

In the northern area plants such as tufted hair-grass, carnation sedge, meadowsweet and ribwort plantain are found. These plants attract a range of insects especially butterflies. From May onwards you may see Orange-tip, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Large Skipper and Green-Veined White Butterflies.

Along the river bank 10 different tree species grow and the small area of copse provides shelter and food for several breeding birds. On the river evidence of Otters have been found. The river is ideal for Otters with good clean water and wooded river banks.



Otter / English Nature

## English Nature

This is one of many nature reserves managed by English Nature, a Government funded body that cares for our natural heritage and promotes the conservation of England's wildlife and natural features.

## How to get to the Reserve

From the Cockermouth roundabout on A66 take A5086 to Egremont. After 2 miles turn left at crossroads to Lorton (school on left). After 1 mile turn right to Lorton, stay on this road for about 1 mile until you reach a small bridge. The reserve is on the right. Park on the left near the bridge.

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# Sandy Beck Meadow

National Nature Reserve



working today  
for nature tomorrow

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Great Burnet / English Nature



## Sandy Beck National Nature Reserve

At  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a hectare, Sandy Beck is England's smallest National Nature Reserve. The site is managed by English Nature as a Hay Meadow, a habitat all too rare nowadays. The reserve lies in the Lorton valley within the Lake District, and is one of several hay meadows along the river.

## Britain's Lost Heritage

Hay meadows like Sandy Beck were once very common across Britain. After World War Two farming practices modernised. Many hayfields were ploughed, re-seeded or had artificial fertilisers added to increase grass production. These practices changed the range of plants within the meadow.

The rarer flowers and grasses were replaced by common grass species.



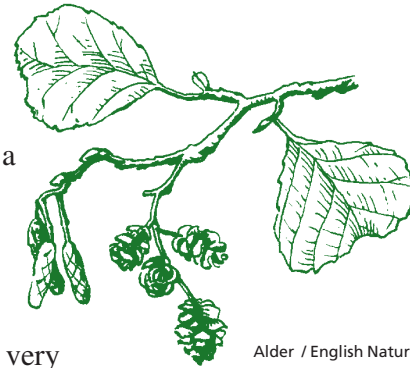
Common Bistort / English Nature

## Hay Meadow Management

Hay meadows need to be cut at the correct time. Too early a cut and the plants have not set seed, too late and the hay may not be very palatable to farm animals.

Weather conditions and the growing season determine the time of cut. Sandy Beck is usually cut about mid-July but modern hay meadows are usually cut in June. Once cut the grass is left to dry. Each day the cut grass is turned or 'scrowed' to evenly dry it. After about three days in hot weather the grass has 'made hay'. It is then rowed up and baled. The bales are taken to a barn and stored until winter when they are eaten by cattle, sheep and ponies.

Following the hay cut the regrowth of plants, usually called the aftermath, is grazed until winter. Autumn grazing up to winter opens up the grass sward and removes dead material ready for the next growing season.



Alder / English Nature



Orange Tip Butterfly / English Nature

Farmyard manure mixed with straw can be applied in low doses, during the winter to provide extra nutrients.

## Wildlife

Although small, the NNR has a rich variety of wildlife. The Sandy Beck river splits the site into two halves. The Southern half is slightly larger and drier than the northern half. The Southern area contains grasses such as Sweet Vernal Grass, Crested Dogs Tail and Red Fescue. In mid June you can see the range of wonderful flowers such as Oxeye daisy, Betony, Great Burnet, Hawkbit and Common Spotted Orchid. Two less common species Greater Butterfly Orchid and Common Bistort also flower.



Greater Butterfly Orchid / English Nature