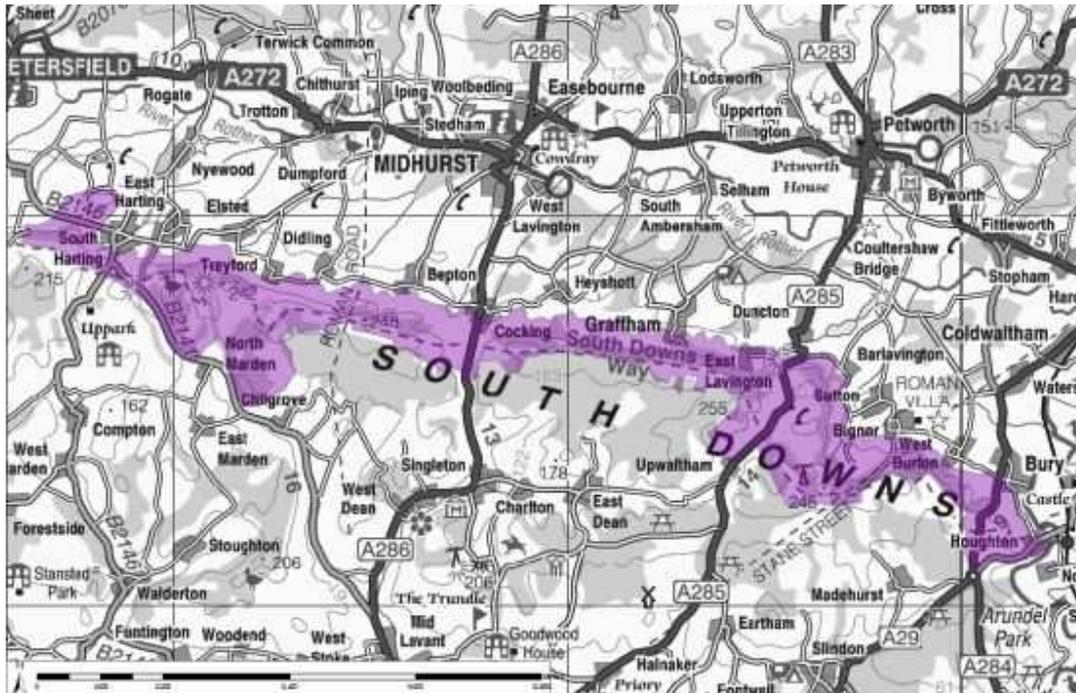


Western escarpment Biodiversity Opportunity Area

Joint Character Area South Downs and Wealden Greensand

Geology Western escarpment Biodiversity Opportunity Area lies on chalk



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

The western escarpment has been recognised as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) as it represents 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 4261 hectares.

This area is important for its chalk geology and its influence on the character of the surrounding streams of the western Rother. The 25 kilometre chalk block runs from the border with Hampshire all the way to the Arun valley. It contains key downland landmarks such as Harting Down, Duncton Down, Graffham Down and Heyshott Down. The area is characterised by its ancient woodlands, the hangars of the West Sussex Downs. The area is bounded to the north by the chalk geology and to the South by the South Downs Way national trail and woodland edges.

BAP Habitat

Lowland calcareous grassland

Lowland dry acid grassland

Lowland heathland

Reedbeds

Wood-pasture and parkland

Woodland

BAP Species 69 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Species	Habitat Requirements
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
Barbastelle <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	Old woodland, structural variety, plentiful dead wood, hedgerows, larger river valleys, caves, underground sites, hollow trees
Common Toad <i>Bufo bufo</i>	Scrub, rough grassland, fens, reedbed and wet woodland, dense ground vegetation or litter, ponds, large water bodies, hedgerows
Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Heathland, moorland, open woodland, recently felled conifer plantations, mosaic of bare ground, low vegetation, scrub and trees
Lesser Redpoll <i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	Birch and Alder woods, most common in the north in the summer
White Helleborine <i>Cephalanthera damasonium</i>	Woodlands, particularly Beech on chalk or limestone soils, low ground cover, shaded habitat
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Woodland, good supplies of fruit, seeds and keys, drinking pools
Frog Orchid <i>Coeloglossum viride</i>	Chalk grassland, meadows
Small Heath <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Dry grassland, heathlands, short turf, parks and gardens
Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Woodland, scrub, marshes, heathland, reedbed
Wart-biter <i>Decticus verrucivorus</i>	Sunny, sheltered, calcareous grassland, south-facing slopes, heathland, structural mosaic, bare ground, short swards, tussocks
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
Dingy Skipper <i>Erynnis tages</i>	Chalk grassland, woodland rides, cliffs and embankments, mosaic of bare ground, shorter sward and sheltered areas, Bird's-foot Trefoil
Duke of Burgundy <i>Hamearis lucina</i>	Chalk grassland and woodland glades, larvae feed on Cowslip and Primrose, varied vegetation structure, shelter, heat
Juniper <i>Juniperus communis</i>	Chalk grassland, heathland, maritime cliffs, exposed areas, rocky slopes, unshaded locations
Brown Hare <i>Lepus europaeus</i>	Open farmland and grassland, habitat mosaic
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
Yellow Bird's-nest <i>Monotropa</i>	Shaded woodland floor in leaf litter, humidity, often calcareous

