

<b>Scientific name</b>	<i>Molinia caerulea</i> – <i>Succisa pratensis</i> grassland
<b>Common name</b>	Purple Moor-grass – Devil's-bit Scabious grassland
<b>Community code</b>	GL1C

### Vegetation

This is typically a species-rich grassland community with a number of constant species. *Molinia caerulea* is often an abundant species, but tends not to form large, dominating tussocks and may even be absent. *Succisa pratensis* is a strong indicator and can be plentiful, while *Calliergonella cuspidata* is usually abundant beneath the sward. Other constant graminoids include *Carex panicea*, *Carex flacca*, *Juncus acutiflorus*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Festuca rubra* and *Anthoxanthum odoratum* (mean graminoid height = 31.9 cm,  $n = 216$ ). Apart from *Succisa*, the main forbs are *Potentilla erecta*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Trifolium* spp., *Plantago lanceolata*, *Prunella vulgaris*, *Filipendula ulmaria* and *Cirsium dissectum* (mean forb height = 19.4 cm,  $n = 216$ ). *Briza media* and *Carex pulicaris* occur on the more calcareous soils.

### Ecology

The *Molinia caerulea* – *Succisa pratensis* grassland is a wet grassland community that primarily occurs in fairly low-lying areas (mean altitude = 77 m,  $n = 216$ ; mean slope = 3.6°,  $n = 216$ ) on gleys but also on basin peats. These areas are often seasonally flooded (e.g. callows grassland). The soils are usually fairly acidic, markedly infertile and organic (mean organic content = 32.5%,  $n = 102$ ).

### Sub-communities

No sub-communities are currently defined for this community.

### Similar communities

GL1D *Molinia caerulea* – *Potentilla erecta* – *Agrostis stolonifera* grassland is related to this community but is less rich in number of species and *Molinia caerulea* tends to dominate there in a taller, tussocky sward.

### Records and distribution

#### Number of records (all)

Clearly assigned:	320
Transitional:	100
Total:	420

#### Number of records (mapped)

2001-2020:	286
1986-2000:	28
1971-1985:	37
Pre-1971:	20
Total:	371

#### Number of hectads (by most recent time period)

2001-2020:	129
1986-2000:	10
1971-1985:	14
Pre-1971:	12
Total:	165

#### Number of hectads (records in each time period)

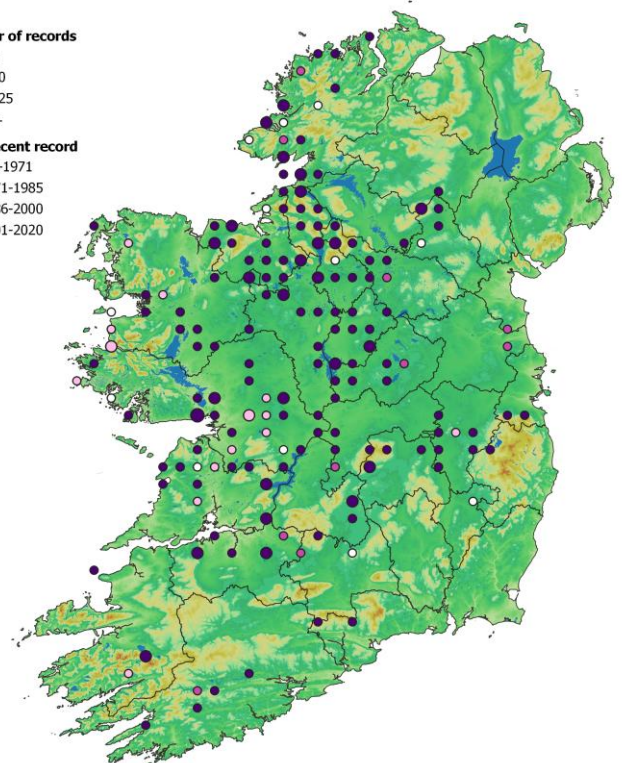
2001-2020:	129
1986-2000:	18
1971-1985:	17
Pre-1971:	14

