

Current occupied 10km squares within the UK

For more information on this species visit our website

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Plantlife - The Wild Plant Conservation Charity  
14 Rollestone Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 1DX, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)1722 342730 Fax: +44 (0)1722 329035  
e-mail: [enquiries@plantlife.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@plantlife.org.uk) website: [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk)  
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Three-lobed Water Crowfoot  
(*Ranunculus tripartitus*)

## Three-lobed Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus tripartitus*)

**DESCRIPTION:** A small annual plant with small white flowers (petals typically less than 5 mm long, equal or marginally longer than sepals). This species can sometimes have two leaf types; broad, flat (laminar) leaves and very rarely thread-like (capillary) leaves. The former are dark green, and deeply divided into three or five wedge-shaped lobes.

**LIFECYCLE:** A winter annual, growing in shallow water, and flowering in late winter to spring (March to May).

**HABITAT:** Associated with seasonal pools, trackways and ditches on mildly acid clays, and sands, particularly within heathland areas subject to grazing.

**DISTRIBUTION:** Occurs sporadically throughout north-west Europe. In the UK it is scattered across the lowland acidic heathland areas of south-east England (Thames Basin & the Weald), the New Forest and Dorset heaths, south-west England, south-west Wales and Anglesey.

**UK STATUS:** Classified as Endangered, and is therefore considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild.

**UK RARITY:** Strong populations still survive within protected areas on the Lizard (Cornwall), in Southwest Wales, and the New Forest (although here many populations comprise the hybrid *R. x novae-forestae*). Elsewhere it has declined severely across much of its range.

**REASONS FOR DECLINE:** Loss and fragmentation of heathland sites, deepening or infilling of seasonal pools, cessation of livestock grazing, hybridisation with Round-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus omniophyllus*).

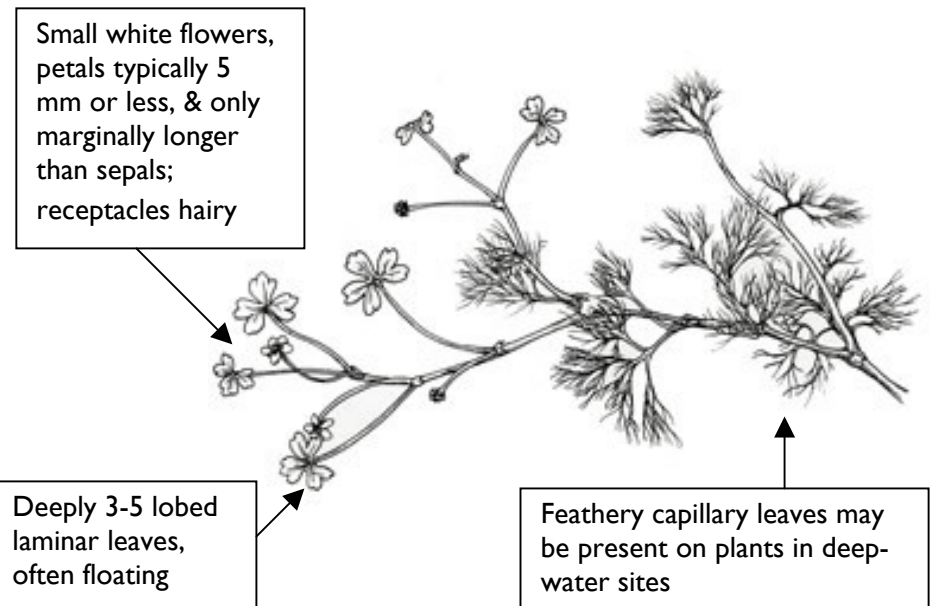
**PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW:** Listed as a Priority Species under the UK Government Biodiversity Action Plan.

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### HOW TO SURVEY?

**TIME OF YEAR:** Best recorded in March to May before its pool habitat dries up.

**WHAT TO RECORD?** If possible record the number of individual plants, with an indication of the overall spread of the population (e.g. five large plants in two pools over an area 5 x 2 metres)



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### HOW TO MANAGE?

**HOW TO MANAGE HABITAT?** Three-lobed Water-crowfoot favours well-grazed heathland – and populations can be self-sustaining under such circumstances. Some success has been achieved by forcing cattle and other stock through ‘pinch points’ in hedges, fences or walls. Where it is impossible to reinstate grazing, considerable success can be achieved by the periodic dredging of pools to their original profile, combined with the removal of overhanging trees and bushes.

**HOW TO RESTORE TO LOST SITES?** Three-lobed Water-crowfoot has a remarkable ability to ‘reappear’ from seed buried in the mud of overgrown pools, and it is still worth carrying out restorative works up to thirty to fifty years after a population was last recorded. Restoration will involve dredging of waterbodies (if appropriate), together with restoration of grazing.

**WHEN TO CARRY OUT WORK?** Tree-clearance work is best undertaken during the winter months to avoid breeding bird populations. Dredging is best undertaken during summer and early autumn, ensuring existing populations are carefully avoided.