

ACID GRASSLAND (UK BAP BROAD HABITAT)

This broad habitat is composed of swards of bent grasses *Agrostis* spp., fescues *Festuca* spp., sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, mat-grass *Nardus stricta*, wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* or heath rush *Juncus squarrosus*. These grasslands typically contain other species such as heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* (a particularly good indicator for acid grasslands compared with neutral or calcareous grasslands) tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, heath milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*, green-ribbed sedge *Carex binervis*, pill sedge *C. pilulifera* and heath wood-rush *Luzula multiflora*. Mosses are common, especially in upland swards where *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Pleurozium schreberi*, *Pseudoscleropodium purum*, *Dicranum scoparium* and *Hylocomium splendens* can be abundant. Drier lowland acid grasslands typically contain fewer of the above herb and moss species but a distinctive mix of early hair-grass *Aira praecox*, sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, parsley-piert *Aphanes arvensis* and low-grown patches of the mosses *R. squarrosus*, *Brachythecium albicans* and *Polytrichum piliferum*. Some damper acid grasslands in upland areas contain many scattered tussocks of soft rush *Juncus effusus*.

This habitat is widespread throughout Scotland on well-drained acid soils. It is most common in grazed uplands where it can dominate the landscape, especially where heavier grazing has reduced dwarf shrub cover so as to convert heaths to grasslands. In the uplands this is the most extensive grassland broad habitat.

Botanically these acid grasslands are generally less herb-rich than calcareous grasslands and some neutral grasslands though they can be rich in fungi such as waxcaps *Hygrocybe* spp.. However, lowland examples are important as small areas of relatively high diversity in otherwise more heavily managed and ecologically poorer landscapes, and some upland examples are floristically rich, especially where slightly flushed.

Examples of this broad habitat which are situated in the enclosed lowlands belong to the Lowland dry acid grassland priority habitat. Some examples found on coastal cliffs are covered by the Maritime cliff and slopes priority habitat. The remainder – the bulk of our acid grassland – does not belong in any priority habitat.

The priority habitat within this broad habitat type is:

- [Lowland dry acid grassland](#)