

Natura 2000 habitat 6510 : Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*)



In habitat 6510 are contained species-rich hay meadows on lightly to moderately fertilised soils. But the nutrients in the soil may also be of natural origin. These extensive grasslands are rich in flowers and different subtypes are described :

- On humid to fresh soils grasslands occur with a lot of bulbous oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*). Typical species are rough hawksbeard (*Crepis biennis*), hedge bedstraw (*Galium mollugo*) and field scabious (*Knautia arvensis*).
- If extensive grazing is the only management on loamy or clayey soils rich in chalk, the dominant grass often is crested dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) with typical species like bristly hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*), cowslip (*Primula veris*) and hoary plantain (*Plantago media*).
- In river valleys meadows are present which are flooded regularly in winter and contain a lot of meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*). Typical species are narrow-leaved water dropwort (*Oenanthe silaifolia*), snake's head fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*) and pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*).

Where to find it?

The grasslands of habitat 6510 occur now less under commercial agricultural management as these parcels are in general too strongly manured and too often ploughed to be species-rich. In nature reserves, road-sides and dykes of waterways habitat 6510 is widely distributed almost everywhere in the European Union, from plain to submontane levels. But well-developed examples with a lot of typical species are rare.

Typical species

The following typical plants are mentioned in the European habitat description :

- bulbous oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*)
- yellow oatgrass (*Trisetum flavescens*)

- greater burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella major*)
- brown knapweed (*Centaurea jacea*)
- rough hawksbeard (*Crepis biennis*)
- field scabious (*Knautia arvensis*)
- Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon (*Tragopogon pratensis*)



- wild carrot (*Daucus carota*)



- ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)
- meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*)



- great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*)
- spreading bellflower (*Campanula patula*)
- bristly hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*)
- lesser hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*)
- corky-fruited water-dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*)
- musk mallow (*Malva moschata*)

The following 3 species mentioned are not present in the wild in Belgium :

- pale flax (*Linum bienne*)
- tongue orchid (*Serapias cordigera*)
- awns rattle (*Rhinanthus lanceolatus*)

Typical animals :

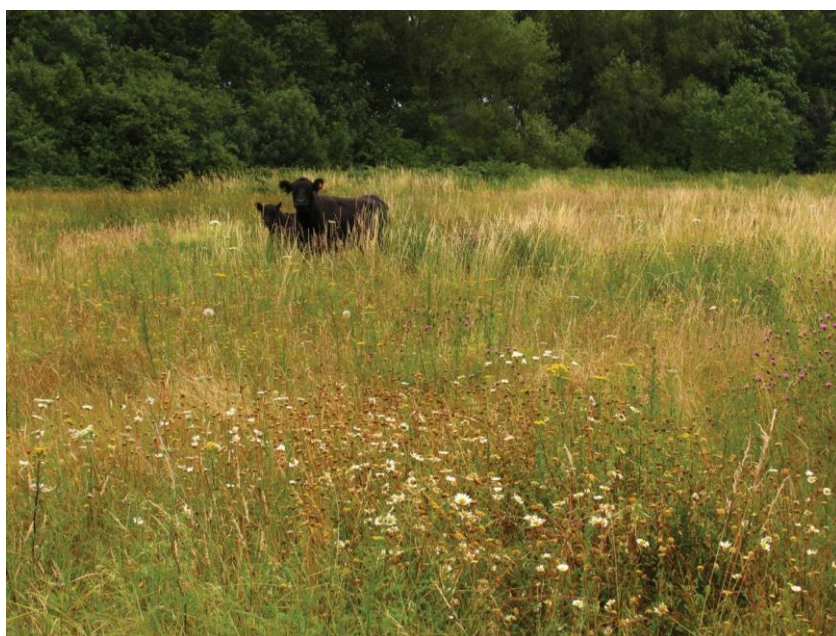
- mazarine blue (*Cyaniris semiargus*)
- scarce large blue (*Phengaris teleius*)
- corn crane (*Crex crex*)



- whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

## Management and threats

To maintain the grasslands of habitat 6510 it is possible to mow once a year, or more often twice a year is done (even three times yearly may occur). For the fauna (typical insects and others) it is important not to cut everything at once but to leave at least 15% unmown each time. But the mown material has to be evacuated. On some places extensive grazing is present which results in partly different species. Often mowing and grazing are combined in the same area, for example mowing end of June, followed by grazing in autumn.



A lot of these grasslands got very strongly manured resulting in species-poor vegetations. In recent years they are also more frequently ploughed and reseeded with high-yielding grass species. Instead of a first cut end of June or in July grasslands can be cut already in April by modern farmers, which is negative for animals and the production of seeds. Sometimes they are flooded with water containing too much nutrients, degrading the species-richness. If not managed these grasslands get dominated with tall herbs and eventually turn into forests. Habitat loss can also occur because of afforestation; mostly fast growing poplar (*Populus* sp.) is used in these cases.

This text has been made possible with financial support of the [LIFE-programme of the EU](#) in the [LIFE Green Valley project](#).

