Habitat Survey 2010 Report

Up to date knowledge of habitat condition is vital in order for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) to deliver local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets, advise on agri-environment schemes and for development control functions. 2010 saw the start of a ten year rolling survey programme which will condition assess BAP habitats across the entirety of the National Park. For this purpose the National Park has been divided into ten distinct survey areas with the aim of surveying one area each year over the next decade.

In 2010 a condition assessment of BAP habitats in the south east part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park was commissioned by the National Park Authority and completed by the consultants BE Brooks Ecological Ltd. The condition assessment targeted 2309 hectares (subject to landowner consent) in the parishes of Appletreewick, Barden, Beamsley, Bolton Abbey, Burnsall, Cracoe, Embsay with Eastby, Grassington, Halton East, Hartlington, Hazlewood with Storiths, Hebden, Hetton, Linton, Rylstone, Thorpe, and Threshfield. The chosen sites were non-designated and were predominantly areas of BAP habitat identified from previous surveys. The assessment also looked at a small area of land for which previously no data was held.

Of the 89 landowners that were contacted 52 (58%) allowed access on to the land to survey. The assessment commenced in June 2010 and was completed by the end of November 2010. In total 1923 ha of land was assessed (see Figure 1) ranging in size from small areas (<0.25ha) of BAP habitat within a management unit to large tracts of moorland >200ha.

Condition assessment methodology (see Appendix 1 2010 Habitat Survey Report App 1) was based upon that developed for the Environmental Stewardship scheme. The consultants were provided with a map of the area of habitat. The basic format of the survey required walking a 'W' transect and stopping 10(-20) times to record a series of attributes.

Figure 1: Habitats recorded and area (hectares)

Habitat code	Habitat name	Area (hectares)
G01*	Improved grassland	51.7
G02**	Semi-improved grassland	119.1
G03	Species-rich grassland	0.1
G04	Lowland calcareous grassland	17.5
G05**	Lowland dry acid grassland	0.1
G06	Lowland meadows & pastures	21.9
G08	Upland calcareous grassland	67.2
G09	Upland hay meadows	0.4
G10	Calaminarian grassland	35.7
L01	Limestone pavement	6.8
M01*	Upland acid grassland	222.4
M02	Fragmented heath	126.6
M04	Upland heathland	293.1
M06	Blanket bog	799.6
M07	Inland rock outcrops, cliffs & scree	2.4
M08	Upland flushes, fens & swamps	83.4
R01***	Rivers	0.2
T04*	Broad-leaved plantation	0.5
T05*	Conifer plantation	1.7
T06*	Mixed plantation	0.9
T08	Semi-natural woodland	17.8
T11	Upland mixed ashwoods	13.1
T13	Wet woodlands	0.3
T16*	New-native woodland	4.4
V02*	Bracken	18.4
V03*	Rank vegetation	0.7
V04*	Scrub	0.4
W04	Upland flushes, fens & swamps	8.8
W07	Ponds	0.3
W10*	Reservoirs	0.8

*Non BAP habitat not condition assessed

**Non BAP habitat some areas condition assessed

***New BAP habitat not assessed

Results

See Appendix 2 2010 condition assessment App 2

Discussion

The survey results have substantially updated the level of knowledge of the extent and condition of habitats within the south east area of the National Park. This will provide a strong platform for the future monitoring and planning of biodiversity conservation work within the National Park. The results will be used in-house and will also be made available to the Yorkshire & Humber Ecological Data Centre.

Comparison of results with previous assessments is difficult as previous surveys have not always condition assessed habitat (see Appendix 2) and those that have been previously assessed have frequently used a different methodology

The surveyors incurred several problems:

- In some instances the area mapped and the habitat listed was inaccurate and had changed since the previous survey. In this instance the surveyor condition assessed the habitat as appropriate.
- Mosaics of habitats are frequent. I these cases if possible each habitat was assessed independently.

Future surveys

Future surveys will need to include the new BAP habitats and these may also require better mapping.

It is particularly important that future habitat monitoring and survey work is better coordinated with partner organisations such as Natural England.