



Scientific name	<i>Dryas octopetala</i> – <i>Sesleria caerulea</i> heath
Common name	Mountain Avens – Blue Moor-grass heath
Community code	HE1A

Vegetation

Dwarf shrub cover in this typically open heath community is provided by *Calluna vulgaris* and/or low-growing mats of *Dryas octopetala*. These are accompanied by a range of species characteristic of calcareous grassland. The main graminoids are *Sesleria caerulea*, *Carex flacca* and *Festuca ovina* and there is typically a good diversity of colourful forbs including *Succisa pratensis*, *Thymus polytrichus*, *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Linum catharticum*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Viola riviniana/reichenbachiana*, *Hypericum pulchrum* and *Geranium sanguineum*. The bryophyte layer is composed mainly of *Scleropodium purum* and *Breutelia chrysocoma*, with *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* and *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus* frequent.

Ecology

This community occurs mainly in association with karstic limestone pavements and outcrops in the lowlands (mean altitude = 171 m, $n = 14$). Soils are fairly well-drained and more base-rich than those upon which other heath communities grow, but are still quite infertile.

Sub-communities

No sub-communities have been described for this community.

Similar communities

From other types of heath with *Calluna vulgaris*, community HE1A should be easily differentiated by the common presence here of *Dryas octopetala* and several calcicole species. It will often be found occurring in mosaic with GL3A *Briza media* – *Thymus polytrichus* grassland, but in that community the cover of dwarf shrubs is only patchy at best. Overall cover of plants here is higher than that found in the assemblages of open limestone pavement, communities RH1A and RH1B.

Records and distribution

Number of records (all)

Clearly assigned:	307
Transitional:	10
Total:	317

Number of records (mapped)

2001-2015:	103
1986-2000:	0
1971-1985:	20
Pre-1971:	33
Total:	156

Number of hectads (most recent records)

2001-2015:	19
1986-2000:	0
1971-1985:	0
Pre-1971:	0
Total:	19

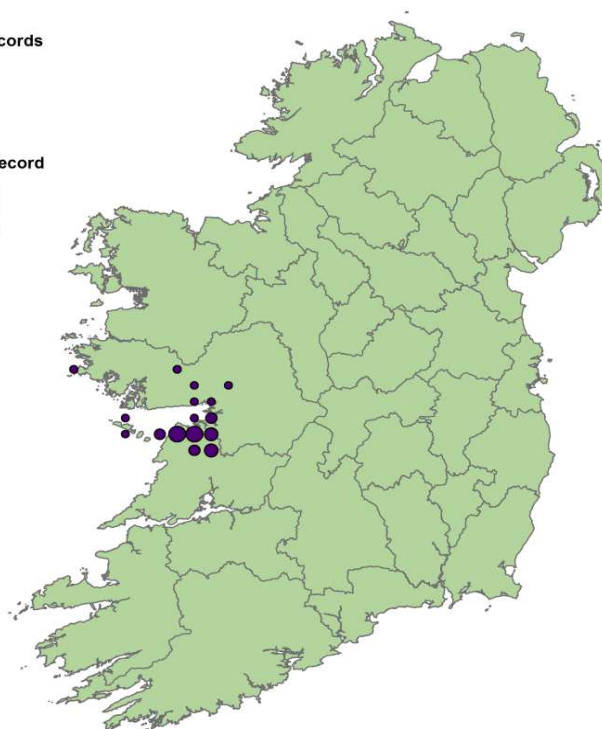
Number of hectads (all mapped records)

2001-2015:	19
1986-2000:	0
1971-1985:	6
Pre-1971:	7

Number of records



Most recent record



Synoptic table (n = 151)

Species	Frequency	Cover	Species	Frequency	Cover
	(from I-V)	min (med) max		(from I-V)	min (med) max
<i>Sesleria caerulea</i>	V	2-(7)-8	<i>Rhytiadelphus squarrosus</i>	III	1-(5)-8
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	V	1-(4)-9	<i>Carex caryophylla</i>	III	1-(5)-8
<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	V	1-(5)-8	<i>Briza media</i>	III	2-(3)-7
<i>Carex flacca</i>	V	1-(5)-8	<i>Polygala vulgaris</i>	III	+- (2)-5
<i>Dryas octopetala</i>	V	2-(7)-9	<i>Ctenidium molluscum</i>	III	1-(3)-5
<i>Thymus polytrichus</i>	V	1-(4)-8	<i>Rhytiadelphus triquetrus</i>	III	1-(5)-7
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	V	+- (3)-7	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	III	+- (3)-7
<i>Viola riviniana/reichenbachiana</i>	V	1-(3)-5	<i>Hylocomium splendens</i>	III	1-(5)-8
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	IV	2-(3)-8	<i>Antennaria dioica</i>	III	+- (3)-8
<i>Linum catharticum</i>	IV	1-(2)-7	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	III	2-(4)-7
<i>Festuca ovina</i>	IV	2-(7)-8	<i>Euphrasia officinalis</i> agg.	III	1-(3)-5
<i>Scleropodium purum</i>	IV	1-(3)-7	<i>Tortella tortuosa</i>	II	1-(3)-5
<i>Hypericum pulchrum</i>	IV	+- (2)-5	<i>Galium verum</i>	II	1-(3)-7
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	IV	1-(5)-9	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	II	1-(3)-8
<i>Breutelia chrysocoma</i>	IV	+- (4)-8	<i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>	II	1-(3)-7
<i>Carex pulicaris</i>	III	1-(3)-7	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	II	1-(2)-7
<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>	III	1-(3)-8	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	II	2-(5)-8
<i>Asperula cynanchica</i>	III	1-(3)-8	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	II	1-(3)-7
<i>Solidago virgaurea</i>	III	+- (2)-5	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	II	+- (3)-5
<i>Dicranum scoparium</i>	III	+- (3)-7	<i>Carex panicea</i>	II	1-(3)-8

Affinities

GHI: HH2 Dry calcareous heath
 ZM: KOB-01A Kobresio – Dryadion Nordhagen 1943
 EUNIS: F2.292 Hiberno-Brittanic maritime *Dryas* mats
 NVC: CG13 *Dryas octopetala* – *Carex flacca* heath (58.6%)
 Annex I: 4060 Alpine and subalpine heath / 4030 Dry heaths

Proxy environmental data

Light: 7.1 Reaction: 5.6 Wetness: 5.2 Fertility: 2.3 Salinity: 0.1

Conservation value

This is an exceptionally species-rich heath community (species/4 m² = 33.8 n = 53). Examples of this vegetation with *Dryas octopetala* qualify in Ireland as EU Annex I habitat 4060 Alpine and subalpine heath. Other instances, with just *Calluna vulgaris*, qualify as habitat 4030 Dry heaths.

Management

These heaths are traditionally winter grazed by cattle. The main threats are scrub encroachment, quarrying and destruction of limestone pavement for purposes of agricultural improvement.

Key references

Wilson, S. & Fernández, F. (2013) National survey of limestone pavement and associated habitats. *Irish Wildlife Manuals*, No. 73. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Synopsis version: V1.0

Synopsis date: November 2017

Synopsis author(s): P.M. Perrin



Photo 1. Mat of *Dryas octopetala*, Lyan, Clare (O. Daly, April 2017)



Photo 2. HE1A *Dryas octopetala* - *Sesleria caerulea* heath, Coolagh, Galway (J. Martin, September 2014)