

Factsheet

Biodiversity in the North Wessex Downs 2. Chalk Rivers and Streams

Chalk Rivers and Streams

The spring fed, fast flowing streams and rivers which cut through the chalk in the AONB support a diversity of plant and animal life.

Winterbournes are seasonal streams which appear only in late autumn, winter and early spring. They attract their own, very specialised group of plants and animals.

Species information

The clear water supports healthy fish populations including perch, chub and trout. A mosaic of wetland habitats exist alongside these watercourses such as fens, wet meadows, carr and wet woodland and these support important and often rare species. Pea Mussel, freshwater White Clawed Crayfish and internationally rare floating vegetation of River Water-dropwort can be found along their reaches.

In turn, the rivers irrigate adjacent areas creating the distinctive valley landscape of remnant fens, water meadows and carr. The Summer Snowflake, a Red Data Book species, survives in seasonally flooded sites along the River Kennet.

Freeman's Marsh Hungerford



Chalk Stream Designations

In recognition of their outstanding nature conservation value the Lambourn, Kennet and Hampshire Avon are all designated SSSIs within the AONB, while the River Lambourn, the Hampshire Avon, and the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain (a series of discrete sites supporting the Desmoulin's whorl snail) are SACs.

Water Vole



Brown trout



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