
MC7

Stellaria media-*Rumex acetosa* sea-bird cliff community

Synonymy

Bird cliff vegetation Petch 1933; Zooplethismic vegetation Poore & Robertson 1949; *Cochlearietum* Goodman & Gillham 1954 *p.p.*; Herring gull colony vegetation Sobey & Kenworthy 1979 *p.p.*

Constant species

Stellaria media.

Physiognomy

The *Stellaria-Rumex* community has a scruffy but generally closed cover of *S. media* with some *Festuca rubra*, *Agrostis stolonifera* and *Holcus lanatus* (each of which may be abundant) and a little *R. acetosa* and *Armeria maritima*. There is a variety of low frequency occasional of maritime and inland grasslands and of disturbed habitats. *Cochlearia officinalis* may be much more abundant early in spring than later.

Habitat

The community is always associated with disturbance and manuring by colonial sea-birds. On St Kilda, it is particularly frequent around the nest burrows of puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) where there is considerable excavation of soil.

Zonation and succession

As with the *Atriplici-Betetum* community, this vegetation forms a mosaic with surrounding maritime crevice communities and grasslands and its spatial and temporal relationships with these are likely to be governed by the intensity of sea-bird activity and the high maritime influence.

Distribution

The community has been recorded from scattered sites from Pembrokeshire round to the Firth of Forth.

Affinities

Among the apparently rather variable assemblages of species able to take advantage of the seasonal enrichment of soils exposed to high maritime influence, this is distinct from the latter in the replacement of *B. vulgaris* ssp. *maritima* and *A. prostrata* by *S. media* and *R. acetosa*. The abundance of grasses characteristic of less maritime situations suggests an affinity with the vegetation of enriched and disturbed inland habitats placed in the Chenopodietea.

Floristic table MC7

<i>Stellaria media</i>	V (2–8)
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	III (4–5)
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	III (3–7)
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	III (4–8)
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	III (7–9)
<i>Armeria maritima</i>	III (2–3)
<i>Plantago maritima</i>	II (4)
<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	II (2)
<i>Poa subcaerulea</i>	II (4–6)
<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>	II (1–2)
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	II (1)
<i>Atriplex prostrata</i>	II (2)
<i>Silene vulgaris maritima</i>	II (1–3)
<i>Matricaria maritima</i>	I (4)
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i> agg.	I (2)
<i>Cerastium glomeratum</i>	I (5)
<i>Poa annua</i>	I (3)
<i>Sedum anglicum</i>	I (4)
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	I (2)
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	I (2)
<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	I (5)
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	I (4)
<i>Juncus articulatus</i>	I (4)
<i>Spergula arvensis</i>	I (2)
Number of samples	7
Number of species/sample	7 (3–13)
Vegetation height (cm)	9 (2–20)
Total vegetation cover (%)	98 (90–100)
Altitude (m)	31 (10–59)
Slope (°)	7 (0–15)
Soil depth (cm)	34 (23–64)