

EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name:	Lake District High Fells
Unitary Authority/County:	Cumbria
SAC status:	Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference:	NY303318
SAC EU code:	UK0012960
Area (ha):	26999.36
Component SSSI:	Armbboth Fells SSSI, Birk Fell SSSI, Buttermere Fells SSSI, Helvellyn and Fairfield SSSI, Honister Crag SSSI, Pillar and Ennerdale Fells SSSI, Scafell Pikes SSSI, Shap Fells SSSI, Skiddaw Group SSSI, Wasdale Screes SSSI

Site description:

This upland site is predominantly on acidic rocks, of the Borrowdale Volcanic Series and Skiddaw Slates. Dry heath occurs throughout with heather *Calluna vulgaris* and locally bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* being the dominant species. Wet heath, which occurs throughout the complex in a mosaic with other habitats, is dominated by heather, with cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and bog-moss *Sphagnum* species.

Blanket bogs are generally scarce as there is so little flat land where peat can form; however there are relatively extensive areas in places. Much of the bog is dominated by heather and hare's-tail cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum* with varying amounts of cross-leaved heath, deer-grass *Trichophorum cespitosum* and crowberry *Empetrum nigrum*. There are often carpets of bog-moss with species such as *Sphagnum papillosum* and *S. magellanicum*. Bog myrtle *Myrica gale* can be locally abundant. The bogs display transitions to other upland habitats including dry heath, rock and lake habitats.

Alpine and Boreal heaths and montane acidic grasslands form an important component at higher altitudes. Heather *Calluna vulgaris* can be a significant component but dies out at the highest altitudes. Wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* can dominate the sward, with bilberry, woolly fringe-moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*, stiff sedge *Carex bigelowii*, fir clubmoss *Huperzia selago* and lichens. Dwarf willow *Salix herbacea* and alpine clubmoss *Diphasiastrum alpinum* can be locally abundant, the latter particularly where there is late snow-lie.

Species present on the predominantly acid crags include alpine lady's mantle *Alchemilla alpina*, starry saxifrage *Saxifraga stellaris* and stiff sedge. Crevices and wet rock faces support a number of uncommon ferns. Screes are one of the most extensive habitats within the site, and vary from recently-formed loose scree in lower sections of gullies and below cliffs to stable areas colonised by grasses, bryophytes and ferns. The communities are well-developed and diverse with a wide range of characteristic species, including an abundance of parsley fern *Cryptogramma crispa*. Bryophytes can be frequent and the screes provide a suitable microclimate for many oceanic moss and liverwort species.

Areas of moist, basic soils support species-rich tall herb vegetation. Tall herb ledge communities are characterised by wood crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum*, wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, water avens *Geum rivale*, and globeflower *Trollius europaeus*. Often associated with these ledges but also found on the bare outcrops and ledges are many montane

and northern species such as roseroot *Sedum rosea* and mountain sorrel *Oxyria digyna*. The gill ledges support a wide range of ferns. A number of rare arctic-alpine species occur and Buttermere Fells is a locality for the rare alpine catchfly *Lychnis alpina*.

There are extensive areas of juniper *Juniperus communis*. There are good transitions to dry heath, blanket bog and old sessile oak *Quercus petraea* woods with rich bryophyte and lichen communities.

Lake District High Fells contains many upland tarns. Species occurring throughout include water-starwort *Callitriche hamulata*, quillwort *Isoetes lacustris*, shoreweed *Littorella uniflora*, water lobelia *Lobelia dortmanna* and floating bur-weed *Sparganium angustifolium*. A rare fish, the powan *Coregonus lavaretus* (locally called 'schelly') occurs in Red Tarn in Helvellyn and Fairfield.

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Alkaline fens. (Calcium-rich springwater-fed fens)
- Alpine and Boreal heaths. (Alpine and subalpine heaths)
- Blanket bogs*
- Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation. (Plants in crevices in base-rich rocks)
- European dry heaths
- Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels. (tall herb communities)
- *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands. (Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands)
- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*. (Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath)
- Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles. (Western acidic oak woodland)
- Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*. (Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels)
- Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands. (Montane acid grasslands)
- Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation. (Plants in crevices on acid rocks)
- Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (*Androsacetalia alpinae* and *Galeopsietalia ladani*). (Acidic scree)
- Species-rich *Nardus* grassland, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in continental Europe). (Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas)

Qualifying species: The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:

- Slender green feather-moss *Drepanocladus (Hamatocaulis) vernicosus*

Annex I priority habitats are denoted by an asterisk (*).

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0012960

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: 

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs