

Mawbray Banks - Rapid Assessment of Waxcap (hygrocybe sp) populations November 2020

A rapid assessment of waxcap populations has been carried out pending significant change in conservation management of the site which was underway at the time of survey. The changes involve installation of ponds and new water troughs and installation of a fenced enclosure to facilitate cattle grazing on the southern part of the site. At this time no changes are proposed for the northern part of the site although this has been highlighted as possibly requiring conservation grazing in the future.

At present the site comprises of a static dune system, formerly sheep grazed in living memory, with active coastal erosion occurring on the dune frontage at high spring tides and during storm events. Inland the dunes are consolidated with occasional ponds and dune slacks maintained by a rabbit population and foot passage, this being a popular recreational site.

The site appears relatively unknown for its significant and abundant populations of waxcaps . This rapid survey identified approximately 10 or so distinct species. Waxcaps are indicators of poor nutrient grasslands which have remained unimproved by agricultural practice. Traditionally such sites have been maintained by sheep and rabbit grazing resulting in a short sward. The mycelia mat is sensitive to disturbance and damage such as vehicular passage and poaching

An assessment of national importance in terms of conservation value based on species prevalence gives some indication of the importance of such sites.

| | sp present |
|----------------------------|------------|
| No particular value | 1 – 3 |
| Local significance | 4 – 8 |
| Regional significance | 9 – 16 |
| National significance | 17 – 21 |
| International significance | 22+ |

The rapid assessment of species returned an estimated 10 species indicating that the site is firmly of regional significance. Given that this is the end of the waxcap season numbers and prevalence of species will have diminished. Recommendations include a more thorough survey next year albeit this will be after conservation grazing by cattle has been introduced with potential damaging impact before the mycological value of the site is fully aware to the site managers.

Distinct concentrations of waxcaps were found in the southern part of the site and were mappable as defined sites of interest. The northern part of the site lacked this with sporadic occurrences of waxcaps across the whole site. Previous visits had noted a greater abundance than present of the date of survey and in particular the lack of clavaria (spindles) which had been noted as frequent earlier in the year.

One previous noted area of significant waxcap interest in the southern part of the site has been destroyed by the placement of a pond on that area – noted in the survey

Other notable species present on the northern part of the site include the presence of juniper, autumn gentian and meadow saxifrage. There is also an area of clavaria lichen which is substantive and should be surveyed for extent and species interest.

Recommendations

1. A full mycological survey ought to be carried out.
2. Particular locations in the southern area need vigilance this coming season if cattle are to be introduced, particularly round site 6 where a cattle watering trough has been sited which could lead to poaching and irreversible damage to the waxcap colony adjacent.
3. Placement of any proposed fencelines should be mindful of colony sites and subsequent poaching damage (as cattle follow the fence around or congregate)
4. Use of electric fence perhaps should be considered if significant poaching damage becomes apparent, at least until informed management decisions have been made which have considered ecological impacts of conservation management change at the site (both south and north)
5. The recognition of this area as a good waxcap site should be flagged to NE along with Grune point prior to any introduction of grazing animals or fenced enclosures

Survey

Date of Survey:

South Side 24/11/2020

North Side 25/11/2020

Methodology:

1. An extensive walk over the whole site concentrating on those areas where previous occurrence of waxcap and spindle (*Clavaria*) species were observed.
2. Areas where the prevalence of waxcaps was significant were mapped (paper and gps) and identified within that site, elsewhere, such as the northern end of the site where waxcaps were sporadic across the whole site species were identified on a list and locations where caps visible exceeded 5 were located as a gps point of interest.
3. An estimation of density was given using the DAFOR scale (dominant, abundant, frequent, occasional, rare). This was done by counting cap numbers in a 5m circle and multiplying this across the area being considered. A broad approximation of cap numbers has been estimated for the 6 distinct sites in the southern part of the area
4. 4 hours of survey carried out.

General Observations

5. The survey took place at the end of November at the end of the waxcap season and the preceding weeks had been significantly wet however frost incidences had been rare.
6. Earlier in the season, from visual observation, caps had been much more prevalent across the site, together with calvaria species. If the survey is to be repeated it should be carried out earlier in the season.
7. On the south side populations tended to be in distinct areas on the site in short to medium sward areas which were being sustained by rabbit and foot passage albeit populations were also present in longer adjacent sward areas also.

Southern site: 6 distinct areas where populations were prevalent.

| Site | DAFOR | Approx. # Caps | Sp | Sp # |
|------|-------|----------------|--|------|
| 1 | F | 50 | Ceracea, virginea, pratensis, mucronella, clavaria sp. | 4 |
| 2 | O | 30 | Ceracea, mucronell, irrigata | 3 |
| 3 | F | 200 | Ceracea, viginea, pssiticina, pratensis, punicea, coccinea, conica, insipida | 8 |
| 4 | X | 40 | [damaged area] | |
| 5 | O | 30 | Ceracea, pssiticina, pratensis, virginea, punicea, | 5 |
| 6 | F | 50 | Conica, pratensis, punicea, coccinea, cercea, virginea | 6 |

Northern Site

Waxcaps were identified sporadically across the whole site excepting those areas of dwarf heath, marron grass and dense matted grass zone adjacent to the road. Primarily sites were located in rabbit grazed, foot trampled areas adjacent to paths and where sward <6cm. Indication of prevalence was made by locating gps points at those sites where 5 or more caps were noted.

DAFOR scale for northern part would be estimated as O (occasional)

Species 7

Species: pssitincina, conica, cercea, punicea, virginea, coccinea, mucronella + approx. 10 sites where clavaria species were present.

J Malley

Nov 2020

Waxcap Survey - Sites



wood bleach
Jan 85

High Lichen

5 DAFOR

4.

6

3.

10

7 - psiliana, ronica, russo? vicajina (Lepista nuda)
?

Mawbray Banks Grid ref NY082459 to NY088487



High lichen site

Juniper

wood
blewit

ashmun
genher

+ meadow
scurfeyl

clouded
nebula

3.

2.

7 - psittiana, ronica, rusoc? vicginta (lapista nuda)

20 R

2 - (lichen) ...

Points of Interest - locations where there were > 5 caps underfoot

Prefix with 'NY'

08558 48041
08566 48058
08688 48137
08653 48079
08688 48129
08682 48104
08654 48039
08669 48030
08694 48139
08699 48149
08699 48149
08699 48203
08693 48210
08655 48175
08655 48175
08642 48118
08611 48145
08632 48171
08641 48173
08678 48266
08721 48255
08724 48279
08680 48296
08680 48296
08623 48229
08592 48159
08602 48236
08383 47349
08370 47312
08249 47205
08274 47299
08322 47381
08409 47609
08427 47624
08451 47663
08441 47705
08488 47807
08505 47868
08255 42760
08493 47853
08493 47853
08590 47953
08590 47953

