

Combe Haven and Marline Biodiversity Opportunity Area

Joint Character Area High Weald

Geology Combe Haven and Marline Biodiversity Opportunity Area lies on geology of sandstone (Lower Tunbridge Wells), siltstone and mudstone.



The Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) are the regional priority areas of opportunity for restoration and creation of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats. They are a spatial representation of BAP targets and are areas of opportunity, not constraint. The BOAs are the property of the South East England Biodiversity Forum www.sebiodiversity.org.uk. Contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database right 2010

Combe Haven and Marline has been recognised as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) as they represent a priority area for the delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets. This is one of 75 such areas across Sussex. The BOA covers approximately 999 hectares.

This area contains Filsham Reedbed; the largest reedbed in Sussex and also Combe Haven SSSI. To the north of Filsham Reedbed lays a large expanse of fen, reedbed and wet woodland, and within the SSSI there are areas of farmland with high value for wildlife. Around the SSSI lies agricultural land rich in arable plants with a scattering of ancient woodlands. To the north-east the area extends in to two extensive ancient woodlands; Marline Valley and Queens Wood, which extends in to the urban area of Hastings.

BAP Habitat

Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh

Reedbeds

Wood-pasture and parkland

Woodland

BAP Species 92 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Species	Habitat Requirements
Aquatic Warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	Mosaic of tall and short vegetation, sedge beds, herb-rich areas, often on edge of reedbed
Marsh Warbler <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	Tall-herb often dense vegetation and scattered scrub (often including Rosebay Willowherb, Nettle and Hogweed)
Knot Grass <i>Acronicta rumicis</i>	Meadows, gardens and hedgerows, larvae feed on a range of herbs
Slow-worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i>	Open habitats, gardens, heathland, cliff, mixed deciduous woodland, structural variation, hedgerows
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Newly planted conifers or open heath, mixed deciduous woodland
Garden Tiger <i>Arctia caja</i>	River valleys, hedgerows, gardens and parks
Water Vole <i>Arvicola terrestris</i>	Rivers, ponds, canals and drainage ditches, reedbeds, fens, grazing marsh, banks, slow-flowing waters
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Wet reedbed and marshland
Minor Shoulder-Knot <i>Brachylomia viminalis</i>	Damp woodland, hedgerows, heathland and fens, Willow
Common Toad <i>Bufo bufo</i>	Scrub, rough grassland, fens, reedbed and wet woodland, dense ground vegetation or litter, ponds, large water bodies, hedgerows
Stone-curlew <i>Burhinus oediconemus</i>	Spring-sown crops, heathland, chalk or acid grassland with areas of bare stony ground, short sward or bare ground with good invertebrate levels - linked with animal dung, low disturbance
Lesser Redpoll <i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	Birch and Alder woods, most common in the north in the summer
Crescent <i>Celaena leucostigma</i>	Wetlands, reedbeds, grazing marsh, wet woodland, Yellow Flag Iris, Great Fen Sedge
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Woodland, good supplies of fruit, seeds and keys, drinking pools
Small Heath <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Dry grassland, heathlands, short turf, parks and gardens
Corn Crane <i>Crex crex</i>	Large areas of unintensified grassland with tall vegetation to provide early spring cover, timing of cutting very important
Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Woodland, scrub, marshes, heathland, reedbed
Small Phoenix <i>Ecliptopera silaceata</i>	Woodland, hedgerows, open habitats including commons and gardens, willowherbs
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Open countryside, scrubby areas, woodland edges, hedgerows, insect-rich grassland, seed-rich areas
Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Wetlands including reedbeds, tall rushes and wet grassland with good vegetation cover, gardens, farmland, hedgerows, ditches
Hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Woodland, farmland, urban areas, hedgerows
Rustic <i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>	Gardens, grassland and heathland, docks, plantains, hedgerows
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Mainly on the ground in open woodland, farmland, occasionally seen in gardens
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	South and east coasts of the UK, perch prominently on bushes, hedgerows, fence posts, lowland heathland, lowland meadow
White Admiral <i>Limenitis camilla</i>	Woodlands, sunny glades, Bramble, Honeysuckle, partially-shaded locations
Savi's Warbler <i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	Extensive reedbed close to water
Grasshopper Warbler <i>Locustella naevia</i>	Scrub, thick grassland, reedbeds, forestry and gravel pits