<i>hypopitys</i>	ground, also found under Creeping Willow on dune slacks
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Open woodland and woodland edges, parks and gardens
Polecat <i>Mustela putorius</i>	Wooded areas, fields and farm buildings, cover, shelter and abundant rodents required
Bechstein's Bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	Closed canopy woodland, wooded streams, hedgerows
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	Urban areas, farmland, hedgerows
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>	Farmland, rush pastures, moors, mosaics of bare ground and cover, hedgerows, uncultivated margins
Lesser Butterfly Orchid <i>Platanthera bifolia</i>	Herb-rich, unimproved grasslands and woodlands, particularly Beech, partial or no shade
Brown Long-eared Bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	A widespread bat of open woodlands, hedgerows, parks and gardens, it roosts in old buildings and trees in the summer, moving to caves and underground sites in the winter.
Grizzled Skipper <i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	Grassland, quarries, embankments, woodland rides, larvae feed on Agrimony and <i>Potentilla</i> species, requires warmth and shelter
Striped Lychnis <i>Shargacucullia lychnitis</i>	Chalk grassland, woodland and disturbed ground, larvae feed on Dark Mullein
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Woodland edges, hedgerows and open land with scattered bushes
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
Adder <i>Vipera berus</i>	Open heathland, woodland and moors, fens, cliff

Invasive Non-native Species 12 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber*

Wall Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster horizontalis*

Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*

Hybrid Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta x hispanica = H. x massartiana*

Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*

Curly Waterweed *Lagarosiphon major*

Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*

American Mink *Mustela vison*

Winter Heliotrope *Petasites fragrans*

Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*

Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*

Designated Sites

Duncton to Bignor Escarpment SAC is an example of mature Beech woodland developed over chalk which is overlain in places by clay-with-flints. It supports some rare species including White Helleborine, Yellow Bird's-nest and Green Hellebore.

Rook Clift SAC is a small wooded coombe on the scarp of the South Downs. Large-leaved Lime dominates the canopy together with some Ash and Beech.

Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC constitute the most important sites for hibernating bats in the region in particular the rare Barbastelle and Bechstein's, and this is the only known location in Britain for the Greater Mouse-eared Bat.

Harting Downs SSSI contains species-rich chalk grassland and supports uncommon species such as Musk Orchid. There are areas of woodland on the site, a diverse breeding bird community and a number of uncommon invertebrates.

Heyshott Down SSSI is an area of unimproved chalk grassland that has an assemblage of bryophytes not known from any other site on chalk in southern England. There are also areas of scrub and woodland, and the site is nationally important for Arachnids.

Treyford to Bepton Downs SSSI contains representative examples of chalk grassland and Yew woodland. There are several rare or uncommon molluscs on site.

Barlavington Down SNCI consists of remnant unimproved chalk grassland with typical flora such as Yellow-wort and Fairy Flax.

Coombe Wood SNCI is ancient semi-natural woodland with a reasonable ground flora and rich molluscan interest.

Farm Hill SNCI is remnant herb-rich chalk grassland containing many notable herbs such as Round-headed Rampion, Common Rock-rose and Marjoram.

Graffham Down SNCI consists of species-rich chalk grassland, a small area of chalk heath and coniferous plantation. Unusual species include Columbine, and the site has a good diversity of butterflies and breeding warblers.

Hooksway Down SNCI is a species-rich chalk grassland with some planted broadleaf trees, which supports a large population of Large Thyme.

Leith Copse and Old Ditcham Wood SNCI is an important section of Ash-Field Maple- Hazel woodland, which is one of the few Sussex sites for Herb-Paris. Other notable species include Toothwort, Columbine and False Oxlip.

Manorfarm Down SNCI wood is a dense secondary woodland dominated by Yew, adjacent to Heyshott Down SSSI. Small remnants of chalk grassland support species such as Round-headed Rampion and Autumn Gentian, and a rich invertebrate fauna.

Rook Clift SNCI is an important wooded section of the South Downs escarpment and contains a number of Large-leaved Lime. As well as a rich ground flora the site also has a diverse molluscan community.

Torberry Hill SNCI is a south-facing chalk grassland surrounded by scrub and Ash and Beech woodland. There are several notable plants including Clustered Bellflower and Quaking Grass, that along with the presence of four notable molluscs indicate this site is ancient in origin.

The Warren SNCI consists of Ash dominated semi-natural woodland with notable species including Solomon's Seal and Fly Orchid.

Opportunities Identified

- Farmland bird interest
- Policy integration
- Ecological networks
- Woodland management and restoration
- Chalk grassland management, restoration and creation
- Grazing management
- Access improvements and management