

BEACON HILL

Local Nature Reserve

S&SEinB's Conservation Area Gold Awards
in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017

TQ 364028

ANNUAL WILDLIFE REPORT 2017/18



A surreal moment on Beacon Hill

Image: Les Ellam

By the Beacon Hill LNR Working Group of
Rottingdean Parish Council

Beacon Hill LNR Working Group and Report Distribution

Working Group Members:

Cllr Bob Webzell	Chairman of Beacon Hill Working Group
Cllr Sue John	Rottingdean Parish Council
Cllr Anthony Delow	Rottingdean Parish Council
Cllr Ian Wilson	Rottingdean Parish Council
John Cumming	Founder of Beacon Hill LNR
David Larkin	Conservation Manager B&HCC & Founder
Emma Keane	Countryside Ranger
Peter Whitcomb	Wildlife Co-ordinator and Specialist
Joanne Spickett	Specialist
Angela Swinn	Allotment Representative
Bernadette Skinner	Ovingdean Residents & Preservation Soc
Colin Dellar	Rottingdean Preservation Society
John Funnell	Sussex Archaeological Society
Cllr Lynda Hyde	Ward Councillor, B&H City Council
Bernard Turnbull	Chairman, Beacon Hub
Jason Fisher	Chairman, Friends of Beacon Hill
Louise Arnold	Secretary, Friends of Beacon Hill

External:

Geoff Raw	Chief Executive Officer, B&HCC
Rob Walker	City Infrastructure B&H City Council
Ken Bodfish	South Downs National Park Authority
Dr Niall Burnside	Biogeography/Ecology Brighton University
Chairman	Rottingdean in Bloom
Jay Butler	Publicity, Friends and Beacon Hub
Nicky Jackman	Clerk, Rottingdean Parish Council
Cllr Graham Sheppard	VCAG, Rottingdean Parish Council
Malcolm Emery	East Sussex Natural Nature Reserves
Laura Bristow	Information Officer, Sussex Wildlife Trust
Penny Green	Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre
David Hunt	Rottingdean Scouts
Libby Darling	GRAB
Atlanta Cook	Beacon Hub and GRAB
Harold Williams	Rottingdean Tourist Information Point
Appointed Judges	South and South East in Bloom
Longhill School	
Our Lady of Lourdes School	
St Margaret's School	
The Grange Library	
Booth Museum of Natural History, Brighton	

NB This Annual Wildlife Report can be downloaded free of charge from the Rottingdean Parish Council website: www.rottingdean-pc.gov.uk along with quarterly Nature Notes for Beacon Hill LNR. The species records of BHLNR are regularly uploaded onto irectord by Peter Whitcomb, Wildlife Co-ordinator for BHLNR

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Open Skies by Peter Whitcomb

Chairman's introduction
Bob Webzell (Councillor)
Chairman of Beacon Hill LNR Working Group
and Chairman of Rottingdean Parish Council

Beacon Hill LNR links and unites the communities of Rottingdean and Ovingdean.

Beacon Hill LNR is as it is today because of the dedicated efforts of both Working Group Members and real community effort, that led to the creation in September 2013 of the Friends of Beacon Hill. Added to this came the seed of an idea that has evolved since 2013/14 into the Beacon Hub Eco-education and Visitor Centre who are developing the kiosk and car park to enhance the Reserve. These three bodies, and the village communities they serve, aim to work collaboratively to assure that the Beacon Hill LNR we have today is passed on better maintained and better understood to those generations that follow us. The invaluable help of BHCC's Conservation Manager, David Larkin, and Countryside Ranger, Emma Keane, are again gratefully acknowledged.

I am delighted to be able to confirm that discussions with the owners, BHCC, to legally integrate the former mini-golf course into the LNR were completed in September 2017. BHCC's Director, Larissa Reed, and I, have worked together to secure this sealed document that required the approval of both BHCC's Legal Department and of Natural England. The reward is a much larger legally protected green-space for people to enjoy and for wildlife to flourish. See pp5-6

As with previous years, the 2017/18 Annual Report records our observations and actions to date and our plans and goals for the future. This report includes our first listing of moth species found on Beacon Hill and also features research-based articles by Botanist, Jo Spickett showing the positive effects of the revised grazing programmes for wild plants and flowers. **South and South East in Bloom** have again awarded us **Gold** in the **Large Conservation Area** classification, a recognition of the hard work by so many for this outstanding LNR. Group Members, Beacon Hub and Friends of Beacon Hill welcome your support, ideas, contributions and physical hard work towards achieving our collective goals.

