

Factsheet

Biodiversity in the North Wessex Downs 3 Farmland

The North Wessex Downs support a wide range of nationally and regionally important species associated with arable farmland. They are adapted to colonise disturbed land achieved through tillage. They include farmland birds such as Stone-curlew and Tree Sparrow; rare arable plants such as Corn Buttercup and Shepherd's Needle; and mammals such as Brown Hare and Harvest Mouse.

Many of these species are listed as Priority Species of Importance and form targets for Biodiversity 2020. An Arable Strategy was prepared in 2008 to help protect and enhance the nationally important arable biodiversity found within the North Wessex Downs.

Species information

Although the downlands are essentially a large-scale landscape, traditional areas of mixed farming, responding to the underlying geology, have resulted in a range of habitats (grassland, scrub and arable lands) co-existing in close proximity. This interlinking range of habitats provides some of the most favourable conditions for the characteristic birds and mammals of the North Wessex Downs, such as the Brown Hare, Skylark, Lapwing, Tree Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Linnet and Grey Partridge. Increased cover, nesting opportunities and a

Corn bunting



Changes to climate will alter the composition of the natural communities that are characteristic of chalk downland, woodland, streams and arable fields. Diverse natural communities of plants and animals are most likely to survive on soils and in streams with low nutrient status and in large patches of habitat. Given the pressures of climate change and the need for species migration, habitat corridors along rights of way and habitat networks are of increasing value.

