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Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

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Invertebrate species: molluscs

1016 Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*

Follow link for UK biodiversity information on this species.

Background to selection

[UK resource for this species](#)

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Description and ecological characteristics

Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* is the largest *Vertigo* species, with a shell height up to about 2.6 mm. It is restricted to calcareous wetlands, usually bordering lakes or rivers, or in fens. High humidity appears to be important in determining local distribution within sites. It normally lives on reed-grasses and sedges, such as reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* and tussocks of greater pond-sedge *Carex riparia* and lesser pond-sedge *C. acutiformis*, where it feeds on the microflora, and in autumn it may ascend taller reeds and scrub. Like all Annex II *Vertigo* species, it is highly dependent on maintenance of existing local hydrological conditions.

The species was more widespread during the early post-glacial period, but climatic change and destruction of its habitats for agriculture caused a contraction in its range.

European status and distribution

In Europe *Vertigo moulinsiana* is widely distributed north to Denmark and the extreme south of Sweden. There are few recent records, and it is regarded as rare in all range states. Within the EU, only England and Ireland are considered to support reasonable populations (Drake 1999), despite being close to the northern limit of the species' range.

UK status and distribution [Click to view UK distribution of this species](#)

Recent surveys in England have indicated that *Vertigo moulinsiana* is not as rare as previously thought. It occurs at scattered sites in a band across southern England from Norfolk to Dorset, with isolated populations elsewhere (Drake 1999). Southern chalk streams have been shown to be as important as the East Anglian fens as strongholds for this species.

Site selection rationale

Sites have been selected to represent the strongholds of *Vertigo moulinsiana* in southern England and East Anglia, with additional outliers in Kent and north Wales. The selected sites represent the largest populations and also a range of ecological conditions, incorporating variation in river catchment type as well as representation of the species' occurrence in wetlands. It is abundant in some patches at certain localities, and clusters of these patches of greatest abundance have been included in site selection.

Site accounts

[Corsydd Lllyn/ Lleyn Fens](#)

The population of Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* on Cors Geirch NNR occurs in stands of great-fen sedge *Cladium mariscus* in calcareous fen and is the only locality known for the species in Wales.

[Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain](#)

The cluster of sites selected in the Kennet and Lambourn valleys supports one of the most extensive known populations of Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* in the UK and is one of two sites representing the species in the south-western part of its range in the important chalk stream habitat. Integrity of the population is being maintained by taking measures, including habitat creation, to safeguard populations. The habitat occupied at this site differs from the Fenland sites in East Anglia in that it is predominantly reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* swamp or tall sedges at the river margins, in ditches and in depressions in wet meadows.

[Norfolk Valley Fens](#)

Norfolk Valley Fens is one of several sites representing Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* in East Anglia. Within Norfolk Valley Fens there are a number of marginal fens around pingos – pools that formed in hollows left when large blocks of ice melted at the end of the last Ice Age. These are very ancient wetlands and several support strong populations of *V. moulinsiana* as part of a rich assemblage of Red Data Book and Nationally Scarce species in standing water habitat.

[River Avon](#)

There is an extensive population of Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* along about 20 km of the margins and associated wetlands of the Rivers Avon, Bourne and Wylde. This is one of two sites representing the species in the

Distribution of SAC with interest feature



Distribution of SACs with species 1016 *Vertigo moulinsiana*. [Click image for enlarged map.](#)

south-western part of its range, in chalk stream habitat. It occurs here in a separate catchment from the Kennet and Lambourn, within an environment more heavily dominated by arable agriculture.

Stodmarsh

Kent

A sizeable population of **Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*** lives beside ditches within pasture on the floodplain of the River Stour, where reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, large sedges *Carex* spp. and sometimes common reed *Phragmites australis* dominate the vegetation. Stodmarsh is a south-eastern outlier of the main swathe of sites and is important in confirming the role of underlying base-rich rock (chalk) as a factor determining this species' distribution.

The Broads

Norfolk; Suffolk

The Broads is the main stronghold of **Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*** in East Anglia and is one of several sites selected in this part of its range. Several large populations are known, associated with standing and flowing water and ditch systems. This is a very important area for its wetland invertebrate fauna, and many Red Data Book and Nationally Scarce species occur here.

Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens

Norfolk; Suffolk

This site is one of several representing **Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*** in East Anglia. At Weston Fen populations of this snail occur in a valley fen.

SACs where this Annex II species is a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection

River Wensum Norfolk

Solent Maritime City of Portsmouth; City of Southampton; Hampshire; Isle of Wight; West Sussex

Many designated sites are on private land: the listing of a site in these pages does not imply any right of public access.