And in a surreal year when we have managed to legally make our LNR 44% bigger what better than Les Ellam's surreal image to receive place of honour on our front cover. Thank-you Les.

Bob Webzell

Dec 2017



Beacon Hill Working Group and Friends met the Mayor of Brighton and Hove in 2016

NATIONAL PARKS AND ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1949

In pursuance of Sections 19 and 21 of the above-mentioned Act, and all other powers enabling them in that behalf, the Brighton & Hove City Council ("the Council") hereby declares that:

- (i) the land containing 18.55 ha or thereabouts situated in the Parish of Rottingdean in Brighton & Hove and shown edged red on the attached plan marked Beacon Hill Local Nature Reserve – Old Boundary is owned by the Council and is hereby declared not to be a nature reserve and is no longer known as Beacon Hill Nature Reserve
- (ii) the land containing 26.70 ha or thereabouts situated in the Parish of Rottingdean in Brighton & Hove and shown edged red on the attached plan marked Beacon Hill Local Nature Reserve – New Boundary is owned by the Council
- (iii) AND in pursuance of Section 19 (2) of the above-mentioned Act and all other powers aforesaid the Council hereby further declare that the land shown edged red and coloured purple on plan marked Beacon Hill Local Nature Reserve – New Boundary is being managed as a Nature Reserve and shall be known as the Beacon Hill Nature Reserve.

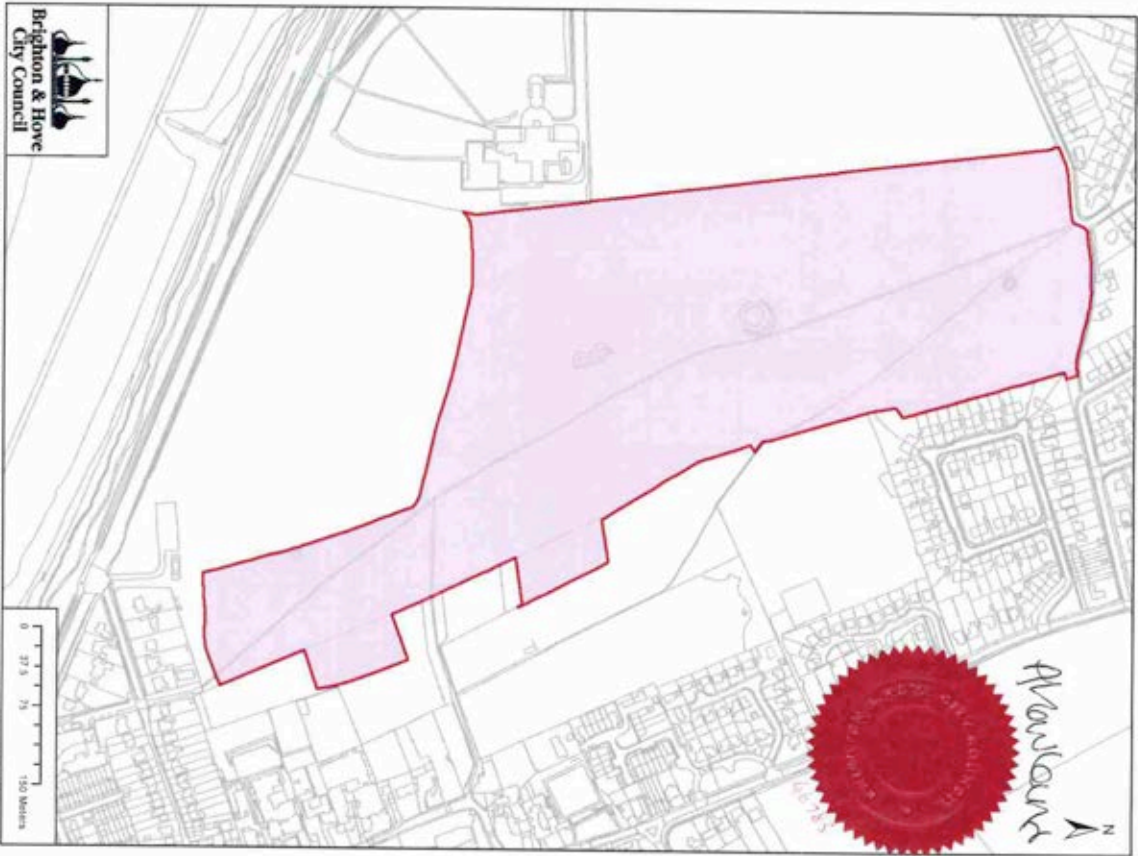
This declaration may be referred to as the Beacon Hill Nature Reserve 2017

