

## Habitat Survey 2012 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. 2012 was the third year of a ten year rolling survey programme with the aim of assessing the condition of 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 intent of surveying one area each year over the next decade.

In 2012 a condition assessment of BAP habitats within the upper Aire parishes of the Yorkshire Dales National Park comprising Airton, Calton, Eshton, Flasby with Winterburn, Hanlith, Hellifield, Kirkby Malham, Malham, Malham Moor, Otterburn, Scosthrop, Stirton with Thorlby. The assessment was commissioned by the National Park Authority and completed by the consultants Haycock and Jay Associates Limited. The condition assessment targeted 1187 hectares of habitat (subject to landowner consent). The chosen sites were non-designated and were areas of BAP habitat identified from previous surveys. Also targeted for assessment was 825 hectares of land (subject to landowner consent) for which previously no data was held.

Of the 42 landowners that were contacted 25 (60%) allowed access on to the land to survey. The assessment commenced in June 2012 and was completed in December 2012. In total 1062 ha of land was surveyed including the condition assessment of 237 ha of BAP habitat (see Figure 1) ranging in size from small areas (<0.1ha) to larger management units (>55ha).

The condition assessment methodology [Appendix 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)**

<b>Habitat code</b>	<b>Habitat name</b>	<b>Area (hectares)</b>
G01	Improved grassland	128.4
G02	Semi-improved grassland	322.7
G04	Lowland calcareous grassland	41.4
G06	Lowland meadows & pastures	49.9
G08	Upland calcareous grassland	0.4
L01	Limestone pavement	16.0
M01	Grass moorland and rough grazing	214.5
M04	Upland heathland	12.3
M06	Blanket bog	61.3
M07	Inland rock outcrops, cliffs & scree	0.6
M08	Upland flushes, fens & swamps	45.5
T06	Mixed woodland	152.0
T08	Semi-natural woodland	0.8
T11	Upland mixed ashwoods	2.1
T12	Upland oak woodland	3.9
W04	Lowland fen	2.3
W07	Ponds	0.1
F02	Hedgerows	0.9

## **Results**

[Appendix 2](#) shows current and historical BAP habitats and condition assessment data for the survey area (excluding designated land).

## **Discussion**

The survey results have substantially updated the level of knowledge of the extent and condition of habitats within the upper Aire parishes of the National Park. This will provide a strong platform for the future monitoring and planning of biodiversity conservation work within this area of the National Park. The results will be used in-house and will also be made available to the [North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre](#).

A comparison of these results with previous assessments has been difficult because previous surveys have not always assessed the habitat condition (see Appendix 2). In addition, areas 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 substantially since the previous survey. In this instance the surveyor condition assessed the habitat as appropriate.
- Mosaics of habitats are frequent. In these cases where possible each habitat was assessed independently.