Irish Vegetation Classification (IVC)

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Community Synopsis

Scientific name	*Arrhenatherum elatius – Dactylis glomerata* grassland
Common name	False Oat-grass – Cock's-foot grassland
Community code	GL3G

Vegetation

Arrhenatherum elatius dominates this tall, rank grassland usually accompanied by patches of *Holcus lanatus* (mean graminoid height = 61.3 cm, *n* = 21). These are the only constant species and diversity is rather low. Frequently, there are some tufts of *Dactylis glomerata* and some *Agrostis stolonifera*. Common amongst the dense sward are stems of the yellow-flowered *Lathyrus pratensis* and other legumes, such as *Vicia cracca* or *Vicia sepium* may be present (mean forb height = 41.4 cm, *n* = 21). Occasional species include *Elytrigia repens*, *Filipendula ulmaria* and the tall umbellifer *Heracleum sphondylium*.

Ecology

The *Arrhenatherum elatius – Dactylis glomerata* grassland is a feature of abandoned pasture or meadows and unmown verges in the lowlands (mean altitude = 41 m, *n* = 21; mean slope = 1.9°, *n* = 21). Soils are well-drained mineral types or gleys and fairly fertile (mean organic content = 19.2%, *n* = 19).

Sub-communities

No sub-communities are described.

Similar communities

The abundance of *Arrhenatherum* should serve to identify this community. This species is occassional in GL3C *Festuca rubra – Plantago lanceolata* grassland, but it usually less abundant there in a more diverse sward in which *Trifolium* spp. and *Plantago lanceolata* are typical.

Records and distribution

Number of records (all)

Clearly assigned:	39
Transitional:	10
Total:	49

Number of records (mapped)

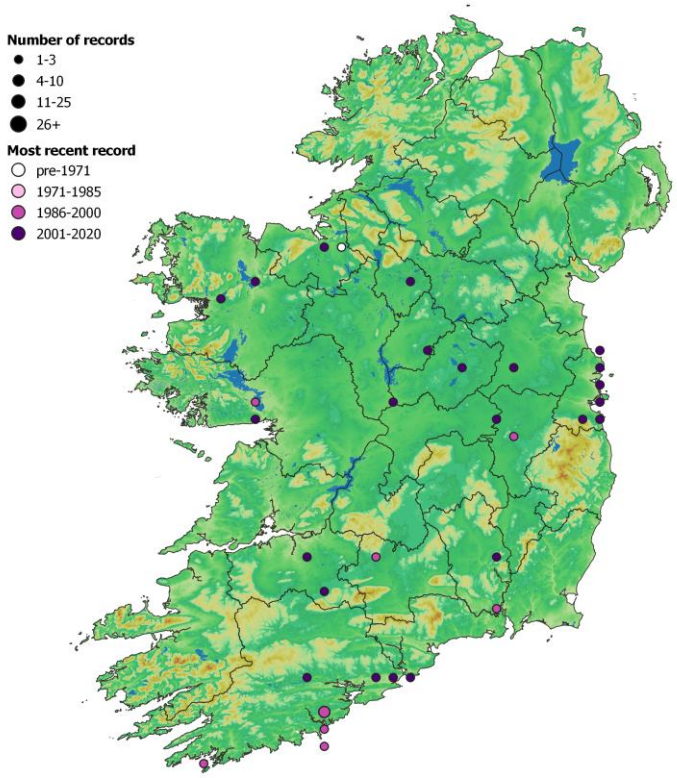
2001-2020:	28
1986-2000:	16
1971-1985:	1
Pre-1971:	1
Total:	46

Number of hectads (by most recent time period)

2001-2020:	23
1986-2000:	8
1971-1985	0
Pre-1971:	1
Total:	32

Number of hectads (records in each time period)

2001-2020:	23
1986-2000:	9
1971-1985	1
Pre-1971:	1



Synoptic table (*n* = 31)

Species	Frequency (from I-V)	Cover min (med) max	Species	Frequency (from I-V)	Cover min (med) max
Arrhenatherum elatius	V	5-(8)-9	*Anthoxanthum odoratum*	I	2-(3)-4
Holcus lanatus	IV	2-(4)-8	*Calystegia sepium*	I	2-(5)-8
Dactylis glomerata	III	+-(3)-5	*Cerastium fontanum*	I	+-(+)-2
Agrostis stolonifera	III	2-(4)-7	*Lotus corniculatus*	I	2-(2)-3
Lathyrus pratensis	III	1-(3)-7	*Phalaris arundinacea*	I	4-(6)-8
Festuca rubra	II	1-(3)-8	*Potentilla reptans*	I	2-(4)-7
Filipendula ulmaria	II	1-(5)-7	*Trifolium repens*	I	+-(2)-3
Vicia cracca	II	1-(2)-3	*Urtica dioica*	I	3-(3)-4
Alopecurus pratensis	II	+-(4)-5	*Galium aparine*	I	1-(2)-2
Elytrigia repens	II	+-(3)-5	*Lolium perenne*	I	1-(2)-4
Heracleum sphondylium	II	+-(1)-5	*Stellaria graminea*	I	+-(2)-2
Rumex acetosa	II	+-(2)-4	*Phragmites australis*	I	2-(4)-4
Cirsium arvense	I	1-(3)-5	*Poa trivialis*	I	2-(5)-7
Ranunculus repens	I	+-(1)-7	*Potentilla erecta*	I	2-(3)-4
Taraxacum officinale agg.	I	+-(3)-4	*Rubus fruticosus* agg.	I	2-(3)-3
Plantago lanceolata	I	+-(3)-4	*Rumex crispus*	I	+-(3)-3
Poa pratensis/humilis	I	1-(3)-5	*Rumex obtusifolius*	I	2-(4)-4
Potentilla anserina	I	3-(4)-6	*Stachys palustris*	I	3-(4)-5
Vicia sepium	I	+-(3)-5	*Veronica chamaedrys*	I	2-(5)-6
Agrostis capillaris	I	3-(4)-5	*Vicia sativa*	I	1-(1)-2

Affinities

GHI: GS2 Dry meadows and grassy verges / GS4 Wet grassland

ZM: CM01A Arrhenatherion elatioris Luquet 1926

EUNIS: E2.211 Atlantic *Arrhenatherum* grasslands / E2.7 Unmanaged mesic grassland

NVC: MG9b *Holcus lanatus-Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland *Arrhenatherum elatius* sub-community (56.9%)

Annex I: No significant correspondence

Proxy environmental data

Light: 7.0 Reaction: 6.6 Wetness: 5.7 Fertility: 6.2 Salinity: 0.3

Conservation value

This is a very species-poor grassland community (species/4 m^2 = 9.8, *n* = 24) with relatively little recognised conservation value.

Management

These swards are usually the result of lack of management and are eliminated by regular grazing or mowing. With time they are liable to succeed to scrub. Afforestation is a threat where resumption of agriculture is less economically viable.

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.

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Photo 1. GL3G *Arrhenatherum elatius – Dactylis glomerata* grassland, Terryland, Galway (F. O'Neill, June 2012)

Photo 2. GL3G *Arrhenatherum elatius – Dactylis glomerata* grassland, Ardgillan Demesne, Dublin (J. Denyer/J. Martin, June 2010)