Given under the Common Seal of the Council this ^{6th}..... day of ~~September~~ ^{September} Two thousand and seventeen

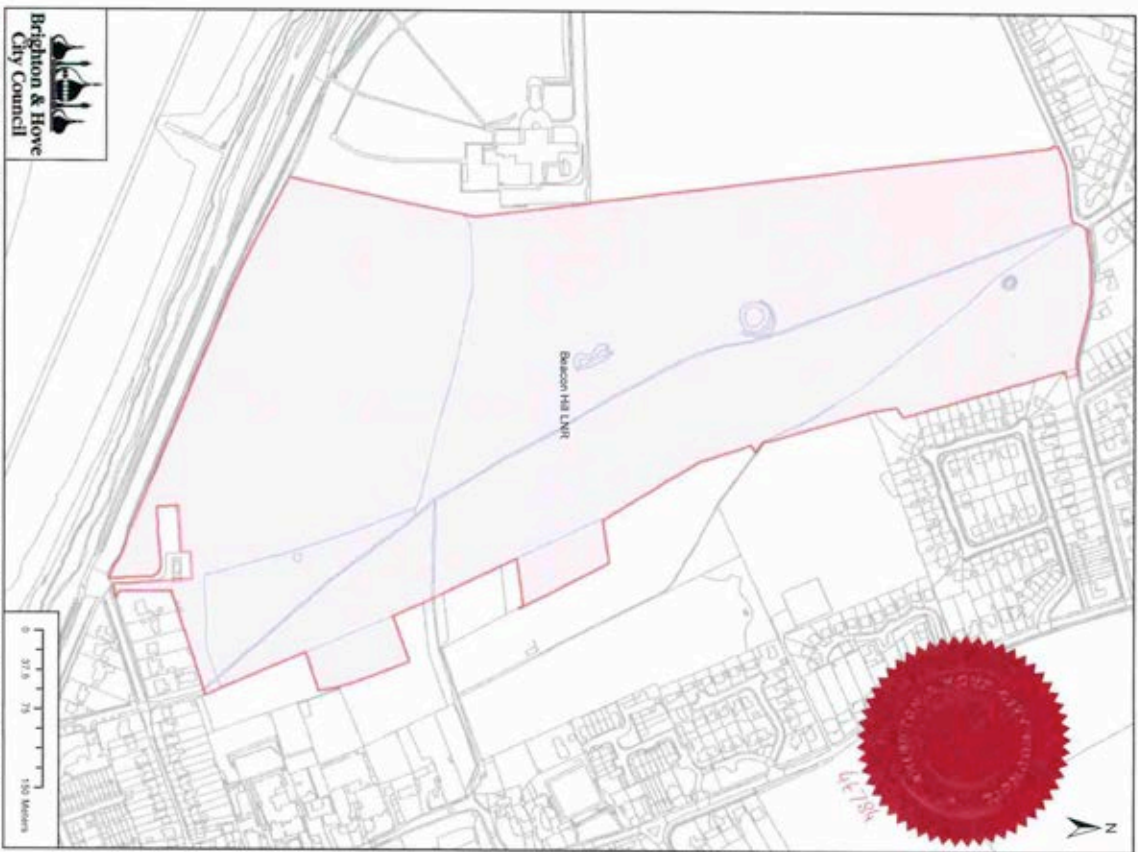
(Signed) *A Rawland*



Beacon Hill Local Nature Reserve - Old Boundary



Beacon Hill Local Nature Reserve - New Boundary



THE BRAMBLE EXPERIMENT

By Joanne Spickett

In 2015 Beacon Hill Nature Reserve working group with the help of Friends of Beacon Hill Nature Reserve Volunteer group began an experimental trial to assess the impact of different methods for managing the large patches of bramble on Beacon Hill Nature Reserve. An area adjacent to South wood was selected for this trial. This section had the largest area of bramble on the reserve and due to the high density of the bramble posing a welfare issue to the sheep, it was not possible to graze in the winter 2014/15. When bramble becomes this dense, it smothers the chalk grassland and prevents the wild flowers growing, as scrub species (blackthorn, hawthorn etc) also take hold the chalk grassland wildflowers eventually becomes 'lost' with no or very few calcareous flowering plants able to compete.

