

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Conservation Objectives Series

Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC 001831



An Roinn Cultúir,
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta
Department of Culture,
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

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Introduction

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

A site-specific conservation objective aims to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Notes/Guidelines:

1. The targets given in these conservation objectives are based on best available information at the time of writing. As more information becomes available, targets for attributes may change. These will be updated periodically, as necessary.
2. An appropriate assessment based on these conservation objectives will remain valid even if the targets are subsequently updated, providing they were the most recent objectives available when the assessment was carried out. It is essential that the date and version are included when objectives are cited.
3. Assessments cannot consider an attribute in isolation from the others listed for that habitat or species, or for other habitats and species listed for that site. A plan or project with an apparently small impact on one attribute may have a significant impact on another.
4. Please note that the maps included in this document do not necessarily show the entire extent of the habitats and species for which the site is listed. This should be borne in mind when appropriate assessments are being carried out.
5. When using these objectives, it is essential that the relevant backing/supporting documents are consulted, particularly where instructed in the targets or notes for a particular attribute.

Qualifying Interests

** indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive*

001831 Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC

6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates
(Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)

Supporting documents, relevant reports & publications

Supporting documents, NPWS reports and publications are available for download from: www.npws.ie/Publications

NPWS Documents

Year :	2007
Title :	Grasslands monitoring project 2006
Author :	Dwyer, R.; Crowley, W.; Wilson, F.
Series :	Unpublished report to NPWS
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Year :	2013
Title :	Irish semi-natural grasslands survey 2007-2012
Author :	O'Neill, F.H.; Martin, J.R.; Devaney, F.M.; Perrin, P.M.
Series :	Irish Wildlife Manual No. 78
<hr/>	
Year :	2013
Title :	Irish semi-natural grasslands survey annual report No. 5: Leinster (except Offaly, Longford, Dublin and Kildare)
Author :	Martin, J.R.; Devaney, F.M.; O'Neill, F.H.; Delaney, A.
Series :	Unpublished report to NPWS
<hr/>	
Year :	2016
Title :	Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants
Author :	Wyse Jackson, M.; FitzPatrick, Ú.; Cole, E.; Jebb, M.; McFerran, D.; Sheehy Skeffington, M.; Wright, M.
Series :	Ireland Red Lists series, NPWS
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Conservation Objectives for : Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC [001831]

6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) in Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Habitat area	Hectares	Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes	The current total area of semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) in Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC is unknown. The habitat was surveyed as part of the Irish Semi-natural Grassland Survey (ISGS) (Martin et al., 2013; O'Neill et al., 2013) within the sub-sites Toorlisnamore (ISGS site code 2000), where the habitat is found on steeper esker slopes, and Ballymachugh (ISGS site code 2001). In the latter sub-site, the habitat occurs on steeper esker slopes with thin skeletal soils at the southern end of the esker (north and south of the road) and at the northern end in an old quarry. Further areas of the habitat in the SAC were also surveyed by Dwyer et al. (2007) as part of the Grassland Monitoring Project 2006
Habitat distribution	Occurrence	No decline, subject to natural processes	See the notes for Habitat area above
Vegetation composition: positive indicator species	Number at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	At least seven positive indicator species present, including two "high quality" species	Attribute and target based on O'Neill et al. (2013) where the list of positive indicators, including high quality species, identified by the ISGS is presented. High quality indicators recorded by the ISGS in the habitat in the SAC include quaking grass (<i>Briza media</i>), carline thistle (<i>Carlina vulgaris</i>), spring sedge (<i>Carex caryophyllea</i>), fairy flax (<i>Linum catharticum</i>) and cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>) and positive indicators include hairy oat-grass (<i>Helictotrichon pubescens</i>), common bird's-foot trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>), marjoram (<i>Origanum vulgare</i>) and bulbous buttercup (<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>) (Martin et al., 2013; O'Neill et al., 2013). The Flora (Protection) Order, 2015 listed and Vulnerable red hemp-nettle (<i>Galeopsis angustifolia</i>) (Wyse Jackson et al., 2016) has been recorded on more open ground on the esker (NPWS internal files), but cannot be specifically assigned to this habitat
Vegetation composition: negative indicator species	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Negative indicator species collectively not more than 20% cover, with cover by an individual species not more than 10%	Attribute and target based on O'Neill et al. (2013), where the list of negative indicator species is also presented
Vegetation composition: non-native species	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of non-native species not more than 1%	Attribute and target based on O'Neill et al. (2013)
Vegetation composition: woody species and bracken	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of woody species (except certain listed species) and bracken (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>) not more than 5% cover	Woody species that can occur above 5% cover are juniper (<i>Juniperus communis</i>), burnet rose (<i>Rosa spinosissima</i>), mountain avens (<i>Dryas octopetala</i>) and hoary rock-rose (<i>Helianthemum oelandicum</i>). However, cover of these species above 25% may indicate transition to another Annex I habitat such as Alpine and Boreal heaths (4060) or <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations (5130). Attribute and target based on O'Neill et al. (2013)

Vegetation structure: broadleaf herb:grass ratio	Percentage at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Broadleaf herb component of vegetation between 40% and 90%	Attribute and target based on O'Neill et al. (2013)
Vegetation structure: sward height	Percentage at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	At least 30% of sward between 5cm and 40cm tall	Attribute and target based on O'Neill et al. (2013)
Vegetation structure: litter	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Litter cover not more than 25%	Attribute and target based on O'Neill et al. (2013)
Physical structure: bare soil	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Not more than 10% bare soil	Attribute and target based on O'Neill et al. (2013)
Physical structure: disturbance	Area in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops	Area of the habitat showing signs of serious grazing or other disturbance less than 20m ²	Attribute and target based on O'Neill et al. (2013)



Legend
 Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC 001831

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MAP 1:
SPLIT HILLS AND LONG HILL ESKER SAC
CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
SAC DESIGNATION
 Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document.

SITE CODE:
SAC 001831; version 3. CO. WESTMEATH

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 km

The mapped boundaries are of an indicative and general nature only. Boundaries of designated areas are subject to revision.
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Map Version 1
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