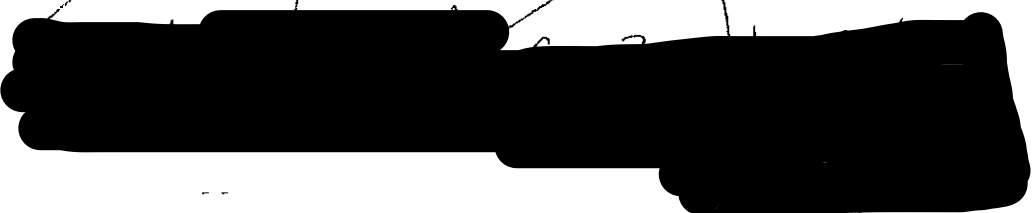


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SCOTTISH WILDLIFE TRUST SITE SURVEY
THORNHILL NORTH COMMON

INTRODUCTION

Thornhill North Common (NN665002) stands at the edge of the village of Thornhill, in Stirling District, which is situated on the Stirling to Callander road (A873). The site is currently designated as a Listed Wildlife Site.

It is an area of common ground and, as such, there is full public access. Locals make frequent use of the site for recreational purposes, particularly dog walking, and it is a good educational resource. Residents, whose gardens back onto the eastern half of the site, have cleared small sections for personal use.

The survey was carried out as part of a ongoing reassessment of listed wildlife sites in Central Region. A species list was compiled in July, 1994 as part of a training course for local SWT members. In November, 1994 this was expanded and the site was mapped. The surveyors were David Black and Kate Fairley, SWT, CEL Enterprise Centre, 58 Cornton Road, Stirling. FK9 5AT.

Leslie

If possible an assessment has for
official wildlife site in 1995.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

In the west of the site, species-rich stretches of rank, neutral grasslands grade into marshy grasslands dominated by tall rushes. Large stands of the emergent, Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) occur in waterlogged areas. A narrow strip of ground along the north fence supports vegetation more characteristic of acid soils and there is a area of acidic dry dwarf shrub heath. In the eastern half of the site, on land that has been much more frequently disturbed, there are extensive stands of tall ruderals and sections of improved grassland. These surround two stands of tall, dense scrub. Paths along the southern part of the site are either covered in tarmac or regularly mown. The more informal paths toward the northern end are often waterlogged and support a variety of damp-loving plants.

The common is found at an altitude of approximately 35 metres. Much of the ground to the west is flat and low-lying. To the east a gentle south-facing slope reaches up to meet the small drumlins beyond the northern boundary.

The land in this part of the Upper Forth Valley is dominated by tills derived from sediments of the Old Red Sandstone bedrock and occasional localised glacial deposits. These produce soils that form the Balrownie soil association, with the dominant soil in this area a brown forest soil of poor base status, imperfect drainage and with associated gleys.

A burn runs down from the hills to the north, cuts through the scrub in the eastern half of the site and runs parallel with the central path. From this, a number of small channels have been cut which divert some of the flow. This includes a deep channel to the south, although there is little water in this and some of it has seeped out into surrounding ground. At a point along the northern fence a broken drain was found, allowing run-off from the hills to spread out into the centre of the western half of the site.

Apart from the single-species stands of emergent grasses and tall ruderals, the grasslands support a rich variety of plants, including a wide range of grasses, numerous meadow herbs, sedges and rushes, as well as a number of common forbs. The more acidic soil at the north of the site supports a range of plants that add to the species diversity of the site. Patches of orchids are scattered throughout the western half of the common.

HABITAT DESCRIPTIONS

A21. Dense Scrub

In the eastern half of the common there are two relatively large areas of tall, dense scrub dominated by mature Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), with young Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*). Where this scrub reaches the northern fence it includes stands of Broom (*Cytisus scorparius*) and Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*), with Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*). These areas of scrub provide shelter and food for high numbers of woodland birds.

In the western half of the common there are stands of Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) along the northern fence and on the heath. These mark the areas where the soil is more acidic.

A22. Scattered Scrub

Broom (*Cytisus scorparius*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*).

A32. Scattered Broad-leaved Trees.

Willow (*Salix* spp.) species on wet grassland and marsh. A number of planted species on improved ground to the east, such as Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

A33. Scattered Conifers

A group of young, exotic conifers on improved ground.

B21. Neutral Grassland (Unimproved)

Much of this large stretch of rank grassland is dominated by tall tussocks of Tufted Hair Grass (*Deshampsia caespitosa*), with an abundance of Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Greater Bird's-Foot Trefoil (*Lotus ulginosus*). Parts of the grassland are heavily waterlogged and, to the north of the site, support a mosaic of different plant communities.

