

Factsheet

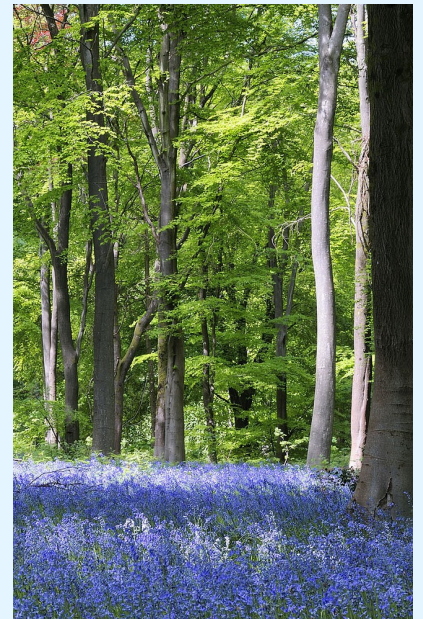
Biodiversity in the North Wessex Downs 4 Woodlands

Broadleaved Woodland

Semi-natural woodland is a nationally scarce and valuable habitat. In the North Wessex Downs, it can be found on the steep scarp slopes and on heavier soils where Clay-with-Flint caps the chalk. Chute and Savernake Forest are former royal hunting forests. Savernake contains large remnants of wood pasture and much is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of its outstanding lichens and fungi, flora, invertebrates and breeding bird communities. It has over 1000 years of documented history and contains well over 500 species.

Overall, just over 45% of the woodland area in the AONB has some form of wildlife designation. According to the Woodland Trust the North Wessex Downs contains two nationally important 'major concentrations' of ancient woodland, centred on the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs and the Hampshire Downs; and areas of forest such as Savernake. Less than 0.1% of the woodland area is designated as a National Nature Reserve, 0.5% is designated as Special Areas for Conservation, 7.5% is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and 42.3% is designated as County Wildlife Sites or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.

Bluebells at West Woods



Woodlands on the Wooded plateau character type are the most highly protected with the vales landscape character having the smallest percentage of designated woodlands.

Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) forms a significant proportion of the woodland resource of the AONB. Overall, the 8646 hectares of ASNW represents some 37.1% of the total area of woodland.

Lichens in Savernake Forest



The diverse woodland types that make up these ancient woodlands include significant areas of wood pasture and support a wide range of species, with roosting sites for a number of bat species.

Of particular importance are the calcareous woodlands which support a range of rare plants including Herb-Paris and Green Hellebore and provide home to a high proportion of the world's population of Bluebells.

