

## Lower Cuckmere reaches Biodiversity Opportunity Area

### Joint Character Area South Downs



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](http://www.sebiodiversity.org.uk). Contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database right 2010

The lower Cuckmere reaches have been recognised as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) as they represent 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 136 hectares.

The Lower Cuckmere Reaches is surrounded by downland and met by the Seven Sisters chalk cliffs. The area consists of aged Victorian embankments, holding back the River Cuckmere from its floodplain. A recent decision by the Environment Agency to reduce the coastal sea defences in the south of this area will lead to the development of floodplain grazing marsh, mudflat and saltmarsh in this area, with discussions around the re-instatement of old meanders still to be completed. As the River meets the coast there is a large saline lagoon and some vegetated shingle. The soft cliffs of Seven Sisters and the famous, littoral chalk platform are a habitat characteristic of this iconic stretch of coastline.

## BAP Habitat

Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh

Coastal saltmarsh

Coastal vegetated shingle

Intertidal mudflats

Lowland calcareous grassland

Maritime cliff and slope

Saline lagoons

BAP Species 38 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
Potter Flower Bee <i>Anthophora retusa</i>	Cliffs and slopes rich in flowers, with dry sheltered areas of bare ground
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Newly planted conifers or open heath, mixed deciduous woodland
Moss Carder Bee <i>Bombus muscorum</i>	Tussocky areas, flower-rich grassland with tall sward, nests on or near surface often in sunny spots
Lesser Redpoll <i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	Birch and Alder woods, most common in the north in the summer
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Woodland, good supplies of fruit, seeds and keys, drinking pools
a mining bee <i>Colletes halophilus</i>	Saltmarshes, saline lagoons, stands of Sea Aster, bare sand, sheltered location
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
Black-throated Diver <i>Gavia arctica</i>	Breeds on freshwater, winters around sheltered coasts and occasionally at inland freshwater
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Mainly on the ground in open woodland, farmland, occasionally seen in gardens
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
Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Breed around mesotrophic waters, blanket bog and heathland, winters around inshore waters
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
Noctule <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	Woodland, wetlands, hedgerows and pastures, predominantly roost in tree cavities
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
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.
Balearic Shearwater <i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>	Breeds on cliffs, headlands and coastal inlets, often returning to the same colony each year
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Woodland edges, hedgerows and open land with scattered bushes
Ring Ouzel <i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Short grassy areas
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Farmland, grazing marsh, wet meadows, seeds and insects

**Invasive Non-native Species** 5 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber*  
Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis*  
Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*

## Designated Sites

Seaford to Beachy Head SSSI a diverse range of habitats including herb-rich chalk grassland, chalk heath, maritime grassland, foreshore and chalk cliffs, river meanders and Greensand reef. Together these habitats support a number of nationally rare, nationally scarce and nationally significant plants, invertebrates and birds.

## Opportunities Identified

- Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation
- Woodland management and restoration, including gill woodland
- Ecological networks
- Landowner advisory and agri-environment schemes