Method

There are 2 methods available for controlling bramble on Beacon Hill Nature Reserve

- A) Clearing by hand using secateurs to cut the bramble at ground level. Removing scrub species by cutting to ground level and from 2017 removing roots using tree poppers. All waste material removed from the area.
- B) Mechanically cutting using specialist equipment which cuts just above ground level and chops the cuttings. It is not permitted to leave the cutting in situ under the HLS agreement so as much of the cut material as possible is raked and collected.

These 2 methods have been used on set areas in autumn 2015 to spring 2016 and repeated autumn 2016 to spring 2017. Following cutting the whole area was grazed with sheep in early 2016 and early 2017.

The aerial photo shows the experimental areas, the red-hashed area was treated using method A and the blue hashed area treated using method B.



Pros and cons of the methods

Method A - reliant on volunteers to undertake the clearance work, can be time consuming but the bramble can be removed to ground level. As the cutting is by hand, possible to remove even the brambles that grow horizontally along the ground. Only bramble and scrub are removed, keeping the amount of waste material to a minimum. Less damaging as only targeted species are removed and other plants i.e. clumps of grasses, which may contain overwintering species have a degree of protection. Removes all cuttings, allowing sheep to graze afterwards without cut material becoming entangled in their fleece.

Method B - initial cutting is quick but the raking is time consuming and again reliant on a volunteer workforce. The low growing horizontal bramble miss machine cut and hinder raking. As all material is cut, including grasses and other plants, considerably more waste produce than by method A and little protection for species which may be overwintering. Difficult to rake cuttings and a considerable amount of material is left in situ, some of this has the potential to re root. With some cut material remaining, a degree becomes entangle in the fleece of the sheep grazing after cutting.

Results

The areas were surveyed as part of the grassland condition assessment conducted across the nature reserve in the summer 2017. The following results were observed.

	Method A	Method B
Average bramble/scrub cover (%)	10	70
Wild flower indicator species/sqm	11 (including round headed rampion)	3
Wild flower cover (%)	60	23

Photo of area under method A management Photo of area under method B management



Conclusion

The hand clearance method (A) has resulted in significantly greater control of bramble and scrub and lead to a substantial increase in the cover and range of wild flower species present when compared to the mechanical cutting method (B).

Our aim is to continue the experiment and expand the area managed, a big thank you to the FoBH volunteers who worked so hard to make this possible.

Joanne Spickett

**Sussex Archaeological Society Report
by John Funnell**

The excavations at Ovingdean are now complete. The new leader of the BHAS field unit is Pete Tolhurst, and he is very keen on geophysics so something is likely to happen next year. We will consult with the Beacon Hill WG before we commence any activities, making sure that we don't interfere with nature, or other activities by your group.

We are also planning some geophysics in the field opposite Blind Veterans as Google earth has revealed some very interesting features in that field too.

BHAS have been asked to conduct a watching brief on Beacon Hill if and when some water features are being considered, possibly for grazing sheep? We will be liaising with David Larkin.

GRASSLAND CONDITION ASSESSMENT 2017

By Joanne Spickett

Condition assessments are a tool for monitoring sites over time, they pick out positive and negative trends and help inform management to ensure the condition improves or if already favourable, is maintained. As comprehensive assessment, they should ideally be conducted approximately every 3 years. Beacon Hill was assessed in 2014 and has therefore has been assessed again this year.

Method

The method used for this assessment is fully detailed in the 2014 annual report (available on the Parish Councils Website). In summary, each grazing section is assessed individually, with 10 or 20 stops at random locations per section and the following attributes assessed at each stop, % Bare Ground, % Litter Cover (debris from the previous seasons growth), % Negative sp Cover (i.e. common ragwort, creeping thistle and broad leaved docks), % Scrub Cover (encroaching woody species/bramble), % Herb Cover (wild flowers), Sward Height, Positive Indicator Species (those associate with species rich grasslands occurring in 1-20% of Stops = Rare, 21-40% of stops = Occasional, 41-60% of stops = Frequent and over 60% of stops = Constant).

