

Търрилово speedwell – a protected element under the Biological Diversity Act

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The unique in the world Turrill's speedwell (*Veronica turrilliana*) has blossomed in "Strandzha" Nature Park in the days before Easter. It is a perennial herbaceous plant. Its flowers are purple-blue with a light yellow ring in the centre. It occurs only in small groups in the locality "Kovach" in the meadows of Petrova Niva, in the reserves "Sredoka" and "Vitanovo", as well as around the springs of the Mladezhka River. Specialists are studying the possibilities for cultivation in experimental collections through the collection of seed material for the National Seed Genebank.

One of the specific features of Strandzha is the great diversity of relict species, combined with the extremely rare occurrence of local endemic species within the boundaries of the South-Euxinian botanical-geographical

province. Turrill's speedwell (*Veronica turrilliana* Stoj. & Stef.) is one of these extremely rare local endemics, which are found only in the Strandzha Mountain – on the limestone rocks in the western part of “Strandzha” Nature Park and in the adjacent territories of Strandzha Mountain in the Republic of Türkiye.



This rare perennial speedwell with leathery leaves was described for science by Academician Nikolay Stoyanov and Academician Boris Stefanov, among the first Bulgarian researchers of the flora and vegetation of the Strandzha Mountain. Stoyanov and Stefanov are also the compilers of the first complete edition of the Flora of Bulgaria (1924), which includes and describes all plant species in the country known at that time.

The Bulgarian botanists Stoyanov and Stefanov chose to give the scientific name of the plant in honour of the British botanist William Turrill (1890–1961), who in turn was one of the first researchers and authors of botanical works on the flora of the Balkan Peninsula, as well as of Türkiye and the Eastern Aegean Islands. [It inhabits dry calcareous rocks and rock crevices. It forms fragmented populations, composed of few scattered individuals.

The site north of Malko Tarnovo, from where the species was first described, has been destroyed.

Turrill's speedwell is included in the Red Data Book of Bulgaria, in the Bern Convention and in the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The Strandzha endemic Turrill's speedwell is protected under the Biological Diversity Act, and sanctions are envisaged for its collection or for damage to its habitats in the wild.

Author: Eng. Ivan Kamburov, Chief Expert "Biological Diversity"