

## Grassland Features – Associated Species

Full Species Action Plans have been prepared for five species/species groups which are generally associated with grassland habitats: barn owl, red kite/kestrel/buzzard, Adonis blue butterfly, Deptford Pink and Tower Mustard. The SAPs for these species are colour-coded with the Grassland Features Action Plan.

The following represent other important species associated with grassland habitats on the Highways Agency soft estate, but for which a full Species Action Plan has not been produced at this stage.

### A ground beetle (*Harpalus dimidiatus*)

This ground beetle occurs in open, dry calcareous grasslands. It is found in scattered localities in Somerset, Dorset, Surrey, Worcestershire, Kent and East Sussex and may be found on road verges in these counties. It is classified as *Nationally Scarce* in Great Britain and is a UKBAP Priority Species.

### Straw belle moth (*Aspitates gilvaria*)

This moth feeds on low growing herbs in chalk grassland. It is confined to the North Downs of Surrey and Kent, where it may occur on road verges. The maintenance of short herb-rich swards on chalk bank road verges could help provide links between isolated populations. It is classified as *Rare* in Great Britain and is a UKBAP Priority Species.

### Basil-thyme case-bearer moth

(*Coleophora tricolor*)

This moth has only been recorded in unimproved grassland that is grazed by rabbits and supports Basil-thyme (*Acinos arvensis*) seed heads. Basil-thyme is in decline and this moth has been recorded only from the Breckland District of Suffolk and Norfolk. It has been recorded on road verges and may occur on rabbit-grazed verges of the A11 around Thetford. It is classified as *Endangered* in Great Britain and is a UKBAP Priority Species.

### Striped lychnis moth (*Cucullia lychnitis*)

The larvae of this moth feed on Mullein (*Verbascum spp.*) and Figwort (*Scrophularia sp.*), usually on sunny open grassland sites on soft limestone.

It is found in a small number of counties in southern England (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, North Hampshire and West Sussex), where it may also occur on calcareous grassland road verges. Buckinghamshire County Council have developed favourable cutting regimes for this species, which could be introduced on road verges, where present. It is classified as *Nationally Scarce* in Great Britain and is a UKBAP Priority Species.

### Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*)

The Primrose is a low, perennial, native herb with pale yellow flowers. Although distributed widely across lowland parts of the British Isles, it remains a local species in many areas. It is a shade-tolerant plant but its growth and reproduction are favoured by relatively open conditions. The Primrose receives general protection from picking, uprooting etc. afforded to all wild plants under the Wildlife and Countryside Act but is not specially protected under Schedule 8. It is not a UKBAP Priority Species but has a specific action plan within the Devon LBAP. There is evidence of a decline in Primrose in parts of England. The Primrose is most likely to occur on road verges in the north- and south-west of England, and is a notable feature of road verges in Devon where the HA and the local authority jointly operate a cutting regime to benefit the species. Where Primroses are known to occur on the network, beneficial road verge management (cutting verges once every one to two years to allow plants to set seed whilst controlling coarse scrub) should be implemented to maintain existing populations.

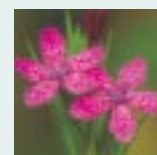
This leaflet is to be read in conjunction with the species Action Plans on:



Adonis Blue Butterfly



Barn Owl



Deptford Pink



Red Kite/Kestrel/Buzzard



Tower Mustard

## Cowslip (*Primula veris*)

The Cowslip is a low, short perennial associated with drier and more lime-rich soils, and is known to occur in areas of unimproved/unmanaged species-rich grassland, hay meadows, roadside verges, open woodland and scrub. It receives the same protection as the Primrose and has a specific action plan within the Staffordshire LBAP. The Cowslip has a widespread distribution and may occur on the network throughout England. Where this species is known to occur on the network, beneficial road verge management (cutting verges once every three years to allow plants to set seed whilst controlling coarse scrub) should be implemented to maintain existing populations.

In some counties, uncommon grassland plant species are confined to road verges; these include Perennial Flax (*Linum perenne anglicum*) in East Anglia and Great Pignut (*Bium bulbocastanum*) in Hertfordshire.

A number of plant species that were once common in the wider countryside are now more frequently encountered on road verges, these include Meadow Crane's-bill (*Geranium pratense*), Cowslip and Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*). In some counties the loss of grassland in the wider countryside has concentrated the hunting activity of barn owls (*Tyto alba*), kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) and other animals on road verges.

Bare ground can be an important component of grassland habitat. Two UKBAP Priority Species which have been recorded in the network information are dependent upon bare ground for their continued survival: Red-tipped Cudweed (*Filago lutescens*); and Western Rampion (*Fumaria occidentalis*). Many species of invertebrate also require areas of bare ground amongst grassland, in particular crickets, grasshoppers and burrowing bees and wasps.