

Lesser butterfly-orchid

Platanthera bifolia (L.) Rich.

DESCRIPTION

Lesser butterfly-orchids are distinguished by their two shining green basal leaves, especially of the hill form, which are shorter and broader and by the angle of the pollinia. The upper sepal and petals form a loose triangular hood above the pollinia, which lie parallel and close together, obscuring the opening into the spur, which is long and almost straight. There are usually around 25 white flowers tinged with yellow-green in a slim flower spike. Flowering times is in June to the end of July.



HABITAT

The lesser butterfly-orchid occupies a wide range of habitats, being far more tolerant of acid conditions than the greater butterfly-orchid. They are found in grasslands, woodlands, in hill pastures up to 400m, on heaths and moorland, and in tussocky marshy ground.

DISTRIBUTION

We find it all over Europe, including the British Isles, all the way to North Africa and West Asia, and the Caucasus in the east.



ENDANGERMENT

It belongs to the group of very sensitive species. This species has suffered a serious decline, especially as a result of woodland clearance, and land meliorations. Upland populations have suffered from overgrazing.

PROTECTION

In many European countries, it is on the list of endangered species, and as such it is permanently protected. It is on the CITES list of species and is also listed in the red books of several countries.

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