

TODMORDEN MOOR WILDLIFE SURVEY

Charles Flynn

17/07/05 10.30 – 12.30

Weather - hazy sunshine, little wind, hot and humid

Abbreviations: d - dominant, a - abundant, f - frequent, o - occasional, r - rare.

l - local, v - very. * only on disturbed ground.

Part One - Flora

Mosses (4 spp. identified)

<i>Drepanocladus uncinatus</i>	Sickle-leaved Hook-Moss	o-lf
<i>Polytrichum commune</i>	Common Haircap	lf
<i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>	Springy Turf-Moss	o-lf
<i>Sphagnum denticulatum</i>	Cow-horn Bog-Moss	o-lf

Dicotyledons (16 spp. identified)

<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup	r.	*
<i>R. flammula</i>	Lesser Spearwort	r.	*
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Nettle	o.	*
<i>Cerastium montanum</i>	Common Mouse-ear	r.	
<i>Sagina procumbens</i>	Procumbent Pearlwort	o.	*
<i>Cardamine flexuosa</i>	Wavy Bittercress	r.	*
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan	r.	
<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	Bilberry	lf	
<i>Empetrum nigrum</i>	Crowberry	vlf	
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	vlf	*
<i>Epilobium palustre</i>	Marsh Willowherb	r.	*

(2)

<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Self-Heal	o.	*
<i>Galium saxatile</i>	Heath Bedstraw	o.	
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	o-f	*
<i>C. palustre</i>	Marsh Thistle	lf.	
<i>C. vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle	o.	*

Monocotyledons (17 spp. identified)

<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush	f-ld	
<i>J. squarrosus</i>	Heath Rush	f.	
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	Common Cotton-Sedge	lf	
<i>E. vaginatum</i>	Harestail Cotton-Sedge	lf	
<i>Festuca ovina</i>	Sheep's Fescue	f-a.	
<i>F. rubra</i>	Red Fescue	r.	*
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-Grass	r.	*
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual Meadow-Grass	r	*
<i>P. pratensis</i>	Smooth Meadow-Grass	o-vlf	
<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Crested Dogstail	o.	*
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet Vernal-Grass	lf.	
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted Hair-Grass	vlf	
<i>D. flexuosa</i>	Wavy Hair-Grass	f-a	
<i>Agrostis canina</i> subsp. <i>canina</i>	Velvet Bent	vlf	
<i>A. capillaris</i>	Common Bent	f-a	
<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	Purple Moor-Grass	o-ld	
<i>Nardus stricta</i>	Mat Grass	f-a	

Fungi and Lichens

<i>Panaeolus semiovatus</i>	Egghead Mottlegill	o.	
<i>Rhizocarpon reductum</i> (<i>obscuratum</i>)		o.	

Part Two – Fauna

Abbreviations for Fauna: n - numerous, c - approximately, m - male, f - female,
 ? - identification uncertain. * does not belong to habitat.

Birds

<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon	4. *
<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Skylark	common
<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Meadow Pipit	common
<i>Montacilla alba</i> subsp. <i>yarrellii</i>	Pied Wagtail	1m.
<i>Corvus corone</i>	Carrion Crow	3.

Insects

<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	Common Hawker (dragonfly)	1m.
<i>Omocestrus viridulus</i>	Common Green Grasshopper	n.
<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	Meadow Brown (butterfly)	c. 20.
<i>Coenonymphus pamphilus</i>	Small Heath (butterfly)	n.
<i>Syrphus ribesii</i>	A hoverfly	?
<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Buff-tailed Bumblebee	c. 20
<i>Vespula vulgaris</i>	Common Wasp	nest.

Note - micromoths were abundant but these can only be identified by specialists.

COMMENT

Todmorden Moor shows signs of abuse both by the graziers and other people using it for tipping domestic and industrial waste, or for inappropriate leisure activities such as trail biking and shooting.

Over most of the moor about a third of the sward is composed of Mat-Grass. This is not generally a competitive species; it produces neither stolons nor creeping rhizomes, so it can only spread by seed. However, it is unpalatable to livestock and consequently does well where grazing is heavy, because the sheep and cattle consume the competition, thus giving it spaces to spread into. The other main components of the sward are Common Bent, Sheep's Fescue, Wavy Hair-Grass and especially on the lower ground, Sweet Vernal-Grass. The first three of these would be more competitive than Mat-Grass under normal grazing conditions. The dearth of Heather is a further indication of excessive grazing pressure, although there may be other factors contributing to its absence.

In some places closer to farmland Smooth Meadow-Grass, and to a lesser extent, Crested Dogtail are significant components of the grassland, but these plants probably originate from seed brought from the fields below.

In flushed areas the dominant plant is Purple Moor-Grass. This is comparatively nutritious for livestock and all of it has been heavily grazed. In other wet areas Soft Rush is the dominant vegetation, sometimes with Tufted Hair-Grass as a co-dominant. Neither are palatable to stock and grazed rushes generally indicate that the animals are hungry. Marsh Thistle is quite common in this habitat.

In one small mire at the bottom of Flower Scar Hill, Velvet Bent grows among the bog-moss. This is by no means a common plant in Calderdale, although it may often be overlooked or misidentified. Both Cotton-Sedges (also known as Cotton Grasses or Bog Cotton) are common in boggy areas, with or without bog-mosses.

Bilberry is common amongst the grass on much of the moor, but it has been eaten by livestock and become short and inconspicuous as a result. In damp places on the highest ground Crowberry is fairly frequent, but like the bilberry all the plants are small.

Disturbed ground, mostly around the main tipping area, has been colonised by Meadow Buttercup, Nettle, Procrumbent Pearlwort, White Clover (probably from farmland), Self-Heal, Creeping and Spear Thistles, Red Fescue, Perennial Rye-Grass and Annual Meadow-Grass. In a few places, ditches by the tracks have provided habitat for marsh plants. Lesser Spearwort, Wavy Bittercress and Marsh Willowherb are all found here, but none of them are very common and none of them are typical moorland species.

Other than Meadow Pipits and Skylarks, few birds were seen. The Woodpigeons simply flew over and had no interest in the moor. The Crows come here to feed, but must nest elsewhere. The Pied Wagtail was probably feeding, but this species breeds on farmland rather than moors.

Impressive numbers of Common Green Grasshoppers were heard. The Small Heath butterfly was common everywhere on the moor, whereas the Meadow Browns were mostly on the lower slopes. The only bees were Buff-tailed Bumblebees. This is the commonest and most adaptable Bumblebee and no typical moorland bees were seen. Given the lack of other flowers at this time of year, both the bees and the adult butterflies are probably dependant on the thistles for nectar.

This was only a two hour survey and cannot be considered exhaustive; other species of butterflies, fungi and lichens are likely to be found at other times of the year.