Site Management

There have been some changes to the management of Beacon Hill since the 2014 survey. The grazing period of December to February (winter) has been shifting to an earlier timing of late September to early February in 2016/2017 (autumn/winter) with section 5 and part of section 4 being spring grazed for the first time in 2017 to help with the control of bramble regrowth and ragwort. The earlier timing allows the sheep to graze the site when the grass is still palatable before it is hit by the worst of the weather and the sheep will no longer graze it effectively. This change in timing is in the early stages but the assessment gives an indication of the impact.

The 'Friends of Beacon Hill Nature Reserve' (FoBH) volunteer group have been out working on the Hill to control scrub, initially cutting back to ground level (it does regrow, but is prevented from developing into trees) and from this year, using the 'tree popper' tools, which remove scrub root and should provide a more permanent solution. It is too early to see the impact of this technique, but future surveys will assess its success. The FoBH have also been tackling the bramble in an experimental area (section 5), the results of which are documented in this annual report and show hand clearance gives a significant reduction in bramble and increase in wild flower species. This method will now be use more extensively and as above, future surveys will show if this strategy is successful.

Results

The summary table shows the results for 2017 and 2014 to allow comparison, indicate of the condition of each section and overall results for the reserve. The ex-Pitch and Putt has now been formally added to the Nature Reserve designation and forms grazing area 6. It was assessed in 2014 to support the designation extension application but as it was not part of the nature reserve the data was not included in the overall results. The data has now been added.

Conclusion

Looking at the overall results, there has been a statistically significant (>5%) increase in % herb cover, a reduction in the frequency of ragwort and litter (debris from previous seasons growth).

The FoBH have held several 'Ragwort pulling' work session over the past few summers which is likely to have contributed to the reduction in ragwort. (continued p10)

It was very noticeable that ragwort in the area of section 4 that was spring grazed, was reduced and less vigorous with fewer seed heads, which should reduce the seed supply. Continuing with this spring grazing regime, together with the efforts for the FoBH should lead to further reductions in ragwort over the coming years.

The shift towards autumn grazing will have helped the sheep graze to remove the seasons growth more effectively, this could account for the reduction in the frequency of litter across the site and as a more open sward enables wild flower to germinate and compete more successfully, also for the increase in the % herb cover. Looking at the results for the individual sections gives a more precise account of the influence of the management changes. Section 2 was grazed first in 2016 (late September to late October) followed by section 1 (late October to late November), in both these sections the frequency of litter has significantly reduced, and the % herb cover increased. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of key indicator species growing in these sections and the frequency at which they occur. These sections have responded positively to the earlier grazing timing.

Section 4 was grazed in the late November to December 2016 and part of it again in the spring 2017. This section has a highest proportion of coarser grasses and ragwort as the soil tends to be deeper on the ridge. For the winter and spring grazed area the following results were observed – 60% litter (average 0.6cm), 5% ragwort, 69% herb cover and for the autumn grazed only area – 100% litter (average 2.7cm), 13% ragwort, 46% herb cover. These results demonstrate the benefit spring grazing has brought to this section and show that winter grazing is less effective. This latter point is reflected in the results for section 6 (grazed late December until mid-January). The grasses here are fine and dense, a result of it being the former golf course. The litter layer is particularly high in frequency and deep, indicating the sheep were not able to remove the growth effectively, likely to be due to the grasses being less palatable by the winter. The % herb cover is low, most probably due to the deep litter layer hindering the development of the many of the wild flower species. It is notable that greater knapweed and agrimony, some of the more competitive wild flower species are starting to move into this section.

Section 3 was also winter grazed (Mid-January to early Feb), and like the other 2 winter grazed sections as high levels of litter. It has the lowest number positive indicator species and higher than desirable levels of creeping thistle (not noted elsewhere on the reserve). Like section 4 with ragwort, spring grazing could be used to help with control of the creeping thistle.

The levels of bramble in section 5 were so high by 2014 that it was not possible to graze for welfare reasons. As mentioned above this section has been subject to an experiment to reduce the bramble and grazing recommenced in 2015. There has been some progress in this section, but further bramble control is needed before significant improvement will be seen.