In the wettest areas there are small localised patches of Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), occasional Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutifolia*) and a layer of mosses. There are small depressions (again, too small to map) that are dominated by Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and contain a few plants associated with soligenous mires, including Marsh Willowherb (*Epilobium palustre*) and Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*). These wet depressions are

more frequent near the northern fence and here they support increasing numbers of plants commonly found in acid conditions, including Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and Heath Wood-rush (*Luzula multiflora*). This forms a transition from neutral to acidic that is most pronounced around the stands of Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*).

B22. Semi-improved Neutral Grassland

The majority of these areas are dominated by Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Around the paths the western half of the site there is a rich variety of grasses: Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), Crested Dogstail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), False Oat Grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) etc. A number of common forbs are present -with a greater diversity to the west- including buttercups (*Ranunculus* spp.), vetches (*Vicia* spp.), plantains (*Plantago* spp.) and sorrels (*Rumex* spp.). Again, the grassland is often wet and grades into marsh.

In the far western corner there is an increased abundance of Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) and there is a transition from neutral to acidic conditions.

B4. Improved Grassland

At the eastern end of the site there is an area of regularly cut grass : Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and White Clover (*Trifolium repens*).

The other species-poor area of improved grassland, dominated by Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), has been cut back by local residents and used for a variety of purposes: planting of trees and garden flowers, keeping beehives and disposing of garden rubbish.

B5. Marsh

These areas of marshy grassland are covered in tall stands of rushes, predominately Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*). They also support a variety of plants suited to the wet conditions: herbs, such as, Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and Northern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*), sedges and mosses.

A few small raised hummocks are scattered throughout the marshy grassland by the western wall and these drier patches support clumps of Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*). There is a localised abundance of Marsh

Willowherb (*Epilobium palustre*) alongside the Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*).

To the north of the central strip of marshy grassland, where it is heavily waterlogged (with some standing water), there is a localised dominance of Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*) and Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutifolia*).

C31. Tall Ruderal

Extensive stands of Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), with occasional thistles and nettles.

D11. Dry Dwarf Shrub Heath

This area of acidic heathland surrounds tall stands of Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*). There are large clumps of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and there is an abundance of Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*), with herbs such as Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) present. There are also occasional patches of Tufted Hair Grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*).

It grades into small, wetter areas (too small to map) which support Spaghnum moss and, in places, a thin scattering of Purple Moor Grass (*Molinia caerulea*). This may mark a transition from a dry to a wet heath habitat.

F1. Swamp

Stands of Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), with occasional Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*).

J13. Ephemeral/Short perennial

A mixture of low-growing annuals and perennials form patches on the raised, disturbed ground in the south-west of the site.

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TARGET NOTES

TG1. Site of an old building. Raised ground covered in Broom (*Cytisus scorparius*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*).

TG2. Small, wet moss-covered depression supporting an abundance of Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*) and numerous orchid spikes: Heath Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*), Northern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*) and Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuschii*).

TG3. Large patch of orchid spikes, predominately Northern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*).

TG4. Broken drain.

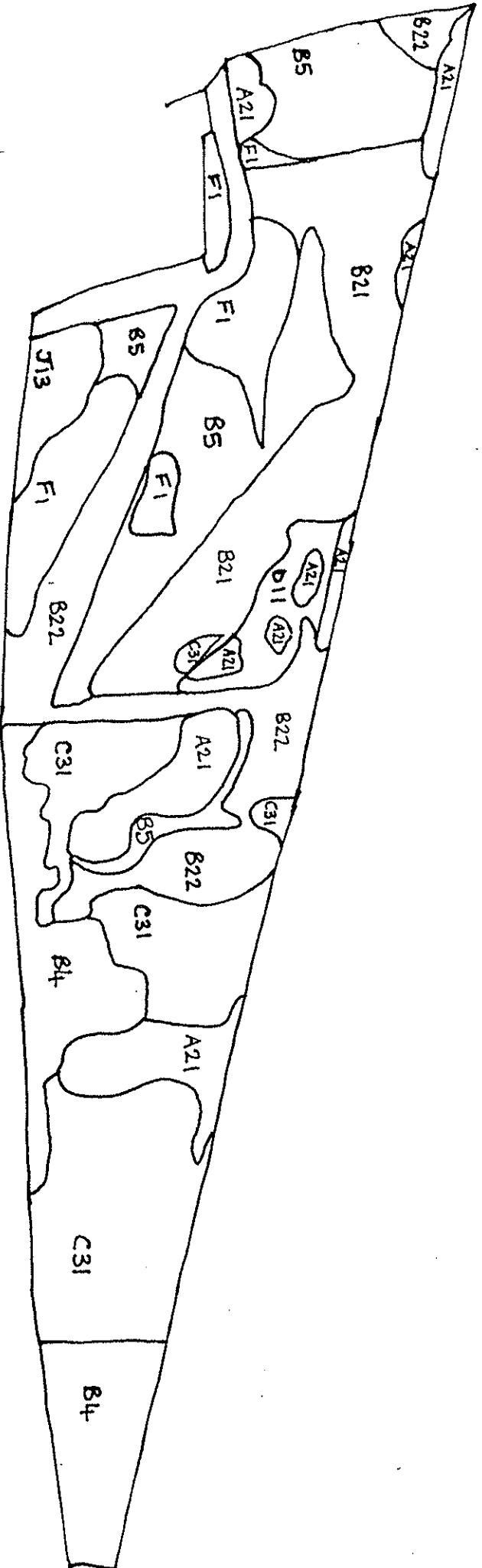
TG5. Localised Purple Moor Grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and an individual, small shrub of Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*).