#### Number of records

- 1-3
- 4-10
- 11-25
- 26+

#### Most recent record

- pre-1971
- 1971-1985
- 1986-2000
- 2001-2020



**Synoptic table (n = 303)**

Species	Frequency	Cover	Species	Frequency	Cover
	(from I-V)	min (med) max		(from I-V)	min (med) max
<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	V	+- (4)-7	<i>Cirsium dissectum</i>	III	+- (4)-8
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	V	+- (4)-7	<i>Carex pulicaris</i>	III	+- (3)-7
<i>Calliergonella cuspidata</i>	V	+- (4)-8	<i>Cirsium palustre</i>	III	+- (2)-5
<i>Carex panicea</i>	V	1-(4)-8	<i>Carex nigra</i>	III	+- (3)-8
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	V	+- (3)-8	<i>Carex viridula</i>	III	+- (2)-7
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	V	2-(4)-8	<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>	II	+- (2)-5
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	IV	+- (3)-6	<i>Mentha aquatica</i>	II	+- (2)-5
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	IV	+- (2)-6	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	II	+- (2)-4
<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	IV	1-(4)-9	<i>Briza media</i>	II	+- (3)-5
<i>Carex flacca</i>	IV	+- (4)-7	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	II	+- (3)-5
<i>Rhynchospora squarrosus</i>	IV	+- (3)-8	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	II	+- (3)-6
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	IV	1-(2)-6	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	II	+- (2)-3
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	IV	+- (2)-7	<i>Galium palustre</i>	II	+- (2)-4
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	IV	+- (2)-5	<i>Juncus conglomeratus</i>	II	1-(2)-7
<i>Juncus acutiflorus</i>	IV	+- (5)-8	<i>Lophocolea bidentata</i>	II	+- (2)-5
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	IV	+- (2)-5	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	II	+- (2)-6
<i>Scleropodium purum</i>	III	+- (3)-8	<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	II	+- (2)-4
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	III	+- (3)-6	<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	II	+- (2)-7
<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	III	+- (3)-6	<i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>	II	+- (2)-7
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	III	+- (3)-6	<i>Carex echinata</i>	II	+- (3)-6

**Affinities**

GHI: GS4 Wet grassland

ZM: CM05A Molinion caeruleae Koch 1926

EUNIS: E3.51 *Molinia caerulea* meadows and other related communities (E3.512 Acidocline purple moorgrass meadows)

NVC: MG8a *Cynosurus cristatus-Carex panicea-Caltha palustris* grassland *Sanguisorba officinalis* sub-community (63.6%), but also M26b *Molinia caerulea-Crepis paludosa* mire *Festuca rubra* sub-community (59.2%)

Annex I: 6410 *Molinia* meadows

**Proxy environmental data**

Light: 7.3 Reaction: 5.1 Wetness: 6.7 Fertility: 3.2 Salinity: 0.2

**Conservation value**

This is a species-rich grassland community (species/4 m<sup>2</sup> = 30.5, n = 245). A high proportion of these plots (particularly those with *Molinia caerulea* and *Cirsium dissectum*) come from grassland classified as EU HD Annex I habitat 6410 *Molinia* meadows. Sites with good populations of *Succisa pratensis* can also be important for the EU HD Annex II species Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) as this is the main food plant for this butterfly species.

**Management**

These swards are managed as rough grazing land (typically for cattle) and/or through a traditional regime of mowing during the drier summer months (typically around August). In wetter years, mowing may not be possible. The main threats to these grasslands include improvement, abandonment and afforestation.

**Key references**

O'Neill, F.H., Martin, J.R., Devaney, F.M., Perrin, P.M. (2013) The Irish Semi-natural Grasslands Survey 2007-2012. *Irish Wildlife Manuals* No. 78. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin.

Bourke, D., Hochstrasser, T., Nolan, S., Schulte, R. (2007) Historical Grassland Turboveg Database Project: 2067 Relevés Recorded by Austin O'Sullivan 1962-1982. (unpublished). National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin.

**Synopsis version:** V2.1

**Synopsis date:** March 2025

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Photo 1. GL1C *Molinia caerulea* – *Succisa pratensis* grassland, Dunshane Common, Kildare  
(E. Cole/J. Denyer, September 2010)



Photo 2. GL1C *Molinia caerulea* – *Succisa pratensis* grassland, Cahirguillamore, Limerick  
(C. MacMahon/K. McNutt, June 2012)