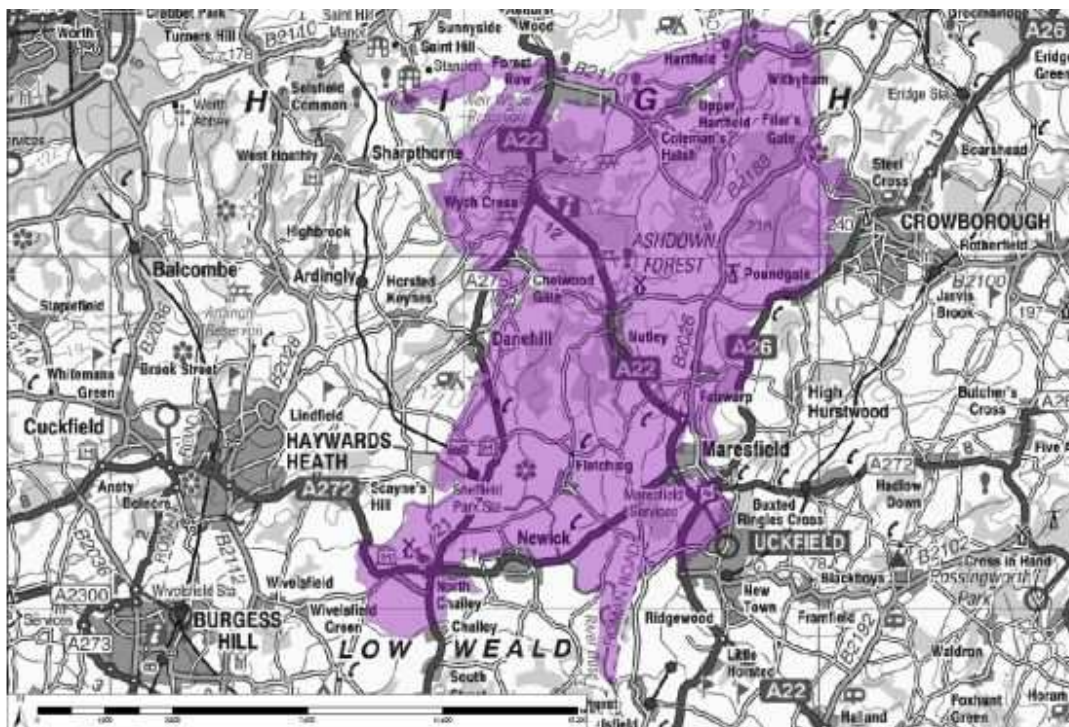


## Western Ouse streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area

**Joint Character Area** High Weald and Low Weald

**Geology** Western Ouse streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area lies on interbedded sandstone and siltstone



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

Western Ouse streams and Ashdown Forest 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 13115 hectares.

The north of the area is dominated by the European protected heathland, Ashdown Forest, which consists of a matrix of open heath, ancient woodland, ghyll woodland and wetlands. The southern part of the area captures the eastern River Ouse and its headwaters, south towards the confluence with the River Uck. In the southern area smaller patches of heathland exist alongside many ponds and modern wood-pasture. The area is an important watershed between the Medway and Ouse systems and is likely to be important for the migration of key species between catchments.

## BAP Habitat

Lowland dry acid grassland

Lowland heathland

Reedbeds

Traditional orchards

Wood-pasture and parkland

Woodland

BAP Species 114 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Species	Habitat Requirements
Knot Grass <i>Acronicta rumicis</i>	Meadows, gardens and hedgerows, larvae feed on a range of herbs
Ear Moth <i>Amphipoea oculea</i>	Chalk grassland, marshy and damp places
European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	Sea, freshwater rivers, eutrophic standing waters, moderate water quality
Slow-worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i>	Open habitats, gardens, heathland, cliff, mixed deciduous woodland, structural variation, hedgerows
Heath Short-spur <i>Anisodactylus nemorivagus</i>	Dry sandy heathland, requires a matrix of heather and bare ground
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Newly planted conifers or open heath, mixed deciduous woodland
Water Vole <i>Arvicola terrestris</i>	Rivers, ponds, canals and drainage ditches, reedbeds, fens, grazing marsh, banks, slow-flowing waters
White-clawed Crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>	Water bodies with clean water and plenty of refuges such as tree roots, rocks and stones. Stable banks not poached by cattle
Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	Lakes, bogs and rivers, estuaries
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Wet reedbed and marshland
Minor Shoulder-Knot <i>Brachylomia viminalis</i>	Damp woodland, hedgerows, heathland and fens, Willow
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
Chamomile <i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>	Heathlands, commons, cliffs and slopes, short turf, also found in areas of temporary inundation
Wood Tiger Beetle <i>Cicindela sylvatica</i>	Dry heathland, requiring areas of bare friable sand
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Woodland, good supplies of fruit, seeds and keys, drinking pools
Small Heath <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Dry grassland, heathlands, short turf, parks and gardens
Corn Crake <i>Crex crex</i>	Large areas of unintensified grassland with tall vegetation to provide early spring cover, timing of cutting very important
Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Woodland, scrub, marshes, heathland, reedbed
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</i>	Wetlands including reedbeds, tall rushes and wet grassland with

