

CUMBRIA COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES

SITE NAME:	Murthwaite Meadows	SITE REF:	L-NY50-17
Planning Authority	Lake District National Park Authority	District	South Lakeland
Review Status	Confirmed	Review Date	29/04/2010
Survey Status	Surveyed	Survey Date	29/04/2010 27/05/2008
Grid Reference	NY 512 008	Area (ha)	5.40

Site Description

Murthwaite Farm lies in Longsleddale, which is 6.5km northwest of Kendal. The Longsleddale valley houses the River Sprint which drains the surrounding upland blocks of Swinklebank and Capplebarrow to the east, and Cocklaw Fell and Sleddale Forest to the west. The meadows lie in the valley bottom mostly along the Sprint at an altitude of around 160m asl.

Nearby sites of conservation interest include County Wildlife Sites Nether House Wood (ancient semi-natural woodland) 0.14km west; Whiteside Pike (mixed moorland) 0.7km northeast; Docker Nook Meadow (species rich meadow) 0.7km northwest and Low House Crag Wood (ancient semi-natural woodland dominated by sessile oak) 0.9km northwest. There is an upland calcareous Grassland Inventory site 1.3km east and SSSI Beech Hill Wood 0.8km northwest; SSSI Longsleddale Woods 0.8km northwest and the River Kent and tributaries running alongside the meadows.

The key interest features of the site are six herb rich upland hay meadows. All six meadows are existing Grassland Inventory sites for upland hay meadow. The site is linear and slopes from the road southwest to the River Sprint. The meadows support features such as terracing, knolls, dry banks, small becks and a spring, and all have high herb cover and frequent indicator species.

The swards are fairly typical MG3 sweet vernal grass - wood crane's-bill (*Anthoxanthum odoratum* - *Geranium sylvaticum*) grasslands. Generally the meadows support quite dense grassy swards with Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), rough meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*), perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), and soft brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*) frequently encountered. Finer grasses are lower in cover featuring sweet vernal grass, common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), crested dogs tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and yellow oat grass (*Trisetum flavescens*). False oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) was found in three meadows.

Herb cover is high with red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) all constant species. Frequent indicator species across all meadows include great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) with meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and wood crane's-bill (*Geranium sylvaticum*) frequent in two meadows. Other indicator species frequent in only one meadow, or occasional, include meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), intermediate lady's mantle (*Alchemilla xanthochlora*) and autumn (*Leontodon autumnalis*) or rough (*Leontodon hispidus*) hawkbits.

Becks between meadows are quite rich with watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*), meadowsweet, hemlock water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*), marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), red campion (*Silene dioica*), large bitter-cress (*Cardamine amara*) and other wetland species.

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Owner	Private
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SITE NAME:	Murthwaite Meadows	SITE REF:	L-NY50-17
Guidelines for Selection	Cumbrian Wildlife Sites Criteria for Selection (New Guidelines 2008) Gr1: Old established semi-natural grasslands.		

Print Date: 02/07/2010