

Lowland dry acid grassland

Current UK status and trends

Substantial decline; only 15,453ha remaining in England. Severe decline in specialist species within sites.

Estimated current Northamptonshire resource

Approximately 155ha

Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015

Unknown, but nature reserves managed and other sites restored through Environmental Stewardship.

Lead partner

Wildlife Trust

Target areas



Habitat description



Lowland dry acid grassland occurs on nutrient-poor free-draining soils, overlying acid rocks or superficial deposits like sands and gravels. In Northamptonshire it includes NVC communities U1 and U4.

U1 mostly occurs under scrub, on road verges or where rabbit grazing causes disturbance. U4 tends to occur in damper areas where rainwater filtering through sandstone encounters a layer of clay and flushes to the surface. In some cases sites will have succeeded to MG1, with coarser grasses dominating, typical of a long-term lack of management.

However, this tends to occur on sites that have not been seeded or heavily fertilised; with the right management these habitats are often easily recoverable.

Areas within west Northamptonshire with potentially suitable soil types for acid grassland restoration or creation have been identified in High Woods Habitats Scoping Report. See maps below.

Main issues and threats

- Very little remaining in Northamptonshire. Much is isolated in small fragments, dangerously reducing species' population sizes and making it impossible for individuals to move between them.
- Additional loss of habitat to development
- Inappropriate management (e.g. improving soils with nutrients, liming, overgrazing/over-mowing)
- Lack of management (e.g. under-grazing)

General strategy

- Conduct survey work and habitat opportunity mapping to identify the current resources and highest priorities for linkage by sympathetic management of degraded sites
- Focus efforts on a 3 mile radius of High Wood south of Daventry and northwest of Northampton around Harlestone Firs
- Sympathetic management and restoration of existing sites, funded primarily through Countryside Stewardship (advice can be provided by The Wildlife Trust)

Targets

1. Maintain the current extent lowland dry acid grassland priority habitat
2. Achieve favourable condition on 30ha of lowland dry acid grassland by 2020
3. Restore 20ha of lowland dry acid grassland from semi-improved or neglected grassland to LWS standard by 2020
4. Create 10ha of LWS-standard lowland dry acid grassland from arable, improved grassland and coniferous plantation by 2020

Actions

A.	Maintain existing acid grassland resource in nature reserves and SSSI	Wildlife Trust Natural England
B.	Identify new Local Wildlife Sites that contain acid grassland within the South Daventry target areas and provide advice to landowners	Wildlife Trust
C.	Through advice and projects ensure up to date surveys of acid grassland LWS and bring sites into favourable management	Wildlife Trust
D.	Through Section 106 agreements/new developments ensure that semi-improved or neglected grassland within an acid grassland target area is restored or created to BAP quality acid grassland	Developers Local authorities Wildlife Trust
E.	Bring sites into favourable condition and restore semi-improved or neglected grassland to LWS standard acid grassland through Countryside Stewardship	Natural England

Flagship species



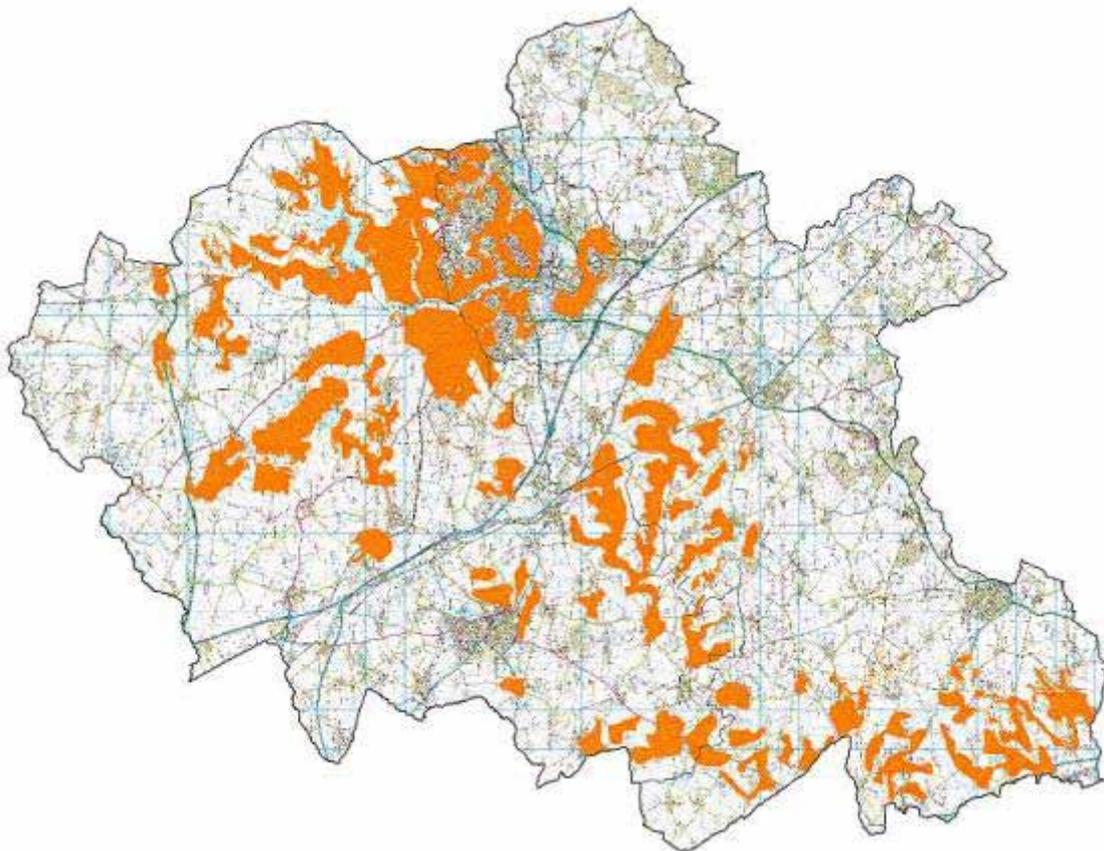
- Common lizard
- Four-spotted moth
- Skylark

Further information and management advice

- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [Further habitat information from Natural England](#)
- ▶ [Flora Locale's management, restoration and creation library](#)
- ▶ [Nature after minerals – grassland creation advice](#) (from RSPB)
- ▶ [Management advice for invertebrates](#) (from Buglife)

Acid grassland creation maps

Figure 1 Areas in West Northamptonshire in excess of 50 hectares where acid grassland is likely to occur or where it may be possible to either restore or create acid grassland



Caveat: Soil maps are not totally reliable and other factors are also important in predicting suitability for current and potential habitat. This map should be used as a guide only and does not preclude the possibility of restoring or creating acid grassland in appropriate places elsewhere in the county.

Figure AG2 Priority areas for recommended survey and investigation into potential habitat restoration and creation opportunities

