

Scientific name	<i>Plantago coronopus</i> – <i>Armeria maritima</i> coastal rock community
Common name	Buck's-horn Plantain – Thrift coastal rock community
Community code	RH4B

Vegetation

This community gathers together a variety of typically open, rocky coastal assemblages in which *Armeria maritima*, *Plantago coronopus* and *Festuca rubra* are the constants. Occasional species are *Lotus corniculatus*, *Cerastium fontanum*, *Silene uniflora*, *Trifolium repens* and *Catapodium marinum*. Maritime specialists encountered less often include *Crithmum maritimum*, *Sagina maritima*, *Spergularia rupicola*, *Tripleurospermum maritimum* and the moss *Hennediella heimii*.

Ecology

This vegetation occurs predominantly in association with coastal cliffs, either on the top, on the rock face, on ledges or in crevices. It may also occur on smaller outcrops of sea-sprayed rocks or in association with soft cliffs or, less often, on trampled ground within saltmarshes or sand dunes. Mean altitude = 13 m, $n = 7$; mean slope = 10.3°, $n = 4$; mean extent of bare rock = 48.7%, $n = 11$.

Sub-communities

No sub-communities are described.

Similar communities

GL3F *Festuca rubra* – *Lotus corniculatus* grassland occurs on the top of maritime cliffs and could be confused with grassy variants of this community. GL3F is typically a closed community, however, where *Festuca* is much more plentiful than in RH4B and where *Armeria maritima* is much less frequent.

Records and distribution

Number of records (all)

Clearly assigned:	46
Transitional:	20
Total:	66

Number of records (mapped)

2001-2020:	29
1986-2000:	7
1971-1985:	13
Pre-1971:	17
Total:	66

Number of hectads (by most recent time period)

2001-2020:	16
1986-2000:	6
1971-1985:	9
Pre-1971:	3
Total:	34

Number of hectads (records in each time period)

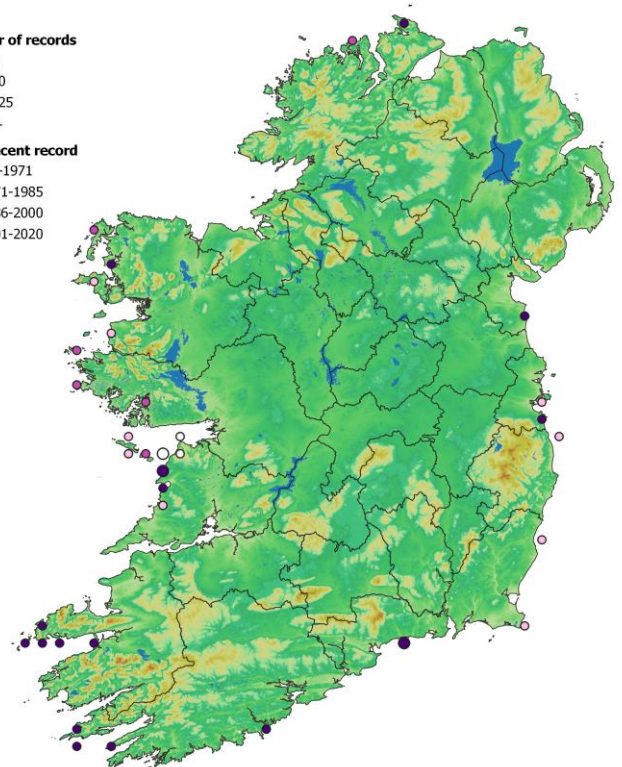
2001-2020:	16
1986-2000:	6
1971-1985:	9
Pre-1971:	5

Number of records

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

Most recent record

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



Synoptic table (n = 31)

