

How great is your grassland?

Our meadows and flower rich grasslands are under threat. The reasons for this include loss of land to development and changing agricultural practices. Grasslands and meadows are important because of the number of different types of plants they contain. This variety is the basic level of food resource supporting many invertebrates, such as bees, butterflies and other insects, small mammals and birds.

We are asking you to let us know how healthy your local meadow or grassland patch is by answering the questions below. Your answers will help us understand where in the United Kingdom we can find great grasslands and magnificent meadows.

What do I need to do?

Simply visit any grassland and search for the information on this sheet. This survey has been designed to help you look for positive indicators of a healthy grassland. The more positive indicators you find, the healthier your area. We've also included some negative indicators that the grassland might need some help.

Take this form into the grassland that you are surveying and fill in the questions. Enter your results online at <http://survey.magnificentmeadows.org.uk> to tell us about what you found.

How do I know if I am in a grassland?

This survey has been designed to be carried out in any meadow or grassland. You are looking for an area that is:

- not obviously wooded;
- does not have an agricultural crop on it;
- is not a regularly mown amenity greenspace; and
- does not appear to consist of simply a mixture of grass and clover.

Access rights and responsibilities

Please make sure you only access meadows which you have permission to do so or stick to public rights of way. In Scotland, you should follow the Access code: <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/>

All the questions with a * need to be filled in to submit a complete record using the online form.

1. Where are you?

* Grid reference:	e.g. SU122422
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It is important that we have information about the location of your meadow so that we know whether the grassland is located in a more urban or rural environment. The grid reference should be taken using British National Grid or Irish National Grid depending on the maps you are using. See the example of how to take a grid reference.

County:	e.g. Angus, Cambridgeshire, Glamorganshire, Montgomeryshire, Northumberland, Oxfordshire, Perthshire, Somerset or Yorkshire
Country:	e.g. England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales

The online form has dropdown boxes to choose the county and country from the list, but enter them into the boxes above to make the choice easy.

Is your grassland in any of the following? Choose any of the relevant options below.

- National Park
- Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB)
- Nature Reserve
- None of the above
- I don't know

* Date of survey?	e.g. 20/05/2016
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2. What is your grassland like?

How many patches of stinging nettles, thistles or docks did you find? Stand in your grassland and look around for patches of nettles, thistles or docks. Decide how many patches you can see and select the category that best describe the patches throughout the grassland. Choose one of the options below.

- None
- Very few
- Thin patches through the meadow
- Lots of big patches

Why is this important? Nettles, docks and thistles are a sign that the ground is rich in nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphate. Where the ground is rich in nutrients many meadow species are out-competed by stronger species such as nettles. Fewer nutrients are better for grassland flowers.

Were there any signs that animals such as cattle (cows) and sheep graze the meadows? Look around your meadow and select from the following list for evidence of livestock. Choose any of the relevant options below.

- None
- Sign saying be careful/keep dogs on a lead as there are sometimes grazing animals (livestock) in the field
- Animal/livestock proof fencing (this is often wire mesh at the base of fences to stop sheep escaping or it could be a hedge that has no/few gaps at the bottom)
- Signs of sheep wool attached to hedgerow or fencing
- Cow pats or sheep poo
- Livestock in field

Why is this important? Allowing livestock to graze in a traditional manner allows wild plants to flower and makes our grasslands special. Ideally, livestock is allowed to graze the grassland once the wild flowers have set their seed (made seed and the seed has fallen to the ground). This happens in late summer. The animals are let into the field to eat the grass. This stops the grass from becoming too strong and taking over the grassland, crowding out the wild flowers.

How many different types of leaf did you find along a 3m x 50cm strip in the grassland?

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- 11+

Why is this important? Flower-rich grasslands may not always have very rare plants in them but they are important because of the variety of plant life that they contain. If you found lots of different leaf shapes, you can be sure that the area has a high biodiversity (variety of species) and that these species are not being out-competed by more robust and vigorous nettles, thistles and grasses.

3. What did you see?

See the spotter sheet to help identify the plants that are on this form.

Which grasses were in your meadow?

- Cock's-foot
- Crested dog's-tail
- Rye-grass
- Sweet vernal grass
- Timothy
- Yorkshire fog

Why is this important? Grasses provide the basic structure of a flower-rich grassland. Some grasses such as Yorkshire fog and sweet vernal grass are associated with grasslands that have been managed traditionally. Sweet vernal grass gives hay its distinctive 'sweet' smell. The grasses are food plants for many meadow butterflies. Some butterflies, such as the marbled white, need many native grasses growing in the same area because the caterpillars like different grass species at different stages in their life. If the grassland is dominated by perennial rye-grass, then it may have been agriculturally improved and might not have as many wild flowers.

Did you find yellow rattle or eyebright in your grassland? It is best to look for this plant between May and July.

- Yellow rattle
- Eyebright

Why is this important? Yellow rattle and eyebrights are unusual plants as they are parasitic on grass, attaching to grass roots and taking nutrients from the grass. This weakens the grass, causing it to grow less vigorously. As a result, other meadow flowers can thrive in the spaces between the grass tufts.

Did you find any of the following orchids in your flower rich grassland?

- Pyramidal orchid
- Spotted orchid
- Early purple orchid
- Bee orchid

Which flowering plants can you find? Wander through your meadow and see if you can find any of these flowers. The species have been arranged in colour and select any flowers that are present.

Purple flowers

- Betony
- Common / black knapweed
- Self-heal
- Wood crane's-bill

Blue flowers

- Devil's-bit scabious
- Harebell / Scottish bluebell

Red flowers

- Ragged-Robin
- Red clover

Yellow flowers

- Common or greater bird's-foot-trefoil
- Meadow buttercup
- Tormentil

White flowers

- Cuckooflower / Lady's-smock
- Meadowsweet
- Oxeye daisy
- Yarrow

4. Your information

* Name:	
* Email:	
* Postcode:	

* Please confirm you are over 18

Please tick the box if you would like to know more about Plantlife

Have you learnt anything about meadows?

- Nothing
- Very little
- A little bit
- Some things I didn't know before
- Quite a bit
- A lot of things I didn't know before

How do you think this activity could be improved to make it more enjoyable and educational?	
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What next?

Go to the website <http://survey.magnificentmeadows.org.uk> and fill in the details of the grassland that you have collected on this form.

Let us know if you've enjoyed this survey and if you would be interested in doing something like this again.

If you can't fill the form in online, it can be posted to:

Plantlife Magnificent Meadows
14 Rollestone Street
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP1 1DX