

What are MAGical Meadows?

MAGical Meadows are the wildflower rich grasslands that grow on a type of rock called Magnesian Limestone. In the UK this is found in a narrow band stretching from South Tyneside to Nottinghamshire.

In places where the Magnesian Limestone reaches the surface, through erosion or quarrying, it supports a rich and unique group of wildflowers and grasses known as magnesian limestone grassland. Two-thirds of the UK's remaining magnesian limestone grasslands are found in east Durham and Tyne and Wear.



Why are MAGical Meadows Important?

Soils on limestone rock are very nutrient poor and slightly alkaline. As a



Where can I see MAGical Meadows?

The remaining MAGical Meadows sites occur on outcrops of the Magnesian Limestone escarpment, which runs between Boldon in the north and Ferryhill in the south and along the plateau of the stunning Durham coast from South Shields to Hartlepool.

Many of the larger sites, including former Magnesian Limestone quarries, are now nature reserves, but you can see smaller examples on roadside verges, former railway lines and railway embankments.

These are some of the best examples of our MAGical Meadows that are open to the public. The best times to visit are from the beginning of June to the middle of August.

South Tyneside

- Cleadon Hills *LNR* (NZ389631)
- Marsden Old Quarry *LNR* (NZ394644)
- The Leas (NZ394658)



Matt Hawking

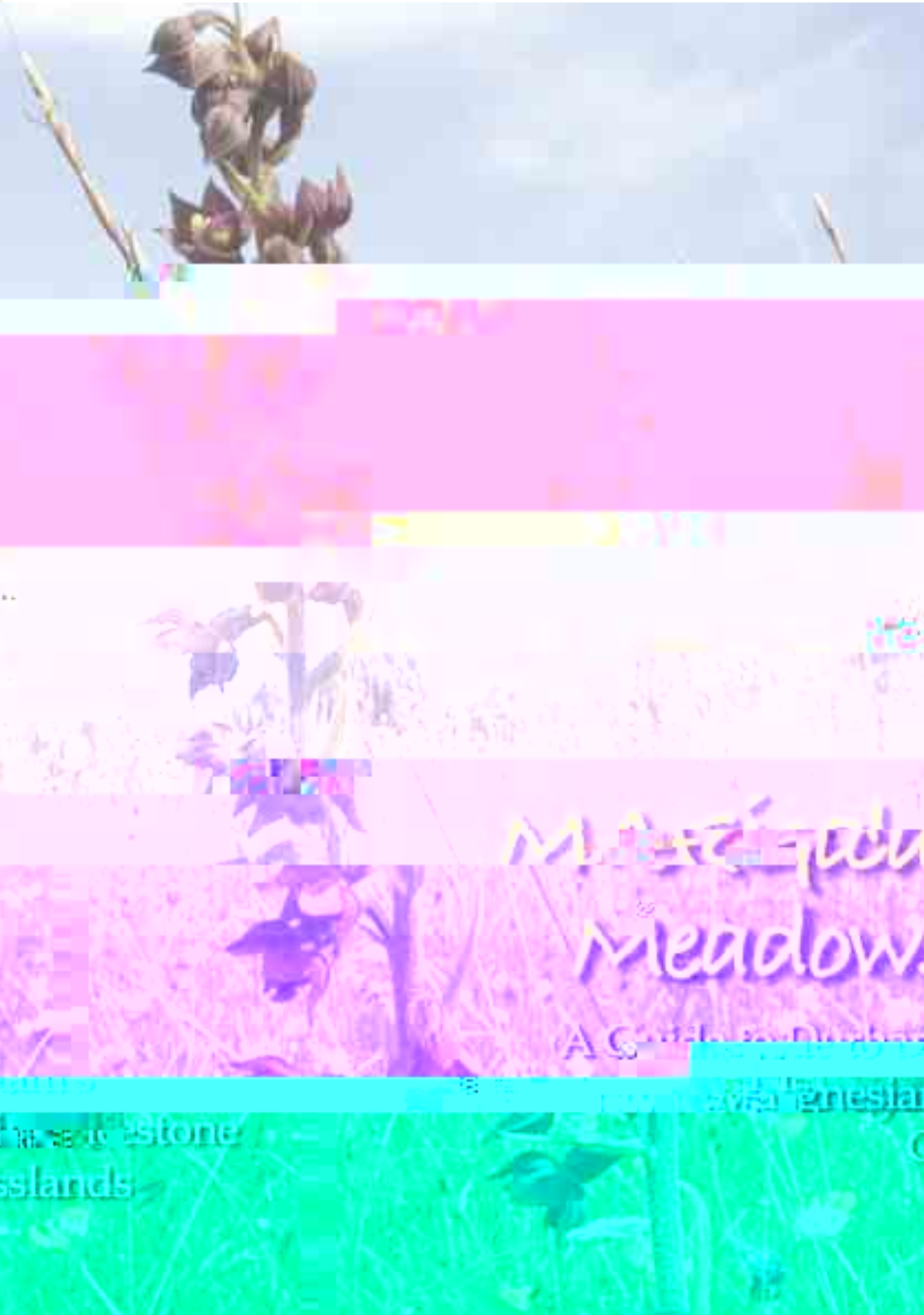
Durham Coast

- Beacon Hill (NZ442453)
- Blackhall (NZ470392)
- Castle Eden Denemouth *NNR* (NZ455403)

East Durham

- Cassop Vale *NNR* (NZ336386)
- Crow Trees *LNR* (NZ332374)
- Little Wood *LNR* (NZ340375)
- Raisby Hill Grassland (NZ333354)
- Wingate Quarry *LNR* (NZ37

These are some of the best examples of our MAGical Meadows that are open to the public. The best times to visit are from the beginning of June to the middle of August.



Wildflower and Grasses of MAGical Meadows

The following grasses and flowers are typical of magnesian limestone grassland. Some of them grow in other places too, but are frequently seen together on our MAGical Meadows.

Blue Moor -grass *(Sesleria caerulea)*

Size: 10 - 45cm

Description: A distinctive fine grass with green-grey leaves and short tufted flowering spikes, which can have bluish-purple tinges.

Flowering time: April – June



Quaking-grass *(Briza media)*

Size: 20 - 50 cm

Description: A very delicate looking grass that has purple coloured, flat, triangular flower spikelets, most distinctive, dancing in the wind on slender stalks.

Flowering time: May – August

Glaucous Sedge *(Carex flacca)*

Size: 10 - 60cm

Description: The stems of sedges are triangular in cross section, unlike grasses (feel the base of the plant). This is the most common sedge of limestone grasslands.

Flowering time: April - May



Greater Knapweed *(Centaurea scabiosa)*

The flowers of this plant attract large numbers of bumblebees and butterflies.

Size: 50 - 80 cm

Description: A large branched plant with hairy stems and ragged looking purple-pink flowers on solitary stalks.

Flowering time: June – August