Species	Frequency	Cover	Species	Frequency	Cover
	(from I-V)	min (med) max		(from I-V)	min (med) max
<i>Armeria maritima</i>	V	1-(4)-7	<i>Spergularia rupicola</i>	I	+-(1)-3
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	V	+-(5)-9	<i>Cladonia pyxidata</i>	I	1-(2)-2
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	IV	1-(3)-9	<i>Cladonia rangiformis</i>	I	1-(2)-6
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	II	1-(2)-6	<i>Homalothecium lutescens</i>	I	2-(2)-5
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	II	1-(2)-5	<i>Psora lurida</i>	I	1-(3)-3
<i>Silene uniflora</i>	II	1-(2)-4	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	I	+-(1)-1
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	II	1-(3)-7	<i>Tripleurospermum maritimum</i>	I	2-(2)-3
<i>Catapodium marinum</i>	II	2-(3)-3	<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i> agg.	I	3-(4)-5
<i>Amblystegium serpens</i>	I	1-(4)-5	<i>Didymodon fallax</i>	I	1-(1)-1
<i>Cerastium diffusum</i>	I	2-(3)-5	<i>Elytrigia juncea</i>	I	2-(3)-3
<i>Sagina maritima</i>	I	1-(2)-5	<i>Festuca ovina</i>	I	7-(8)-8
<i>Tortella flavovirens</i>	I	1-(3)-3	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	I	2-(2)-2
<i>Trichostomum brachydontium</i>	I	1-(3)-7	<i>Hennediella heimii</i>	I	2-(2)-2
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	I	2-(2)-3	<i>Juncus gerardii</i>	I	2-(3)-3
<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>	I	4-(4)-6	<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	I	1-(3)-3
<i>Plantago maritima</i>	I	2-(2)-3	<i>Leontodon saxatilis</i>	I	1-(1)-2
<i>Sagina nodosa</i>	I	2-(3)-3	<i>Ramalina siliquosa</i>	I	1-(1)-2
<i>Thymus polytrichus</i>	I	2-(2)-5	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	I	1-(1)-2
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	I	1-(2)-2	<i>Tortella nitida</i>	I	3-(3)-3
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	I	1-(2)-2	<i>Viola riviniana/reichenbachiana</i>	I	1-(1)-2

Affinities

GHI: CS1 Rocky sea cliffs

ZM: JB01A Crithmion maritimi Tx. et Oberd. 1958

EUNIS: B3.31 Atlantic sea-cliff communities

NVC: MC8e *Festuca rubra*-*Armeria maritima* maritime grassland *Plantago coronopus* sub-community (69.1%), but also MC5a *Armeria maritima*-*Cerastium diffusum* ssp. *diffusum* maritime therophyte community *Desmazeria marina* sub-community (62.7%)

Annex I:1230 Vegetated sea cliffs

Proxy environmental data

Light: 8.0 Reaction: 5.9 Wetness: 5.9 Fertility: 4.4 Salinity: 2.3

Conservation value

Many examples of this vegetation correspond to EU HD Annex I habitat 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs. Species/4 m² = 8.2, n = 13.

Management

Where it occurs on sea cliffs, this community typically does not require management, although it can be invaded by non-native species which require eradication, such as *Carpobrotus edulis*. Changes in sea levels and storminess as a consequence of climate change also constitute threats.

Key references

Ivimey-Cook, R.B., Proctor, M.C.F. (1966) The plant communities of the Burren, Co. Clare. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 64B, 211-299.

Barron, S.J., Delaney, A., Perrin, P.M., Martin, J.R., O'Neill, F.H. (2011). National survey and assessment of the conservation status of Irish sea cliffs. *Irish Wildlife Manuals* No. 53. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin.

Crawford, I., Bleasdale, A., Conaghan, J. (1998) BIOMAR survey of Irish machair sites 1996. Volume 2: Plant communities. *Irish Wildlife Manuals* No. 4. Dúchas, The Heritage Service, Dublin.

