

CUMBRIA COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES

SITE NAME:	Low Snab Meadows	SITE REF:	L-NY21-25
Planning Authority	Lake District National Park Authority	District	Allerdale
Review Status	Confirmed	Review Date	18/03/2010
Survey Status	Surveyed	Survey Date	18/03/2010 24/07/2008
Grid Reference	NY 231 189	Area (ha)	4.79

Site Description

Low Snab farm lies at around 150m asl at the top of the Newlands valley about 5km south west of Keswick. The holding sits in the floodplain of the Newlands Beck where it narrows to three fields width below the high ground of Maiden Moor and Red Knott.

Nearby sites of conservation interest include County Wildlife Sites Chapel Bridge Grassland (unimproved neutral, marshy grasslands) 0.3km north and Keskadale Beck Grassland (flushed marshy grassland) 0.8km west. The site is immediately adjacent to SSSI Buttermere Fells and Chapel Bridge Meadows. Part of this is recorded on the Grasslands Inventory as purple moor-grass and rush pasture, and upland hay meadow. Buttermere Fells SSSI also includes the fells to the northwest of the river valley.

The features of interest are two herb rich meadows supporting swards closest to NVC community MG5 crested dog's tail - black knapweed (*Cynosurus cristatus* - *Centaurea nigra*) grassland.

The site comprises two meadows that lie alongside Newlands Beck - one is a large hay meadow, the other is a less intensively managed grassland that is sometimes cut for hay. The larger hay meadow is a west facing undulating field sloping from the fell wall below Maiden Fell to Newlands Beck. A smaller beck (Parrock's Gill) bisects the northern end. The field is walled against the fell and on the northern boundary, and fenced along the river and another small beck on the southern boundary.

The field supports at least two distinct swards - the free draining knolls support a finer sward dominated by common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) with crested dogs tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) and red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) with abundant autumn hawkbit, frequent yellow rattle and lesser amounts of ribwort plantain, common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and red clover. The sward on the remainder of the field on lower lying ground is much coarser with perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), locally frequent hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and fewer of the smaller herbs like hawkbits. Black knapweed is frequent in this sward, though ribwort plantain, great burnet and meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) are occasional.

An area of interest is a small (3m x 4m), slightly flushed bank dominated by sharp-flowered rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) with glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*), lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*), bog-mosses (*Sphagnum* species), devil's bit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), greater bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*)

The smaller, richer meadow (known as Ellers) is a long thin west facing field lying below the steep bracken clad slopes of Maiden Fell and Little Mire Crag, and above Newlands Beck. The field comprises flat areas broken up by steep and gentle slopes, with meadow arising on flatter areas and more gentle inclines. The freer draining upper slopes support more species rich areas, flatter areas near the river tend to have frequent rushes and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*). The sward within the 'meadow' is very herb rich with abundant black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), autumn hawkbit (*Leontodon autumnalis*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), and frequent rough hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*), yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) and tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*). This area at the top of the slope appears not to have been fertilised for some considerable time.

Other areas within the field include a flushed slope dominated by purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) with ferns, false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) and greater bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus*

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<i>corniculatus</i>) with scattered trees. There is also a rock outcrop and adjacent clump of trees.			
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Owner	National Trust		
Guidelines for Selection	Cumbrian Wildlife Sites Criteria for Selection (New Guidelines 2008) Gr1: Old established semi-natural grasslands.		

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