

SU12.080 Lime Kiln Chalk Wildlife Site



Description: An area of derelict land adjacent to a housing development on the edge of Salisbury, with rank neutral and calcareous grassland and scrub.

Grid ref. SU144281
Area 9.6 hectares
Visited 05/07/2013
By Rob Large

Manager
Chris Stringer
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Selection criteria: Lime Kiln Chalk has been selected as a Wildlife Site because it meets criterion **HG3 Semi-natural grassland sites with high species diversity**.

Important habitats: Lime Kiln Chalk includes **5.19 hectares** of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) priority habitat **lowland calcareous grassland**. This habitat can support very diverse plant and animal communities and has usually arisen as a result of traditional, extensive management, applied over very many years.

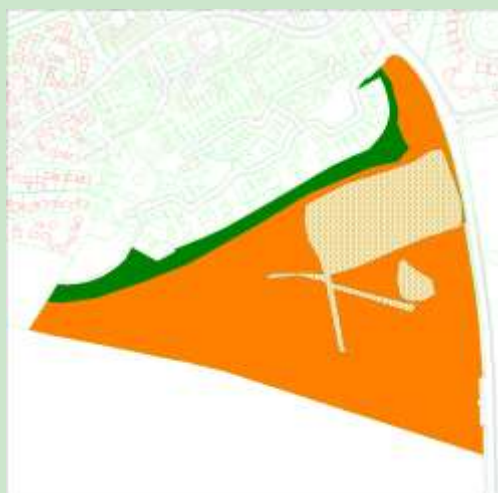


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Important species: Two species have been recorded at **Lime Kiln Chalk** which are notable because they are rare or threatened in Wiltshire, nationally or globally. **Sky Lark (*Alauda arvensis*)** and **Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)** were seen on this visit.

In addition 13 species considered to be indicators of high-quality calcareous grassland were recorded on this visit. Examples include **Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*)**, **Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*)**, **Dwarf Thistle (*Cirsium acaule*)**, **Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*)**, **Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*)**, **Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*)**, **Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*)**, **Wild Marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*)**, **Cowslip (*Primula veris*)**, **Salad Burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*)** and **Small Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*)**.

For more information about site selection, visit:
<http://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/what-we-do/county-wildlife-sites>



Habitats recorded:

- Acid grassland
- Arable
- Bracken
- Broadleaved woodland
- Calcareous grassland
- Conifer woodland
- Dense scrub
- Fen, marsh & swamp
- Heathland
- Improved grassland
- Neutral grassland
- Rock exposure
- Open water
- Priority habitat

The recognition of land as a Wildlife Site has a number of implications for landowners and managers:

- Wildlife Sites may be targeted for management grant aid, for example by Higher Level Stewardship.
- Free advice is available on site management for wildlife.
- Owners and managers are informed of the importance of the site and advised on management.
- No restrictions are placed on agricultural operations, although we may advise against certain activities.
- For any substantial changes in land-use on a Wildlife Site, local authorities should take wildlife into account.
- Site details are not published, apart from the location which may appear in some local development plans.
- No rights of access are created, access is by permission only.
- Wildlife Site land may have an increased sale value.

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Management recommendations

Anthills are an important component of downland diversity. Do not harrow, or mechanically top weeds in areas with anthills. Do not allow scrub to encroach on areas with anthills as this can force livestock to trample them.

A little scattered scrub can enhance the diversity of downland and offer perching, nesting and feeding sites for birds. Grazing should aim to control the spread of scrub, but occasional cutting and stump-treatment may be necessary. Large areas of very dense and well established scrub should not be cut as it will be likely to support more diversity than the poor grassland which will replace it. In such cases it may be possible to reduce patches progressively over a number of years. Where scrub is cut with a flail, care should be taken to avoid leaving mulch on flower rich-grassland

Chalk grassland plant species depend on very low fertility. Use no chemical fertilisers and avoid spreading farmyard manure. Livestock will normally produce enough manure in the course of normal grazing.

Chalk downland sites in Wiltshire are often quite steep and thus not usually amenable to mowing. Grazing regimes should aim to remove all of this year's growth and reduce sward height to 5-15cm by the end of the season. Graze only lightly, if at all, through the summer, to reduce disturbance to ground-nesting birds and maximise flowering and thus nectar and seed production. Avoid grazing in winter or when the ground is wet as poaching may encourage the introduction of weeds. Early spring grazing by sheep may help to reduce Ragwort infestation, but should cease as soon as flowering commences.

Grazing should ideally be by sheep, cattle or a mixture of the two. Cattle will produce a more diverse range of sward heights which may favour a variety of invertebrates, while sheep produce a closer, more even result which may be favourable for low-growing downland plants. Horses are not really suitable, especially when shod, as their hooves can damage the roots of perennial plants.

Avoid treating stock with ivermectin-based anti-parasitics, which reduce the availability of dung insects for birds and bats and slow the breakdown of dung, causing bare patches which may become colonised by weeds.

Where thistles or ragwort become a problem, use light summer grazing to reduce the height of surrounding vegetation then top, or apply a suitable specific herbicide using a knapsack sprayer for scattered plants, or weed-wipe for larger patches. Never blanket spray with any herbicide.

Supplementary feeding should not take place on flower-rich grassland as it will encourage poaching and the introduction of unwanted weed seeds.

Tor Grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*) is a coarse, unpalatable species which can become problematic on downland and meadow sites. Most stock will avoid grazing it and it tends to dominate at the expense of flowering herbs. Careful treatment with a suitable herbicide is normally recommended, however some success has been reported from grazing with Exmoor ponies, a hardy breed which can often be obtained cheaply in the autumn. Where sheep grazing is used, remember that older ewes tend to be less selective grazers than lambs or breeding ewes and that some hardy and traditional breeds are better suited to grazing coarse grasses.

Tree planting on species-rich sites was common in the past but is now regarded as unacceptable, as it fragments and destroys areas of BAP priority habitat and often included non-native species such as Sycamore & Norway Maple. It is recommended that all such plantings be removed. Where shelter is required this would be better achieved by fencing and natural succession to native scrub.



For more information about your Wildlife Site, for detailed management advice or if you have any other questions, contact:

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Tel: **01380 736090**, Email: **robl@wiltshirewildlife.org**

Or visit: **<http://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/what-we-do/county-wildlife-sites>**

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