To conclude, the calcareous grassland is continuing to recover, autumn grazing appears to be significantly more beneficial than winter grazing and spring grazing helps reduce ragwort.

(See Assessment data on p11)

**BEACON HILL 2017 GRASSLAND CONDITION ASSESSMENT SUMMARY TABLE
(2014 results in brackets)**

FEATURES	GRAZING SECTIONS						OVERALL RESULTS %
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
<i>Common Bird's foot trefoil</i>	C(C)	C(C)	F(C)	C(F)	O(O)	C(C)	65 C (67 C)
<i>Cowslip</i>	F(C)	C(C)	-(-)	O(O)	O(R)	-(-)	29 O (41 F)
<i>Devil's Bit Scabious</i>	-(-)	-(R)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	2 R (3 R)
<i>Dropwort</i>	-(R)	O(O)	-(-)	-(R)	-(R)	-(-)	4 R (13 R)
<i>Lady's Bedstraw</i>	C(O)	F(F)	C(C)	F(C)	C(C)	C(C)	73 C (64 C)
<i>Rough Hawkbit</i>	O(R)	O(O)	-(-)	R(R)	R(R)	R(C)	20 R (28 O)
<i>Salad Burnet</i>	F(F)	C(C)	-(-)	O(R)	F(F)	-(-)	33 O (37 O)
<i>Black Knapweed</i>	C(C)	C(O)	C(C)	C(C)	C(C)	O(R)	76 C (69 C)
<i>Dwarf Thistle</i>	O(R)	O(-)	-(-)	O(R)	O(-)	O(F)	27 O (15 R)
<i>Small Scabious</i>	-(R)	R(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(R)	-(-)	3 R (3 R)
<i>Kidney Vetch</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	-(-)	1 R (1 R)
<i>Horseshoe Vetch</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	-(-)	1 R (1 R)
<i>Milkwort spp</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	-(-)	1 R (1 R)
<i>Mouse-ear Hawkweed</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	R(R)	2 R (7 R)
<i>Squinancywort</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	-(-)	1 R (1 R)
<i>Thyme spp</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	R(R)	2 R (4 R)
<i>Greater Knapweed</i>	C(F)	C(C)	O(F)	C(C)	C(C)	R(-)	65 C (63 C)
<i>Field Scabious</i>	R(R)	O(O)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	8 R (8 R)
<i>Eyebright spp</i>	R(-)	R(R)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	-(-)	7 R (4 R)
<i>Pyramidal Orchid</i>	-(R)	R(R)	-	-	-	-(-)	1 R (3 R)
<i>Restharrow</i>	O(O)	O(R)	F(C)	R(R)	R(O)	O(O)	28 O (30 O)
<i>Quaking Grass</i>	-(-)	-(R)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	- (1 R)
<i>Fairy Flax</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	R(-)	2 R (1 R)
<i>Hairy Violet</i>	O(-)	F(-)	-(-)	R(R)	O(O)	-(-)	18 R (6 R)
<i>Hoary Plantain</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(R)	-(-)	-(R)	- (1 R)
<i>Wild Marjoram</i>	R(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	2 R (-)
<i>Wild Basil</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(-)	-(-)	-(-)	2 R (-)
*Bastard Toadflax	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(R)	-(-)	-(-)	1 R (1 R)
*Wild Carrot	C(O)	F(R)	R(F)	C(O)	O(R)	O(F)	48 F (29 O)
*Burnet Saxifrage	C(-)	R(-)	F(F)	C(-)	R(-)	R(O)	39 O (9 R)
*Round Headed Rampion	R(-)	F(-)	-(-)	R(R)	O(-)	-(-)	19 R (1 R)
<i>Knotted Hedge Parsley</i>	R(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(C)	3 R (11 R)
<i>Buckshorn Plantain</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(F)	3 R (8 R)
<i>Strawberry Clover</i>	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	R(C)	3 R (12 R)
<i>Agrimony</i>	C(C)	C(C)	C(C)	C(C)	C(C)	R(-)	76 C (72 C)
<i>Red Bartsia</i>	R(-)	F(R)	-(F)	O(R)	-(O)	-(-)	16 R (15 R)
<i>Yellow Rattle</i>	R(-)	O(O)	O(R)	R(R)	R(R)	-(-)	19 R (15 R)
<i>Tufted Vetch</i>	F(-)	R(-)	O(O)	O(-)	R(-)	-(-)	25 O (4 R)
<i>Meadow Vetchling</i>	-(-)	-(-)	R(O)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	3 R (3 R)
<i>Common Toadflax</i>	R(-)	-(-)	-(R)	R(R)	-(-)	-(-)	3 R (3 R)
<i>Common Ragwort</i>	C(C)	F(F)	-(F)	C(C)	C(C)	R(C)	59 F (72 C)
<i>Creeping Thistle</i>	O(R)	R(R)	C(C)	O(O)	R(F)	-(-)	30 O (25 O)
% Herb Cover (aim 40-90%)	59(46)	63(55)	45(35)	56(32)	47(41)	27(43)	50(42)
% Bare ground cover (aim > 10%)	0(4)	0.2(1)	0.1(0)	0.1(1)	3(0)	0.7	0.7(1.1)
% Stops Litter Recorded (aim < 25%) Average litter depth (cm)	55(65) 0.6(0.7)	25(60) 0.3(0.9)	100(100) 2(1.4)	80(95) 1.6(2.7)	90 (100) 1.8(2.8)	95(N/A) 3.7(N/A)	74(84) 1.7(1.7)
% Negative sp cover (aim > 5%)	5(5)	2(4)	9(4)	9(7)	3(10)	1(1)	5.8(5)
% Scrub cover (aim > 5%)	6(4)	7(9)	1(0)	4(3)	28(18)	0(0)	7.6(6)
Sward Height (cm) (aim 2-15cm)	22(22)	15(26)	25(22)	21(27)	21(27)	33(N/A)	23(25)

