What you can do to maintain good "waxcap-grassland" habitat

The following recommendations, especially when applied to commercial farms, may only be appropriate or practical for those parts of the land which are particularly suitable for "waxcap-grassland" fungi or are known to support fungus "hotspots".

- Maintain the grass sward through livestock grazing and/or hay or silage cropping.
- Avoid the use of fertilizers or lime. These can raise nutrient levels or change the soil chemistry resulting in loss of certain fungi.
- Avoid actions which significantly damage the soil structure or affect drainage. Compaction by heavy vehicles in wet conditions can be especially damaging.
- Avoid supplementary feeding which may cause localised soil enrichment and poaching.
- Ensure scrub is not allowed to encroach and take over the grassland.
- Minimise the use of persistent antithelmic treatments where consistent with good animal husbandry.

Further information

Members of the Pembrokeshire Fungus Recording Network welcome the opportunity to record fungi at good grassland sites, and will be happy to provide further information.

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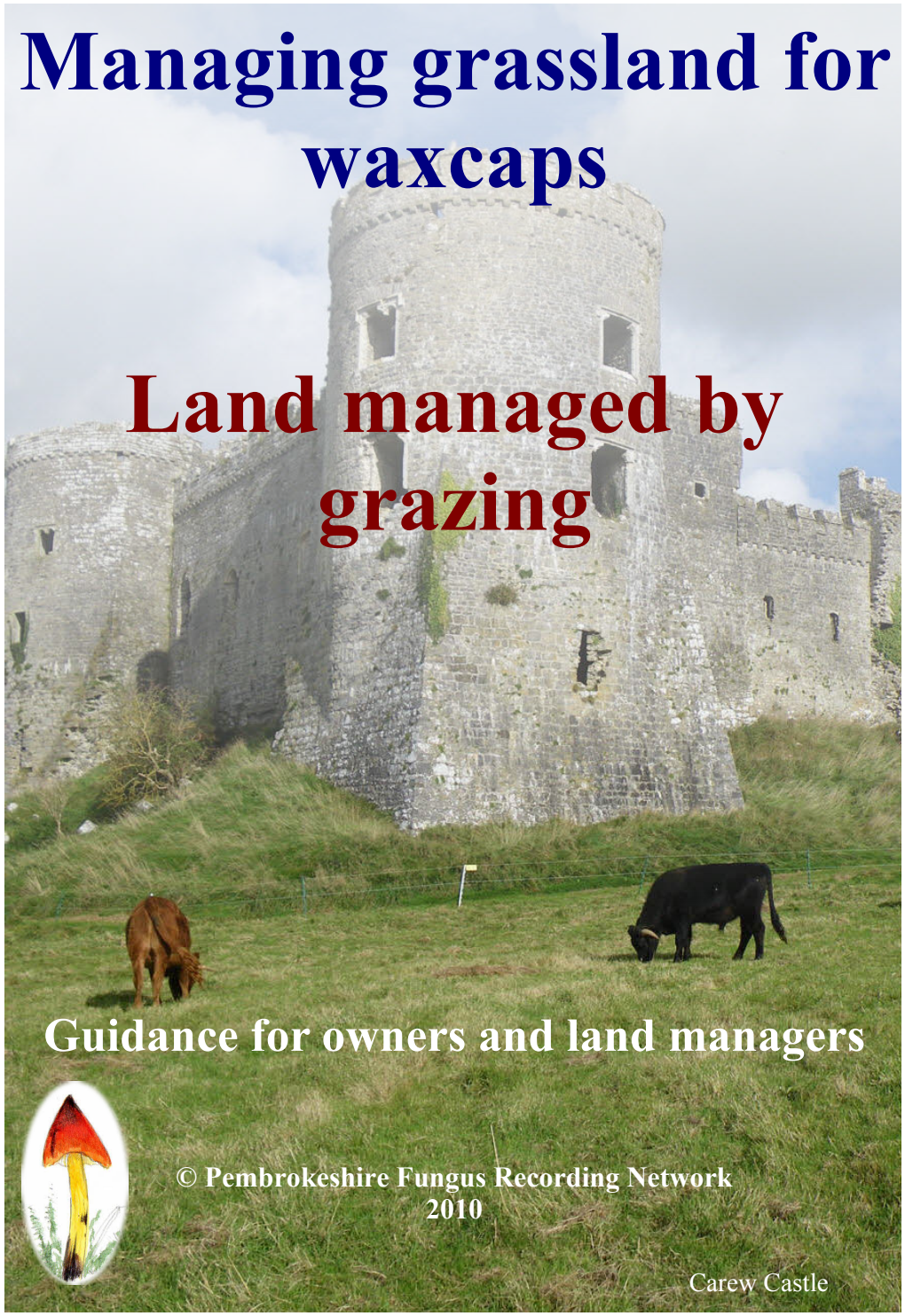
Managing grassland for waxcaps

Land managed by grazing



Guidance for owners and land managers

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Carew Castle

“Waxcap-grassland” fungi

Waxcaps, together with certain pinkgills, club and coral fungi, and earthtongues, form a group known as “waxcap-grassland” fungi.

Many are threatened across Europe through of the loss of suitable habitat, for example where the favoured habitat for these species - long established semi-natural grassland - has been “improved” through the intensification of agricultural production.

Further threats arise from the loss of suitable grassland to development, conversion of permanent grassland to arable cropping, or the neglect of grassland sites leading to scrub encroachment.

Several species are listed in the UK and local Biodiversity Action Plans which address the need to maintain the extent and range of suitable grassland habitat.

Good examples of this type of habitat may still be found on extensively managed farms, nature reserves and other grassland managed through livestock grazing. Slopes, which are less well suited to cultivation or fertilizer application, can be especially valuable.

This leaflet provides guidance for site owners and managers on the best measures to help maintain this type of "waxcap-grassland" habitat in favourable condition.

Dung fungi

Dung from livestock fed mainly through natural grazing - especially on herb-rich pastures - supports a wide range of fungi including species now rarely seen.

Additionally, where livestock are <u>not</u> routinely treated with persistent anti-worming preparations, the resulting dung provides ideal conditions for invertebrates which form an essential component of the natural environment.

How do I know if I have a “waxcap-grassland”?

Any grassland site with a colourful display of fungi in late summer and autumn is likely to be of interest and worth investigating further. Fungi can be difficult to identify, so the four examples shown below illustrate the main groups. The presence of several different species may indicate a good “waxcap-grassland” site.

Scarlet waxcap (*Hygrocybe coccinea*) [left] - fairly common, often in large numbers. Cap typically up to 50 mm. diameter.
Blue-edge pinkgill (*Entoloma serrulatum*) [right] - an example of one of several blue-coloured pinkgills. Cap typically up to 40 mm. diameter.

Violet coral (*Clavaria zollingeri*) [left] - uncommon. Branched fruiting bodies typically up to 100 mm across.
Olive earthtongue (*Microglossum olivaceum*) [right] - uncommon and easily overlooked. Grows up to about 60 mm. high.