

Central downs Arun to Adur Biodiversity Opportunity Area

Joint Character Area South Downs

Geology The site 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

Central downs Arun to Adur 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 2967 hectares.

From the banks of the River Arun at Amberley this area runs for 15 miles across the South Downs following the calcareous geology and some lengths of the South Downs Way. The area encompasses ancient woodlands, characteristic of this part of Sussex with ancient undisturbed soils and their unique downland woodland ecology. On meeting the River Adur at Steyning, the area heads south as far as Applesham Farm, where it extends down to the Adur floodplain.

BAP Habitat

Lowland calcareous grassland

Lowland dry acid grassland

Lowland heathland

Lowland meadows

Wood-pasture and Parkland

Woodland

BAP Species 76 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Species	Habitat Requirements
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Newly planted conifers or open heath, mixed deciduous woodland
Rest Harrow <i>Aplasta ononaria</i>	Coastal areas especially cliffs, slopes and sand dunes, in sheltered locations, larvae feed on Common Restharrow
Lesser Redpoll <i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	Birch and Alder woods, most common in the north in the summer
Red Star-thistle <i>Centaurea calcitrapa</i>	Regularly disturbed grassland, well-drained soils
Cornflower <i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Arable and disturbed land on sandy, loamy soils.
White Helleborine <i>Cephalanthera damasonium</i>	Woodlands, particularly Beech on chalk or limestone soils, low ground cover, shaded habitat
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
Small Blue <i>Cupido minimus</i>	Chalk grassland, chalk cliffs, Kidney Vetch, sheltered conditions, mosaic of short and tall vegetation with scrub
Small Square-Spot <i>Diarsia rubi</i>	Prefers damp and marshy places, hedgerows
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
Red Hemp-nettle <i>Galeopsis angustifolia</i>	Vegetated shingle, arable land, open, unshaded
Duke of Burgundy <i>Hamearis lucina</i>	Chalk grassland and woodland glades, larvae feed on Cowslip and Primrose, varied vegetation structure, shelter, heat
Ghost Moth <i>Hepialus humuli</i>	Grassy areas, hillsides, waste ground, hedgerows
Musk Orchid <i>Herminium monorchis</i>	Chalk grassland, short turf, steep, sunny slopes
Juniper <i>Juniperus communis</i>	Chalk grassland, heathland, maritime cliffs, exposed areas, rocky slopes, unshaded locations
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Mainly on the ground in open woodland, farmland, occasionally seen in gardens
Wall <i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Short, open grassland, gardens, sand dunes, vegetated undercliffs and rocky foreshores

Brown Hare <i>Lepus europaeus</i>	Open farmland and grassland, habitat mosaic
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>Melanchna persicariae</i>	Gardens, verges, waste ground, hedgerows
Fine-leaved Sandwort <i>Minuartia hybrida</i>	Bare ground, walls, quarries, dry and light soils
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Open woodland and woodland edges, parks and gardens
Grass Snake <i>Natrix natrix</i>	Water, reedbed, ponds, heathland, grazing marsh, gardens, fish, amphibians
Fly Orchid <i>Ophrys insectifera</i>	A plant of chalk and limestone soils usually found in open woodland and scrub, often in deep shade, also occurs on grassland and fens
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
Grizzled Skipper <i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	Grassland, quarries, embankments, woodland rides, larvae feed on Agrimony and <i>Potentilla</i> species, requires warmth and shelter
Shepherd's-needle <i>Scandix pectin-veneris</i>	Disturbed ground such as arable margins, prefers calcareous soils and winter-sown land
Chalk Carpet <i>Scotopteryx bipunctaria</i>	Chalk grassland and a range of open habitats, larvae feed on vetch and clover
White Ermine <i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>	Gardens and hedgerows
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Woodland edges, hedgerows and open land with scattered bushes
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
Adder <i>Vipera berus</i>	Open heathland, woodland and moors, fens, cliff
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:

Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber*

Wall Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster horizontalis*

Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii*

Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*

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

Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*

Winter Heliotrope *Petasites fragrans*

Designated Sites

Amberley Mount to Sullington Hill SSSI contains some of the richest chalk grassland in Sussex as well as areas of Juniper scrub. There is a good community of Lepidoptera including some rare species such as Juniper Carpet Moth.

Chanctonbury Hill SSSI consists of the uncommon Field Maple variant of the calcareous Beech, Ash, Pedunculate Oak woodland. There are also areas of chalk grassland, and the habitat mosaic supports over 66 species of breeding bird including Nightingale.

Amberley Chalk Pits and Hacketts Copse SSSI contains a range of habitats spanning the succession from bare chalk to deciduous woodland, and is also of geological importance. There is a rich chalk flora and the site has also had rare spiders, snails and fungi recorded, with the cliffs provide roost space for bats with six species recorded.

Heath Common SSSI contains remnants of wet and dry heath, several ponds and relict ancient base-rich woodland rich in lichens and ferns. With ongoing management it is hoped that uncommon plants such as Marsh Clubmoss and Bog Ashphodel may reappear.

Kithurst Hill SSSI lies on the steep, north-facing escarpment of the South Downs. The site is mostly wooded with Ash and Hazel with small areas of species-rich grassland. There are a number of bryophytes and butterflies including several rare and notable species.

Steyning Coombe and Steyning Round Hill SSSI important areas of unimproved downland with herb-rich sward including interesting species such as Vervain, Common Gromwell and Dropwort. At least 27 butterfly species have been recorded, and the site has records for rare species of lichen, moss and snail.

Sullington Hill SSSI supports chalk grassland on north and east-facing slopes. There are areas of encroaching scrub, including Juniper and a small area of semi-natural woodland.

Washington Chalk Quarry SSSI an area of open downland; some of which is very species-rich, and scattered scrub, along with a collection of disused chalk pits. Seven species of orchid have been recorded, along with 29 species of butterfly including a colony of Chalkhill Blue.

Opportunities Identified

- Chalk grassland management, restoration and creation
- Access improvements
- Farmland bird interest
- Working with and attracting new businesses
- Landowner advisory and agri-environment schemes
- Chalk grassland butterfly interest
- Volunteer opportunities
- Grazing management