<i>schoeniclus</i>	good vegetation cover, gardens, farmland, hedgerows, ditches
Hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Woodland, farmland, urban areas, hedgerows
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
Autumnal Rustic <i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i>	Woodland edges, moorland, hedgerows
Glandular Eyebright <i>Euphrasia anglica</i>	Short grazed acid grasslands, and heathlands including wet heathland
Petty Whin Weevil <i>Exapion genistae</i>	Heathland on stands of Dyer's Greenweed
Rustic <i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>	Gardens, grassland and heathland, docks, plantains, hedgerows
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
Wall <i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Short, open grassland, gardens, sand dunes, vegetated undercliffs and rocky foreshores
White Admiral <i>Limenitis camilla</i>	Woodlands, sunny glades, Bramble, Honeysuckle, partially-shaded locations
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
Marsh Clubmoss <i>Lycopodiella inundata</i>	Bare, trampled, poached ground, damp but not wet, peaty or sandy margins of lakes, pools, flushes and tracks
Dot Moth <i>Melanchra persicariae</i>	Gardens, verges, waste ground, hedgerows
Broom Moth <i>Melanchra pisi</i>	Open woodland, shrub, heathland, Broom, Bracken
Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Breed around mesotrophic waters, blanket bog and heathland, winters around inshore waters
Harvest Mouse <i>Micromys minutus</i>	Arable margins, hedgerows, meadows, scrub, reedbeds, tall grass.
Hazel Dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	Woodland, overgrown hedgerows, Honeysuckle, Bramble, Hazel and Ash, well-structured woodland with a well-developed understorey and scrubby areas
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Open woodland and woodland edges, parks and gardens
Grass Snake <i>Natrix natrix</i>	Water, reedbed, ponds, heathland, hedgerows, grazing marsh, gardens, fish, amphibians
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
Slender Thread-moss <i>Orthodontium gracile</i>	Acidic rock outcrops, requiring shade and shelter
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</i>	Mixed deciduous woodland, even age-canopy, little understorey,

<i>sibilatrix</i>	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.
Silver-studded Blue <i>Plebejus argus</i>	Chalk grassland and heathland, mosaic of bare ground and vegetation, sheltered locations, larvae feed on heathers, Bird's-foot-trefoil and Common Rock-rose
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.
Nail Fungus <i>Poronia punctata</i>	Unimproved grassland and heathland on pony droppings
Grizzled Skipper <i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	Grassland, quarries, embankments, woodland rides, larvae feed on Agrimony and <i>Potentilla</i> species, requires warmth and shelter
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
Marsh Stitchwort <i>Stellaria palustris</i>	Pools with seasonal variation, grassland with open sward, damp/wet soil, herb rich, unimproved, fens, reedbed
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Nest areas sheltered by overhanging rock or tall vegetation, often on offshore islands
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
Oak Hook-tip <i>Watsonalla binaria</i>	Oak woodland and parkland, larvae feed on oak
Common Lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	Open woodland, moorland, heathland, fens, sand dunes, rocks, gardens and cliffs

**Invasive Non-native Species** 24 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Three-cornered Leek *Allium triquetrum*  
 Heath Star Moss *Campylopus introflexus*  
 Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber*  
 Wall Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster horizontalis*  
 New Zealand Pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii*  
 Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis*  
 Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*  
 Shallon *Gaultheria shallon*  
 Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis*  
 Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*  
 Spanish Bluebell *Hyacinthoides hispanica*  
 Hybrid Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta x hispanica = H. x massartiana*  
 Floating Pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*  
 Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*

Curly Waterweed *Lagarosiphon major*  
Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*  
American Mink *Mustela vison*  
Parrot's-feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum*  
Signal Crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus*  
Winter Heliotrope *Petasites fragrans*  
Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*  
Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*  
False-acacia *Robinia pseudoacacia*

## Designated Sites

Ashdown Forest SAC, SPA and SSSI is one of the largest single continuous blocks of heathland, semi-natural woodland and valley bog in the region. Alongside typical heathland species are less common species such as Petty Whin and Ivy-leaved Bell Flower, and aquatic habitats on the site provide habitat for a range of invertebrates including many uncommon beetles, moths and butterflies. There are also large populations of reptiles and heath nesting birds including Curlew and Nightjar.

Chailey Common SSSI good example of sub-Atlantic English heath habitat, supporting a variety of heathland plant communities and in turn diverse invertebrate and bird communities.

Rock Wood SSSI small ancient woodland with a number of different woodland types represented. A small stream and its tributary have cut through the sandstone in places creating steep sided gills which contain various uncommon bryophytes and ferns.

