Irish Vegetation Classification (IVC)

www.biodiversityireland.ie/ivc

Community Synopsis

Scientific name	*Festuca rubra – Plantago lanceolata* grassland
Common name	Red Fescue – Ribwort Plantain grassland
Community code	GL3C

Vegetation

The community typically has a good diversity in grass species with the constants including *Dactylis glomerata*, *Festuca rubra*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Agrostis stolonifera* and *Cynosurus cristatus* (mean graminoid height = 30.4 cm, *n* = 207). Broadleaved herbs consist primarily of *Plantago lanceolata*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Trifolium repens*, *Cerastium fontanum* and *Centaurea nigra* (mean forb height = 22.4 cm, *n* = 207). The usual presence of *Dactylis glomerata* and the occasional dominance of *Arrhenatherum elatius* can lend the vegetation a coarse and tussocky structure.

Ecology

The *Festuca rubra – Plantago lanceolata* grassland is chiefly a lowland community (mean altitude = 64 m, *n* = 207) of mineral soils (mean organic content = 18.3%, *n* = 133) and gentle slopes (mean slope = 6.0°, *n* = 207). Soils tend to be well-drained, fairly fertile and quite base-rich. This community is most frequent across the central part of the country, being only occasional in the south and far north.

Sub-communities

No sub-communities are described.

Similar communities

This grassland differs from the other main meadow community, GL3E *Festuca rubra – Rhinanthus* minor grassland, in being slightly drier, more base-rich and more fertile. *Rhinanthus minor* and *Agrostis capillaris* are much more frequent in community GL3E, while *Dactylis glomerata* and *Agrostis stolonifera* are less so.

Records and distribution

Number of records (all)

Clearly assigned:	471
Transitional:	163
Total:	634

Number of records (mapped)

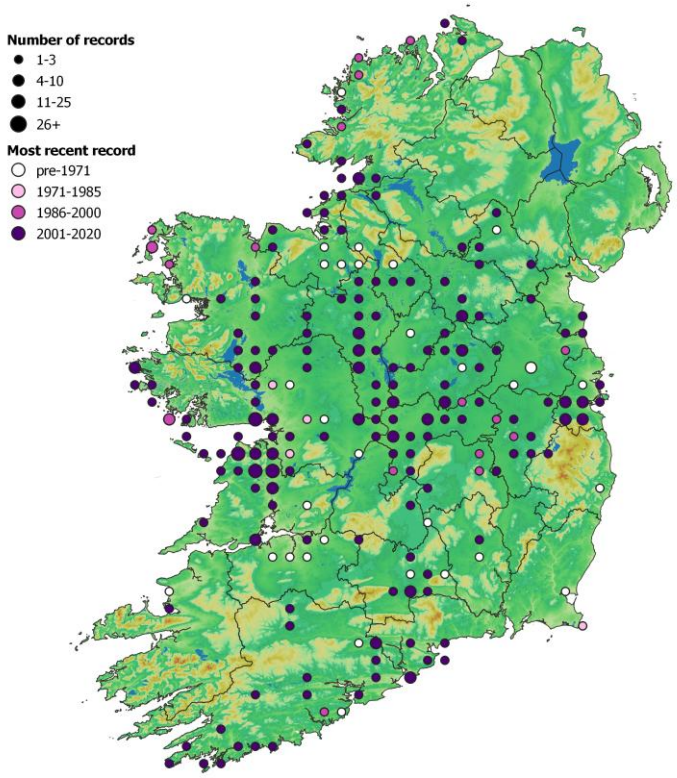
2001-2020:	343
1986-2000:	52
1971-1985:	16
Pre-1971:	55
Total:	466

Number of hectads (by most recent time period)

2001-2020:	159
1986-2000:	17
1971-1985	4
Pre-1971:	31
Total:	211

Number of hectads (records in each time period)

2001-2020:	159
1986-2000:	27
1971-1985	11
Pre-1971:	44



Synoptic table (*n* = 348)

