

MARSH FRITILLARY HABITAT SURVEY – SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Devil's-bit Scabious *Succissa pratensis* is the only known food plant of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* in Northern Ireland. The Marsh Fritillary butterfly is a European Protected species which is included in Annex 2 of the EC Habitats Directive 1992, and is protected under Schedules 5 and 7 of the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take the Marsh Fritillary butterfly. It is also an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site of this butterfly.

To establish the extent of suitable habitat for a European Protected Species, Northern Ireland Environment Agency has asked you to carry out an appropriate habitat survey mapping the occurrence of Devil's-bit Scabious in detail, noting the presence of adult Marsh Fritillary Butterfly on the wing. You should follow these guidelines:

- The surveyor contracted to undertake this work must have relevant experience which is deemed acceptable to the Department, for example an ecological consultant with experience of, and/or qualifications in flora and/or invertebrate surveying. The qualifications of the surveyor should be included in the survey report.
- **The survey should be undertaken between May and November.** The date, time and weather conditions of the survey should be included in the survey report.
- It is preferable that a survey of adult butterflies takes place between **May and July**, as this can aid identification of web locations. Adult butterflies only fly in warm, sunny conditions, so visits should only be undertaken in favourable weather conditions between 10.30 and 16.30. All sightings of marsh fritillary butterflies should be mapped using GPS. The presence of adults confirms that there is a marsh fritillary colony in the area. However, the precise whereabouts of the breeding colony can only be confirmed from the presence of larvae.
- Vegetation height, and the frequency and abundance of Devil's-bit Scabious across the extent of the habitat should be recorded.
- The potential for patches of Devil's-bit Scabious to support Marsh Fritillary butterfly must be identified in the report. The extent of these patches must be mapped.
- The land management and features of each area should be identified in the report, including signs of stock grazing, or scrub encroachment.
- The information should be presented in a written report and must include large scale maps at 1:500 scale. The survey effort must cover all habitats that will be affected by the development, and all locations of Devil's-bit Scabious patches must be mapped.
- **If there is potential for a Marsh Fritillary butterfly colony on site, or a Marsh Fritillary butterfly is seen on the wing, and the proposal will require removal of potential habitat, a Marsh Fritillary butterfly survey must be undertaken in addition to this survey. Specific requirements are available on request. It should be noted that Marsh Fritillary butterfly surveys can only be carried out in late August and September.**

- If necessary the report should recommend the most appropriate ways in which the habitat can be protected during construction.
- Surveys should be carried out within one year of submission to the Department.
- In the event that the planning application goes to appeal or public inquiry, the consultant contracted may be required to appear and/or give evidence.
- More guidance and information on survey methodology is available from NIEA, Natural Heritage.

NIEA reserve the right to determine whether the survey is adequate or when additional information is required.