Wood Lark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	Heathland, woodland, mosaic of scattered trees, bare ground, short vegetation and taller vegetation, open seed-rich areas
Dot Moth <i>Melanchra persicariae</i>	Gardens, verges, waste ground, hedgerows
Broom Moth <i>Melanchra pisi</i>	Open woodland, shrub, heathland, Broom, Bracken
Hazel Dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	Woodland, overgrown hedgerows, Honeysuckle, Bramble, Hazel and Ash, well-structured woodland with a well-developed understorey and scrubby areas
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Open woodland and woodland edges, parks and gardens
Shoulder-striped Wainscot <i>Mythimna comma</i>	Gardens, damp habitats, marshes and fens, Cock's-foot.
Grass Snake <i>Natrix natrix</i>	Water, reedbed, ponds, heathland, hedgerows, grazing marsh, gardens, fish, amphibians
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Reedbeds, estuaries, damp grassland, heathland, mosaic of tall vegetation for nesting with short vegetation and open habitats for feeding
Powdered Quaker <i>Orthosia gracilis</i>	A moth of habitats such as floodplain grassland where larvae feed on Bog Myrtle and willows
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	Urban areas, farmland, hedgerows
Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>	Farmland, woodland edges, hedgerows with mature trees, wetland edges
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>	Farmland, rush pastures, moors, mosaics of bare ground and cover, hedgerows, uncultivated margins
Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Mixed deciduous woodland, even age-canopy, little understorey, patchy ground cover
Soprano Pipstrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	A widespread bat that has a preference for riparian habitats, hedgerows, buildings are often important for roost sites and it requires good linkages between these and its foraging grounds.
Grizzled Skipper <i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	Grassland, quarries, embankments, woodland rides, larvae feed on Agrimony and <i>Potentilla</i> species, requires warmth and shelter
Shaded Broad-bar <i>Scotopteryx chenopodiata</i>	Chalk grassland and a range of open habitats, larvae feed on vetch and clover
Buff Ermine <i>Spilosoma luteum</i>	Woodland, parks and gardens
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Woodland edges, hedgerows and open land with scattered bushes
Blood-Vein <i>Timandra comae</i>	Gardens, fields and waste ground
Great Crested Newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	Breeding sites are mainly medium-sized ponds, although ditches and other waterbodies may be used, ponds with ample aquatic vegetation, do not require very high water quality, but usually a neutral pH. Hedgerows, mixed deciduous woodland
Ring Ouzel <i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Short grassy areas
Cinnabar <i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	Meadows, wasteland, road verges and downland
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Farmland, grazing marsh, wet meadows, seeds and insects
Oak Hook-tip <i>Watsonalla binaria</i>	Oak woodland and parkland, larvae feed on oak
Common Lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	Open woodland, moorland, heathland, fens, sand dunes, rocks, gardens and cliffs

Invasive Non-native Species 11 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii*
Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*
American Mink *Mustela vison*
Winter Heliotrope *Petasites fragrans*
Red-eared Terrapin *Trachemys scripta*

Designated Sites

Combe Haven SSSI is an extensive site with a variety of habitats including alluvial meadows, drainage ditches and ancient woodlands. Several uncommon species are found including Marsh Violet, Hairy Dragonfly and Variable Damselfly. The site also contains Filsham Reedbed LNR.

Marline Valley Woods SSSI is a substantial area of ancient woodland on Wadhurst Clay and Lower Tunbridge Wells sandstone dominated by a nationally uncommon woodland type. The presence of a gill adds to the interest of the site, containing 61 species of bryophyte. This site also contains Marline Wood/Valley LNR.

Disused Railway, Bexhill SNCI contains a variety of habitats including woodland, scrub and tall herbs. Scrubby areas are important for birds and the area presents an important corridor. Combe Wood is particularly species rich, containing 32 ancient woodland indicators.

Disused Railway, Crowhurst SNCI includes woodland, species-rich grassland and two disused pits. Patches of calcareous grassland occur with species found including Wild Carrot and Pyramidal Orchid.

Old Filsham Golf Course SNCI is an area of semi-improved grassland with developing scrub, and a mosaic of wetter habitats including reedbed. The site is integral to an overall network of habitats in the local area.

Wishing Tree SNCI consists of a reservoir with marginal vegetation, and semi-natural woodlands and meadows.

Woodland Complex at Buckholt Farm SNCI consists of several ancient woodlands predominantly Hornbeam coppice with Oak, Ash, Birch and Sweet Chestnut. There are several derelict ponds around the site, and bisecting streams are lined with Alders and many bryophytes.

Opportunities Identified

- Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation
- Floodplain restoration and reconnection
- Access improvements
- Opportunities associated with development