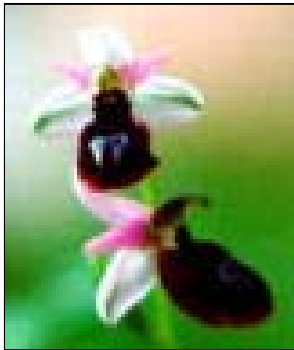


Carillion plc Environmental Tool Box Talk

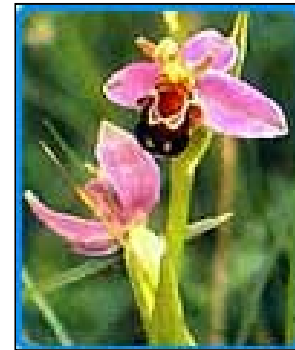


The Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apedifra*).



Introduction

All orchids in the UK are considered to be rare and in decline. As part of an international programme to increase biodiversity this decline needs to be reversed. Although in some areas of the UK it is one of the more common orchids, the Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apedifra*) is still considered to be a plant that needs to be protected.



Description:

- 15 – 40cm in height
- A straight stalk and the flowers appear one above the other.
- Flowers are a velvety texture, with three pink petals.
- The shape and colour of the bottom-lip of the flower gives the appearance of a bumblebee.
- Flowers appear between May and June.



Factors causing loss or decline:

Habitat:

- It is based on chalk grassland a habitat that has declined by 80% since 1945 due to agricultural intensification.
- Less common habitats include road & railway verges.

Pollination:

- The 'bumblebee' appearance of the flower is a tactic to attract bees that will think it is a mate. BUT the bees they mimic have become extinct in the UK, they now only self-pollinate, lessening the plants capability to spread.

Human Activity:

- The striking appearance of the flower means they are victim to over-picking. People might presume they will grow back, but sadly they do not.

Legislation

- The Bee Orchid is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, which protects all wild plants in Britain. It states that, it is illegal to uproot any wild plant without permission from the landowner or occupier. Uproot is defined as to 'dig up or otherwise remove the plant from the land on which it is growing'.
- In Northern Ireland it is protected by schedule 8 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order, 1985. This makes it illegal to intentionally pick, remove, uproot or destroy any wild plant without licence.
- The important issue for the Bee Orchid is the survival of its habitat. Although not strictly under legislation chalk grassland has been identified as a key habitat as part of national Biodiversity Action Plans. This means care should be taken not to damage this sensitive habitat.

Always seek advice before taking action.

Contacts

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