm long and stiff and leathery in texture. Blades are green turning to a purple/brown at the base.

Lifecycle: Plants can produce millions of spores per year, which are dispersed by the wind.

Habitat: Grows on steep rocks and cliffs and in some locations has spread to roadside walls. Sites are usually south facing, with some shade, often from trees and gorse.

Distribution: In addition to Britain and Ireland, this species occurs widely across the mountainous regions of Scandinavia as well as central and southern Europe.

Status: Classified as Near Threatened in Britain. In Southern England, where only two sites remain, the species is at a very high risk of extinction.

Reasons for decline: Over-collecting during the Victorian era led to a dramatic decline in the population size. Plants are also threatened by over or under shading and may be affected by recreational activities such as rock climbing.

Protection under the Law: Not currently protected under the law.

What we are doing:

- Establishing a monitoring network across all sites
- Ensuring that sites have appropriate levels of shading by removing competing vegetation
- Assessing local impact of recreational activities

What you can do:

- If you live locally volunteer to become a site monitor
- Become a species supporter and help fund the project
- If you go rock climbing, be careful not to disturb or damage biodiversity