Species	Frequency (from I-V)	Cover min (med) max	Species	Frequency (from I-V)	Cover min (med) max
Dactylis glomerata	V	+-(4)-9	*Brachythecium rutabulum*	II	+-(2)-7
Festuca rubra	V	2-(5)-10	*Prunella vulgaris*	II	+-(2)-8
Plantago lanceolata	V	+-(4)-9	*Lathyrus pratensis*	II	+-(2)-6
Holcus lanatus	V	+-(4)-9	*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*	II	+-(3)-9
Trifolium pratense	V	+-(4)-8	*Carex flacca*	II	+-(3)-6
Trifolium repens	IV	+-(3)-7	*Ranunculus repens*	II	+-(3)-6
Agrostis stolonifera	IV	2-(4)-9	*Veronica chamaedrys*	II	+-(2)-6
Cerastium fontanum	IV	+-(2)-6	*Hypochaeris radicata*	II	+-(2)-5
Anthoxanthum odoratum	IV	+-(3)-7	*Agrostis capillaris*	II	+-(3)-7
Centaurea nigra	IV	+-(3)-8	*Leucanthemum vulgare*	II	+-(2)-8
Cynosurus cristatus	IV	+-(4)-7	*Potentilla anserina*	II	1-(3)-8
Lotus corniculatus	III	+-(3)-7	*Heracleum sphondylium*	II	+-(3)-5
Lolium perenne	III	+-(3)-8	*Poa pratensis/humilis*	II	+-(3)-7
Taraxacum officinale agg.	III	+-(2)-7	*Leontodon autumnalis*	II	+-(2)-5
Achillea millefolium	III	+-(2)-5	*Daucus carota*	II	+-(2)-6
Rumex acetosa	III	+-(2)-5	*Senecio jacobaea*	II	+-(2)-5
Ranunculus acris	III	+-(2)-5	*Briza media*	II	+-(3)-5
Calliergonella cuspidata	II	+-(2)-7	*Ranunculus bulbosus*	II	+-(3)-5
Galium verum	II	+-(3)-5	*Euphrasia officinalis* agg.	II	+-(3)-6
Arrhenatherum elatius	II	1-(4)-9	*Plagiomnium undulatum*	II	+-(2)-6

Affinities

GHI: GS1 Dry calcareous and neutral grassland / GS2 Dry meadows and grassy verges

ZM: CM01C Cynosurion cristati Tx. 1947

EUNIS: E2.112 Atlantic *Cynosurus-Centaurea* pastures

NVC: MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus-Centaurea nigra* grassland (77.0%)

Annex I: 6210 Orchid-rich calcareous grassland* / 6510 Lowland hay meadows

Proxy environmental data

Light: 7.2 Reaction: 6.2 Wetness: 5.2 Fertility: 4.8 Salinity: 0.5

Conservation value

This is a grassland community of medium to high species richness (species/4 m^2 = 24.8, *n* = 251) to which belong some swards of two EU HD Annex I habitats, the priority habitat 6210 Orchid-rich calcareous grassland*, on the more base-rich soils, and 6510 Lowland hay meadows. Grasslands of these types are important for pollinators.

Management

These swards are managed as grazing land (typically for cattle) and/or mown for hay. Cutting may occur once or twice a year between May and September. The main threats to these grasslands include improvement and abandonment.

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.

Dunford, B. (2001) The impact of agricultural practices on the natural heritage of the Burren uplands, Co. Clare. (Ph.D. thesis). University College Dublin.

Synopsis version: V2.1 **Synopsis date:** March 2025 **Synopsis author(s):** P.M. Perrin

Photo 1. GL3C *Festuca rubra – Plantago lanceolata* grassland, Crumlin, Clare (C. MacMahon/M. O'Neill, July 2011)

Photo 2. GL3C *Festuca rubra – Plantago lanceolata* grassland, Streamstown, Westmeath (F. O'Neill/C. Sullivan, July 2011)