

## Mousetail *Myosurus minimus*, the gateway buttercup at Lower Moor and Haines River Meadows.

Gary Farmer

Mousetail *Myosurus minimus* is an unusual looking member of the buttercup family, more closely resembling a plantain, especially when in seed (01). It is these long thin seed heads that (with a little imagination) resemble a mouse's scaly tail. Mousetail is an annual of seasonally flooded, nutrient-rich soils in areas disturbed by machinery or animals, including gateways in pastures. It has declined throughout its national range, partly due to intensive arable and grassland management and the reduction of grazing in some areas. Without continued un-intensive grazing, the fertile bare ground required by *M. minimus* is colonised by vigorous grasses and herbs and this little buttercup is lost (BRC Plant Atlas).



01. Mousetail *Myosurus minimus* seedheads supposedly resemble a mouse's tail. Haines Meadows 22.04.22. Gary Farmer.

Mousetail was first recorded in Worcestershire in 1787 at Malvern Chase and was considered to be very local in the county, although it could be plentiful where it occurred (Amphlett & Rea 1909). The species remains very local, being mainly confined to the lower Severn and Avon valleys (Maskew 2014). In 2011 this vulnerable plant was discovered at Cooks Hill (lane) Wick, near Pershore, where two plants were growing in a field entrance to pasture, just past the north end of the lane (Reid 2014). This gateway is the entrance to Haines Meadows, a Vale Landscape Heritage Trust (VLHT) site in the river Avon floodplain. A search of the gateway in April 2022 confirmed that the species was still present; five small plants were growing on bare ground in the stoned gateway (02). Mousetail had been found in a gateway within the site a few years prior to 2022 (Michael Liley *pers comm.*), so a search was carried out for *M. minimus* in Haines Meadows in April 2022 and this

revealed Mousetail to be present across the site, but only in gateways.



02. Mousetail *Myosurus minimus* can be tiny and easily overlooked (20p coin for scale). Haines Meadows 12.04.22. Gary Farmer.

Directly opposite Haines Meadows on the north side of the Avon lies VLHT's Lower Moor river meadows where a search of bare ground around the permissive pedestrian track, vehicle ruts and gateways revealed the plant to be present in two areas; both gateways (03). The absence from all bare ground at the two sites except some of the gateways suggests that the plants' requirements are a little more complex than just the need for fertile, bare ground. Seed is likely to be trampled into the ground by livestock and the seed also floats, transported by flood waters to new areas, where it may persist in the soil and germinate in future years.



03. Mousetail flowering in a gateway at Lower Moor 28.04.22. Gary Farmer.

### References

- Amphlett J. & Rea C. 1909. *The Botany of Worcestershire*. (Reprinted 1978). EP Publishing Ltd. Wakefield.  
 Maskew, R. 2014. *The Flora of Worcestershire*. Published by the author Roger Maskew, Worcestershire.  
 Reid, B. 2014. The Flora of Worcestershire – Other Important Updates. *Worcestershire Record* 37:51-53.  
 BRC Plant Atlas On-line. Available at: <https://plantatlas.brc.ac.uk/plant/myosurus-minimus> [Accessed 01.05.22].

### Images

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