

Houghton to Coldwaltham Biodiversity Opportunity Area

Joint Character Area South Downs and Wealden Greensand

Geology The majority of Houghton to Coldwaltham Biodiversity Opportunity Area is on mudstone and sandstone, with upper greensand calcareous sandstone and siltstone, and chalk found in the south



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

Houghton to Coldwaltham 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 1018 hectares.

The area includes large extents of the Arun floodplain's grazing marsh, with some fen, floodplain woodland and reedbed. It also includes one of the only sections of non-embanked, tidal floodplain in the whole catchment. Much of the tidal floodplain is heavily embanked and freshwater habitats occupy most of the floodplain at the upper limit of the tidal saline influence. The area is important for its proximity to the confluence of the western Rother and Arun rivers, and is an important in-migration route for otters from Hampshire. Low density populations of Water Vole are also known to be in the area.

BAP Habitat

Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh

Lowland fens

Lowland meadows

Reedbeds

Woodland

BAP Species 49 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Species	Habitat Requirements
Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	Lakes, bogs and rivers, estuaries
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
True Fox-sedge <i>Carex vulpina</i>	River banks, ditch sides and damp meadows, standing water, open conditions are required
Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Woodland, scrub, marshes, heathland, reedbed
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
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
Cut-grass <i>Leersia oryzoides</i>	Nutrient-rich, bare mud around trampled margins of old lakes and ponds, ditches, canal banks, riversides, wet meadows, not shaded
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
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Open woodland and woodland edges, parks and gardens
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Reedbeds, estuaries, damp grassland, heathland, mosaic of tall vegetation for nesting with short vegetation and open habitats for feeding
Tubular Water-dropwort <i>Oenanthe fistulosa</i>	Floodplain meadows, fens, shallow water in ditches, streams, ponds and canals, open areas
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
Greater Water-parsnip <i>Sium latifolium</i>	Permanently wet, species-rich, tall-herb fen, margins of lakes and large rivers, ditches, reedswamp, not tolerant of shade
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Woodland edges, hedgerows and open land with scattered bushes
Great Tassel Stonewort <i>Tolypella prolifera</i>	Slow-moving alkaline water in ditches, rivers and canals
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Farmland, grazing marsh, wet meadows, seeds and insects

Invasive Non-native Species 9 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis*
Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii*
Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*
Winter Heliotrope *Petasites fragrans*
Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*

Designated Sites

Arun Valley Ramsar site and SPA series of wet meadows, alluvial grazing marsh and former raised peat bog, that is well used by wintering and breeding birds. Several rare species are present including Pea Mussel and Greater Water Parsnip.

Amberley Wild Brooks SSSI, encompassed in Arun Valley, is an extensive area of alluvial grazing marsh dissected by drainage ditches. There are several uncommon invertebrates, a rich dragonfly assemblage and several rare fungi and plants.

Waltham Brooks SSSI also within Arun Valley supports a species-rich community of aquatic plants including one nationally rare species.

Arun Valley, Watersfield to Arundel SNCI contains a section of the River Arun surrounded by an extensive tract of wetland which is important for breeding and wintering birds. There is also a good network of ditches and the site supports many rare and declining species including Black Poplar, Marsh Fern and Marsh-mallow.

Watts Farm Meadow SNCI consists of seven small species-rich meadows, crossed by streams or drains, with areas of scrub and some drier grassland. The marshy grassland contains species such as Star Sedge, Ragged-Robin and Southern Marsh-orchid.

Opportunities Identified

- Policy integration
- Ecological networks
- Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation
- Floodplain restoration and reconnection
- Flood alleviation