

Wildlife finds sanctuary amid natural beauty on a nature reserve of over 100 acres managed by Butterfly Conservation.

Magdalen Hill Down is a surviving fragment of the sheep-grazed downland that once encircled Winchester. Intensive farming and urban expansion obliterated much of this flower-rich downland. Then the decline in traditional sheep grazing and the decimation of rabbits by myxomatosis allowed dense scrub to develop on much of what remained.

The reserve has three distinct areas. The Original reserve is a steep hillside of unimproved chalk downland, rich in wildflowers. Over 400 moth species and some thirty butterfly species have been seen here, including Brown Argus and Green Hairstreak (breeding on Common Rockrose) and Chalkhill Blue (on Horseshoe Vetch). Before Butterfly Conservation took over in 1989 and removed much of the invading scrub, the flowers and butterflies were

threatened with extinction.

A field to the east which had been intensively farmed for over fifty years was acquired. It is known as the Extension and in 1997 was sown with specially selected native wildflowers



Six-spot Burnet Moth (left) and Common Blue (right)

and grass seed collected from Hampshire nature reserves. The restoration to traditional flower-rich grassland is a slow and difficult process, partly because the chemicals used in arable farming persist in the soil for some years. In 2004 Magdalen Hill Down North, a further 55 acres, was sown in a similar way in a joint scheme with Hampshire County Council. Flowers, butterflies and moths together with other wildlife thrive on these areas of recreated chalk grassland.

To control scrub and to keep the flower-rich grassland in good condition, the reserve is rotationally grazed by livestock, so some of the site is divided into fenced paddocks. The gates are left open except when animals are grazing to permit public access on foot. Areas of scrub are also coppiced in rotation to maintain an uneven age structure.

This conservation work is supported by a Higher Level Stewardship Agreement administered by Natural England.



Horseshoe Vetch and Chalkhill Blues

Group visits are welcome by appointment.

Please help us to protect this beautiful place.

The calendar opposite shows the months in which each species of butterfly might be seen.

Butterfly	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O
Brimstone	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Brown Argus			•	•	•	•	•	
Chalkhill Blue				•	•	•	•	
Clouded Yellow				•	•	•	•	•
Comma	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Common Blue			•	•	•	•	•	
Dingy Skipper			•	•				
Gatekeeper					•	•		
Green Hairstreak			•	•				
Green-veined White	•	•	•		•	•		
Grizzled Skipper			•	•				
Holly Blue		•	•	•	•	•	•	
Large Skipper				•	•	•		
Large White	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Marbled White				•	•	•		
Meadow Brown				•	•	•	•	
Orange-tip		•	•	•				
Painted Lady				•	•	•	•	•
Peacock	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Red Admiral	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ringlet				•	•	•		
Small Blue			•	•	•	•		
Small Copper		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Small Heath			•	•	•	•	•	
Small & Essex Skippers				•	•	•		
Small Tortoiseshell	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Small White		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Speckled Wood	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Butterfly Conservation is a national charity. Founded in 1968 it is dedicated to saving butterflies and moths and our environment. It is recognised that butterflies and moths are indicators of biodiversity and of environmental and climatic change.