

## Eastern Valleys Uplands Project - Local Wildlife Sites

The following information outlines the best practice guidelines for managing the habitat type listed below in a manner that is sympathetic to wildlife. It is part of a series relating to various habitat types and management issues that have been produced by your local Wildlife Trusts.

### No.18 Upland Flushes

#### What are Upland Flushes?

Upland Flushes are generally small, localised areas of wetland habitat that occur within the wider landscape of acid grassland and marshy grassland. They are surface or groundwater fed (as opposed to Blanket Bog which is Rain-fed) systems where the water flows down-hill through the flushes at, or close to, the surface. They are often located near to the head-waters of watercourses. The vegetation within in them is generally quite low growing.



Lesser Skullcap



Common Cotton-grass



Flea Sedge

#### What wildlife do they support?

Upland Flushes are generally more species rich than the surrounding upland habitat and typically comprise low-growing Sedge species and Sphagnum moss together with Cotton-grass. There can be a rich community of herbs including species such as a Bog Pimpernel and Lesser Skullcap and a distinctive invertebrate assemblage including a number of Dragonfly species.



Bog Pimpernel



Golden Ringed Dragonfly



Sphagnum moss

#### Why preserve/enhance them?

As these flushes are one of the most species rich habitats in the uplands and they are generally small and localised they are particularly important to preserve. They also act as a control for water quality and flow in watercourses at lower levels. Historically flushes have been lost or degraded, so it is of great importance to preserve in good condition what is left, and we would very much like to assist you in achieving this goal by both highlighting the threats to this habitat and providing management recommendations.

## Threats

The following can all lead to the loss/degradation of this habitat:

- Alterations to water-flows – drainage.
- Pollution through agricultural improvement operations.
- Inappropriate levels of grazing, typically too intensive not giving wild flowers chance to flourish.
- Poaching from too many livestock.
- Scrub encroachment over flushes, particularly if no grazing is being undertaken.

## Management Recommendations

The following is recommended to ensure the valuable Upland Flush habitat is managed sympathetically for wildlife and is thus preserved and enhanced:

### Preservation/Enhancement of Upland Flushes

In general best-practice guidelines for managing Upland Flushes are:

- Ensure that water is not diverted or the land drained as this will dry out the Flushes and they will lose their specialised flora.
- If Scrub is becoming widespread and shading the Flush then some control measures may be required. Remove any invading Scrub between October to March (avoiding the bird-breeding season) by either hand pulling or cutting. Scrub removal also helps prevent further drying out of the flush Stumps should be spot treated with a suitable herbicide to prevent regrowth. **Refer to separate Toolkit – No. 11 Scrub Control for more detail.**
- Grazing levels should be kept to a relatively low level. Cattle and Horses are the preferred animals although these could cause poaching of the Flush if at high densities. Sheep grazing, if unavoidable, should be kept at a low level to avoid the flora being eaten before it can fully develop.
- Signs of poaching should be looked out for and livestock numbers reduced or temporarily excluded (particularly during spells of very wet weather) to prevent excessive poaching.
- No fertilisers or herbicides should be used apart from any necessary to control the re-sprouting of any Scrub removed.

There may be further issues that are reducing/threatening the ecological value of your Upland Flushes such as:

- **Bracken** – The conditions may be too wet for Bracken to be a problem but if the Flush has dried out to a certain extent then Bracken may encroach at the edges. For best results, roll/flail/cut bracken twice a year in May/June and again in July/August. Leave bracken on steep slopes or gullies. Consideration needs to be given to potential for breeding birds that may limit/preclude work in May/June, if this is the case then control Bracken by cutting or spraying after the bird-breeding season in late July/early August. A noticeable reduction will be achieved in 5 years. ***Refer to separate Toolkit – No. 12 Bracken Control for more detail.***

- **Invasive weeds** - Control the spread of highly invasive alien weeds such as Himalayan Balsam, and Japanese Knotweed. These can be controlled with minimum harm to wildlife.

- ❖ **Himalayan Balsam** can be controlled by hand-pulling before it sets seed.
- ❖ **Japanese Knotweed** will require spot treatment with a suitable herbicide.

***Refer to separate Toolkit – No. 14 Invasive Weed Control for more detail.***

Should you require any further advice regarding the management of your Local Wildlife Site please do not hesitate to contact your local Wildlife Trust:

**Gwent Wildlife Trust**

Tel: 01600 740600

e-mail: [info@gwentwildlife.org](mailto:info@gwentwildlife.org)

**Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales**

Tel: 01656 724100

e-mail: [info@welshwildlife.org](mailto:info@welshwildlife.org)

**Other toolkits available are:**

No.1 Neutral Grassland (Hay Meadows)

No.2 Neutral Grassland (Pasture)

No.3 Acid Grassland

No.4 Calcareous Grassland

No.5 Marshy Grassland

No.6 Marsh Grassland (with Marsh Fritillary)

No.7 Heath

No.8 Hedgerows

No.9 Salt Marsh & Coastal Grazing Marsh

No.10 Ponds & Lakes

No.11 Scrub control

No.12 Bracken control

No.13 Invasive weed control (natives – thistle, dock etc.)

No.14 Invasive weed control (aliens – Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam etc.)

No.15 Ffridd

No.16 Blanket Bog

No.17 Upland Broad-leaved Woodland

No.19 Post Industrial

No.20 Rhododendron & Cherry Laurel Control

*Further useful documents include:*

*More information of Flushes*

<http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/habitats/upland-flushes-fens-and-swamps>

*Biodiversity Planning Toolkit – Upland Fens, Flushes & Swamp*

[http://www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/stylesheet.asp?file=9106\\_upland\\_fens\\_flushes\\_and\\_swamps](http://www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/stylesheet.asp?file=9106_upland_fens_flushes_and_swamps)

*This Toolkit has been produced as part of the Eastern Valleys Uplands Project which is funded by the Welsh Government Nature Fund 2014-2015*



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