TG6. Damp species-rich hollow with Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*), Heath Wood-rush (*Luzula multiflora*), and a number of sedges. Standing water on nearby path supports Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*). A dense patch of orchids is also present, predominately Northern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*).

TG7. Under a mature Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) there is a bird hide/gang hut. Small channels have been cut away from the burn creating a very damp area.

TG8. Surface water (seepage from burn) below a mature Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) supports Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*).

THORNHILL NORTH COMMON



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LEPER BUTTERFLY ORCHARD
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SPECIES LIST

Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore	R
Agrostis capillaris	Common Bent	F
Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping Bent	R
Alchemilla vulgaris	Lady's Mantle	O
Alopecurus pratensis	Meadow Foxtail	O
Alopecurus geniculatus	Marsh Foxtail	R
Angelica sylvestris	Wild Angelica	O
Anthoxanthum odoratum	Sweet Vernal Grass	R
Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat Grass	O
Bellis perennis	Daisy	R
Betula pendula	Silver Birch	R
Calluna vulgaris	Heather	O
Cardamine pratensis	Lady's Smock	R
Carex nigra	Common Sedge	A
Carex ovalis	Oval Sedge	O
Carex panicea	Carnation Sedge	R
Centuarea nigra	Black Knapweed	A
Chamaenerion angustifolium	Rosebay Willowherb	LD
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	F
Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle	R
Cirsium palustre	Marsh Thistle	R
Crepis paludosa	Marsh Hawk's-beard	R
Cynosurus cristatus	Crested Dogstail	R
Cytisus scorparius	Broom	F
Dactylis glomerata	Cocksfoot	O
Dactylorhiza fuchsii	Common Spotted Orchid	O
Dactylorhiza maculata	Heath Spotted orchid	O
Dactylorhiza purpurella	Northern Marsh Orchid	F
Deschampsia caespitosa	Tufted Hair Grass	LD
Deschampsia flexuosa	Wavy Hair Grass	R
Dryopteris dilatata	Broad Buckler Fern	O
Dryopteris filix-mas	Male Fern	R
Epilobium palustre	Marsh Willowherb	F
Erica tetralix	Cross-leaved Heath	R
Festuca rubra	Red Fescue	F
Filipendula ulmaria	Meadowsweet	F
Galium saxatile	Heath Bedstraw	R
Glyceria maxima	Reed Sweet-grass	LD
Hieracium aurantiacum	Orange Hawkweed	R
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire Fog	LD
Holcus mollis	Creeping Soft Grass	R
Juncus acutifolia	Sharp-flowered Rush	O
Juncus articulatus	Jointed Rush	A
Juncus effusus	Soft Rush	A
Juncus squarrosus	Heath Rush	O
Lathyrus pratensis	Meadow Vetchling	O
Lolium perenne	Perennial Rye-grass	F
Lotus corniculatus	Common Birdsfoot Trefoil	R
Lotus ulginosus	Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil	A
Luzula campestris	Field Wood-rush	R
Luzula multiflora	Heath Wood-rush	O