Synopsis version: V1.1

Synopsis date: March 2025

Synopsis author(s): P.M. Perrin



Photo 1. RH4B *Plantago coronopus* – *Armeria maritima* coastal rock community, Great Blasket, Kerry
(S. Barron/A. Delaney, July 2010)

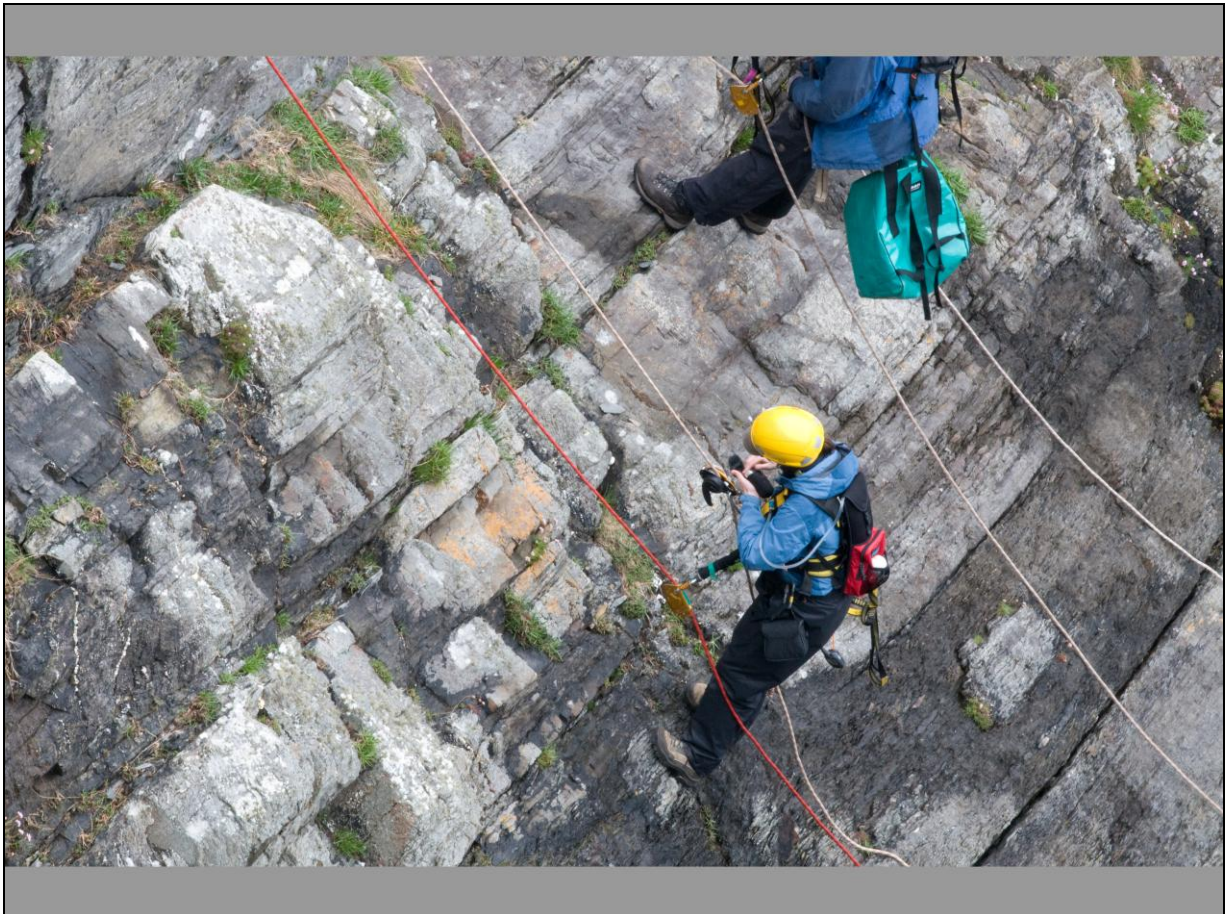


Photo 2. Recording of RH4B *Plantago coronopus* – *Armeria maritima* coastal rock community, near Frower Point, Preghane, Cork (S. Barron/A. Delaney, May 2010)