THE STEWARDSHIP AND MANAGEMENT REPORT

Calcareous grassland (or alkaline grassland) is an ecosystem associated with thin basic soil, such as that on chalk and limestone downland. Plants on calcareous grassland are typically short and hardy, and include grasses and herbs such as clover. Calcareous grassland is an important habitat for insects, particularly butterflies, and is kept in this balance by grazing animals, usually sheep but sometimes cattle. (Wikipedia, 2017)

Over the whole of the South Downs, only 3% of these grasslands remain, the rest having been permanently changed by ploughing. There is no evidence or record of ploughing on Beacon Hill for over a century, probably two.

As we enter a seventh year in which the City Council are grazing our LNR with mixed groups of Herdwick and upland sheep in a carefully managed programme of grazing, evidence suggests we are recreating on Beacon Hill the circumstances to maintain the regeneration of reserve's grass sward. And as our specialists monitor and study it, we continue to discover new plants and other natural findings that suggest our efforts are overcoming the degradation that has taken place to better meet the CG2a category of chalk grassland.

THE MONITORING OF THE FAUNA AND FLORA ON BEACON HILL

Without the vision of our Founders, David Larkin, John Cumming and the late Alan Holden, and the enthusiasm, dedication and hard work of volunteers, Beacon Hill LNR would probably not exist today. It certainly wouldn't be winning In Bloom Gold Awards six years running and would not have worked for two years to legally extend it.

We remain indebted to the Peter Whitcomb, our Wildlife Co-ordinator, for our current flora observations on top of his primary responsibility of butterfly recording. We are grateful to regular walkers and observers including Libby and Jay and many others for unusual sightings. The innovative contribution of Jo Spickett is again here for all to see and we thank them all for what they do for the nature reserve.



Windswept

Bob Webzell

I am very pleased to report that it has been another very successful year up on Beacon Hill Local Nature Reserve with a huge amount of work going in to maintaining and improving what is such an ecologically diverse and important site.

Autumn 2016 began with our important winter scrub management work. The work of hand clearing our rather 'difficult' section of scrub (the area that had been rather overtaken by bramble, hawthorn and sycamore saplings etc) that we began in the Autumn of 2015 has been a strong focus of this very time consuming effort. The great results that were seen after just one year of hand clearing scrub (as opposed to mechanical clearing) have very much been built on in the second year and the quality of chalk grassland is showing a huge improvement. I am extremely pleased with the relative speed that we have been able to reverse the decline of this part of the hill and we will continue to work on this until it has all been brought under relative control.

