

County: North Yorkshire **Site Name:** Arkle Beck Meadows, Whaw

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.

Local Planning Authority: Yorkshire Dales National Park, (Richmondshire District Council)

National Grid Reference: NY 984041

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 92 **1:10,000:** NY 90 SE

Area: 8.4 (ha) 20.8 (ac)

First Notified: 1986

Description:

Arkle Beck Meadows, centred on Whaw in Arkengarthdale, comprise an important group of seven species-rich hay meadows. At an altitude of 300m and with a varied topography two are situated on flat land along the Arkle Beck, with the remainder on the north-facing slope to the south of the Beck. Meadows such as these, traditionally managed by hay cropping and grazing, are becoming increasingly rare nationally as a result of agricultural intensification.

Three distinct grassland types are represented. The first and most extensive of these types is characterised by the abundance of wood crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum*, pignut *Conopodium majus* and lady's-mantle *Alchemilla vulgaris* agg. There is a diversity of grasses including meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, marsh foxtail *A. geniculatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, downy oat-grass *Avenula pubescens* and smooth meadow-grass *Poa pratensis*. The uncommon meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata* and Goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* are two of the more notable herbs associated with this grassland type.

Most of the fields have extensive areas of the second type, a damp northern meadow community characterised by the presence of marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, ragged-robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, common bistort *Polygonum bistorta* and, of particular note, globeflower *Trollius europaeus*.

Lastly the eastern most field of the group is in part too steep to mow, and the slopes are managed as pasture. The grassland here is comprised of red fescue, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and common bent *Agrostis capillaris*. Associated herb species include rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, cat's-ear *Hypochoeris radicata*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, bugle *Ajuga reptans*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* with the uncommon melancholy thistle *Cirsium helenioides*.

The meadows south of the Arkle Beck contain two incised streams. The banks of these support a diverse community of plants including bush vetch *Vicia sepium*, meadowsweet, marsh hawk's-beard *Crepis paludosa* and abundant globeflower.