

Western Rother Biodiversity Opportunity Area

Joint Character Area Low Weald



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 Rother has been recognised as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) as it represents a priority area for the delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets. It is one of 75 such areas across Sussex. The BOA covers approximately 597 hectares.

The site consists of the River Rother, several of its tributaries, and adjoining areas of woodland, carr, marshy grassland and rough pasture. Local variations in the river and its vegetation occur as it flows east from the Hampshire border to its confluence with the Arun near Pulborough. This variation and the quality of the adjoining habitats make the site extremely important for wildlife.

Many of the wet woodlands along the Rother are of great botanical interest, supporting the uncommon Alternative-leaved Golden-saxifrage and Large Bitter-cress. Its streams are generally dominated by Alder, with marshy vegetation. Several are important mollusc sites. The rich fauna includes breeding Grey Wagtail and Kingfisher, fish such as Brown Trout, Grayling, Perch, Stone Loach and Minnow, and both Banded and Beautiful Demoiselles.

BAP Habitat

Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh

Lowland heathland

Reedbeds

Wood-pasture and parkland

Woodland

BAP Species 22 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Species	Habitat Requirements
European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	Sea, freshwater rivers, eutrophic standing waters, moderate water quality
Water Vole <i>Arvicola terrestris</i>	Rivers, ponds, canals and drainage ditches, reedbeds, fens, grazing marsh, banks, slow-flowing waters
a lichen <i>Bacidia incompta</i>	Bark of old trees, often in sap or rain tracks, Elm, Ash and Beech, sometimes on rocks
Poplar Leaf Roller <i>Byctiscus populi</i>	Woodland on Aspen and Poplar, sheltered areas, often on young growth
Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Heathland, moorland, open woodland, recently felled conifer plantations, mosaic of bare ground, low vegetation, scrub and trees
Basil Thyme <i>Clinopodium acinos</i>	Hedgerows, scrub, dry grassland, chalk grassland
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
Wood Lark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	Heathland, woodland, mosaic of scattered trees, bare ground, short vegetation and taller vegetation, open seed-rich areas
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Open woodland and woodland edges, parks and gardens
Soprano Pipistrelle <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.
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.
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Woodland edges, hedgerows and open land with scattered bushes
Adder <i>Vipera berus</i>	Open heathland, woodland and moors, fens, cliff

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

Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*

Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*

American Mink *Mustela vison*

Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*

Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*

Designated Sites

River Rother SNCI encompasses the river, several tributaries and adjoining habitat (woodland, carr and marshy grassland). The wet woodlands are of particular botanical interest with species such as Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage and Large Bitter-cress, and there is a large population of the nationally rare Desmoulin's Whorl Snail at Selham Fen.

Opportunities Identified

- Ecological networks
- Policy integration
- Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation
- Woodland management and restoration