Scaynes Hill SSSI the Cuckfield Stone is dominated by trough cross-bedding which is characteristic of a meander channel belt.

Weir Wood Reservoir SSSI one of the largest areas of open water in Sussex and supports a rich community of breeding birds, with the diversity and numbers of wintering and passage birds also of note.

Brown Knoll Farm Meadow SNCI unimproved acid grassland at the edge of Ashdown Forest, supporting a rich plant community.

Butchers Wood SNCI ancient woodland consisting of Hazel coppice and Oak, with a large population of Wild Daffodil. Along the stream boundary, sandstone outcrops have a good bryophyte assemblage including several rare species.

Chailey Warren SNCI Grassland dominated by Purple Moor-grass and an area of Birch woodland alongside a disused railway. The upper end has a damper fen meadow community while the remainder is drier and more heathy in character.

Courtland Wood SNCI ancient woodland dominated by Oak over Hazel. The canopy is reasonably dense resulting in a less rich ground flora, however there are numerous bryophytes along a small stream that bisects the site.

Els Ash Wood and Long Wood, Chailey SNCI ancient woodland which is part of a complex of small woods. A wide variety of woodland indicators are present at low frequencies, but much of the original structure of the woodland has been lost due to storm damage.

Founthill Wood North, Newick SNCI the stream adjoining the wood is of particular interest and value to wildlife. There is a boggy strip which supports a tall herb/fen community, as well as two ponds.

Frick Wood Heathland SNCI the wood was severely damaged in the 1987 storm and areas have been subsequently cleared and replanted with Oak or Pine. Heathland has regenerated on one part which was Pine plantation until the storm.

Furnace Wood SNCI situated on a steep-sided valley the woodland was badly damaged in the 1987 storm. A stream running along the western boundary is of note and the woodland has quite significant Bryophyte interest.

Hugget's Wood and The Toll SNCI a small woodland on either side of a shallow valley, consisting mainly of Hornbeam and Hazel coppice. Wetter areas contain Alder and Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage.

Lake Wood SNCI an ancient woodland site surrounding a large boating lake. The site is typical Wealden woodland, and supports a diverse bird population and Dormouse. The lake is bordered by sandstone outcrops and several rare lichens and bryophytes can be found. There is also a small cave which is used as a bat hibernaculum.

Land at Isfield Church SNCI consists of rush pasture crossed by several shallow drains. There is an area of wet woodland containing Marsh Marigold and Black Poplar, and the whole site is rich in fungi.

Little Rotherfield Wood SNCI small woodland to the north of Chailey Common with a community typical of light sandy soils. Boundary banks around much of the site are an interesting feature often surmounted by large Hornbeam, Oak or Ash coppices or stubs.

Newick Fields SNCI a series of narrow fields which run along the north end of a small stream. The fields are damp, with some areas of boggy ground, and support lush, herb-rich vegetation.

Piltdown Common SNCI is a mosaic of heathland, grassland, scrub and woodland. There is also a large pond which is good for water beetles and Common Toad.

Pound and Furzefield Wood SNCI consists of Furzefield Wood, primarily a Pine plantation, and Pound Wood, believed to be ancient in origin. Pound Wood in particular supports less common species including Adder's Tongue and Silver-washed Fritillary.

Sheffield Forest Complex SNCI large woodland managed for commercial forestry. The site does however contain specialised Atlantic bryophytes and ferns, as well as a number of gills cut into the sandstone.

Sheffield Park Garden SNCI contains a mosaic of habitats and retains many features of ancient pasture-woodland. There are many ancient Oak, Ash, Sweet Chestnuts and Beech (including pollards), and these support important communities of lichens, bryophytes and invertebrates.

Shortbridge Stream Meadow SNCI part of a series of fields along Shortbridge Stream. The site consists of an area of marshy grassland and swamp with species such as Sneezewort and Gypsywort.

Stephens Farm Meadow SNCI is an unimproved damp grassland site containing species such as Sneezewort and Devil's-bit Scabious. There is a small pond in the meadow and a stream-fed lake with diverse vegetation and a large number of frogs.

Wapsbourne Wood SNCI an area of ancient woodland predominantly containing over-grown Sweet Chestnut. The ground flora is quite sparse however there is a patch of the uncommon Solomon's-seal and a number of ancient woodland indicators.

West Park SNCI comprises a mosaic of habitats including improved grassland, developing broadleaved woodland, exposed rocky outcrops, a marshy area and extensive stands of Bracken. The site is also of archaeological value containing a Mesolithic rock shelter.

## Opportunities Identified

- Heathland management, restoration and creation
- Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation
- Woodland management and restoration
- Floodplain restoration and reconnection
- Ecological networks
- Exploring markets for natural products
- Policy integration
- Botanical interest
- Access improvements
- Water quality improvement
- Grazing management
- Education and community engagement
- Landowner advisory and agri-environment schemes
- Working with and attracting new businesses