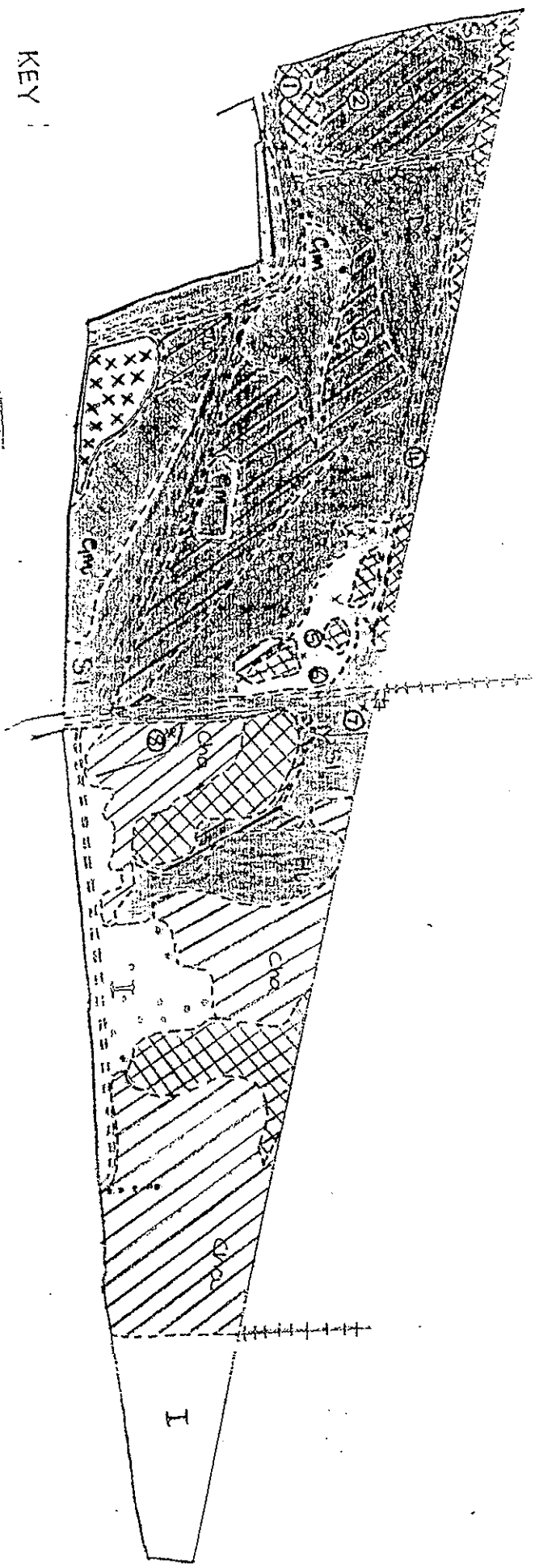
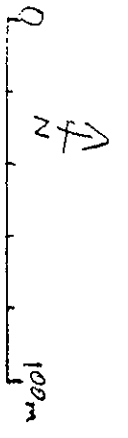
SPECIES LIST

Lychnis flos-cuculi	Ragged Robin	R
Phalaris arundinacea	Reed Canary-grass	O
Phleum pratense	Timothy	R
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain	O
Plantago major	Broad-leaved Plantain	F
Poa trivialis	Rough Meadow-grass	O
Poa annua	Annual Meadow-grass	R
Potentilla anserina	Silverweed	F
Potentilla erecta	Tormentil	O
Quercus petraea	Sessile Oak	R
Ranunculus acris	Meadow Buttercup	O
Ranunculus flammula	Lesser Spearwort	R
Ranunculus repens	Creeping Buttercup	F
Rosa canina	Dog Rose	O
Rubus fruticosus	Bramble	O
Rumex acetosa	Common Sorrel	A
Rumex acetosella	Sheep's Sorrel	R
Rumex obtusifolia	Broad-leaved Dock	R
Salix spp.	Willow	F
Sambucus nigra	Elder	O
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan	F
Symphytum x uplandicum	Russian Comfrey	O
Taraxacum officinale	Dandelion	R
Trifolium repens	White Clover	O
Ulex europaeus	Gorse	F
Urtica dioica	Nettle	R
Veronica beccabunga	Brooklime	R
Veronica chamaedrys	Germander Speedwell	O
Vicia cracca	Tufted Vetch	R
Vicia sativa	Common Vetch	R













Additional species: a number of exotics and garden escapes are present in the eastern half of the site, predominately to the south where residents' gardens have been extended and garden waste has been dumped. These include planted conifers, a stand of snowberries, marigolds and a few members of the Compositae family.

THORNHILL NORTH COMMON

NIN665002
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KEY

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
|  | Dense Scrub |  | Marsh |
|  | Scattered Scrub |  | Improved Grassland |
|  | Scattered Broad-leaved Trees |  | Tall Ruderal |
|  | Scattered Conifers |  | Dry Dwarf Shrub Heath (Acid) |
|  | Neutral Grassland Unimproved |  | Swamp |
|  | Neutral Grassland Semi-improved |  | Ephemeral / Short Perennial |