May 2017 saw the sheep graze a relatively small section of the hill to enable us to observe the grazing impact on the problem we face with the beautiful but somewhat invasive Ragwort plant. We do know from elsewhere in the City that sheep grazing at the right time (during the spring growth period) does help us to bring this tall biennial species under control. Concerns were raised of course as to the impact of sheep on our Skylark population. The numbers of sheep and length of grazing period were therefore carefully calculated to ensure minimal disturbance to these ground nesting birds. I am pleased to report that the Skylark population appeared to suffer no ill effects at all. Additionally, towards the end of summer, the Ragwort plants in this area appeared to have been weakened. Good news all around!

As of August 2017 grazing timings for the whole reserve have been altered to try and improve on the results that are achieved. It has for some years now been noted that keeping the sheep on during the dark November to January months is not the best use of resources, as the animals have a tendency to just lie on the rather rank grass, rather than eat it! This issue and the need to get our Ragwort under control has driven this change. It is now planned that four of the reserves six sections will be grazed from August until the end of October. The sheep will then return to graze a further three sections from approximately February until the end of April. This enables us to target each specific areas need more accurately.

2017-18

As we near the end of 2017 I am looking forward to the next year of work up on the hill and am sure it will be as positive as the last. Workdays have already seen a return to hand scrub clearance with particular emphasis being placed on the area where we have seen so much

improvement already. I will still be having to mechanically cut a small area of the dense bramble to enable sheep to return in early spring, for animal welfare reasons. However I am confident that the area cut in this way will be significantly diminished further. As I have already mentioned sheep will be returning in the early spring with a focus on four of the six reserve sections. The areas targeted this time will reduce the vigour of the invasive Ragwort but as the weather warms up the focus of work will turn to additional hand clearance to make sure we are on top of the issue. Once summer is with us again, focus will be on the north woodland. Much effort is put into maintaining the various pathways here to enable good access for all. Where needed steps will be repaired, paths levelled off and revetted and undergrowth cleared back.

This leaves me to give many thanks to both the Friends of Beacon Hill and to the Beacon Hill Working Group for their enthusiasm and tireless work in ensuring that Beacon Hill is managed in the best possible way both for wildlife and the wider community who enjoy it. The last year has been an absolute pleasure working with all volunteers, without whom only a tiny fraction of what is achieved would ever be possible.

I look forward to seeing you all there.

Emma Keane, Countryside Ranger



Our 2017 Flock

Bob Webzell

BEACON HILL NATURE RESERVE WALKABOUTS

From its establishment by Natural England, Alan Holden and I were determined to encourage our local Rottingdean schools to participate in nature reserve Walkabouts to meet our specialists. We strongly believed that it is only through our young that this small patch of Downland will continue to be nursed and managed well into the future. For all but a decade now, I have arranged annual visits for Year 6 of our two primary schools and Year 7 of Longhill and, although Longhill now conduct their own visits, both S^t Margaret's and Our Lady of Lourdes have on most years managed to fit these visits into their curriculum. Lately, after these walkabouts, Colin Dellar has also volunteered to open our windmill to outline its history and explain its technology.

This year, Our Lady of Lourdes went bird watching with Peter Whitcomb and Bob Webzell in May and in July both St Margaret's and Our Lady of Lourdes had a flower and butterfly walkabout with Peter, Joanne Spickett and myself. There were also 2 open days for anyone to come and meet them, for birds in May and the flora and fauna in August. We are so lucky to have Peter, Bob, Jo and Colin to share their knowledge with us.

However, it is now anticipated that the Beacon Hub, which is established to provide walkabouts to all the schools in the local area and the City, will take over this organizing role from the Parish Council's Working Group, starting next year. I thank all of you who have helped me arrange and have participated in these visits.

John Cumming

Founder and Events Organizer



YEAR SIX IMAGES OF ST MARGARETS' SCHOOL AND OUR LADY OF LOURDES SCHOOL ON BEACON HILL
JOHN CUMMING

The loyal volunteers that make up Friends of Beacon Hill have been busy again this year. The summer task of pulling the dreaded ragwort was spread over 5 regular work sessions plus a special weekend outing to lure those that work during the week onto the Nature Reserve. The designated area for the weekender was the new extension (formerly the golf course) and in four 2 hour sessions we not only managed to pull every one we saw but also wandered off onto the northern section of the hill.

The continued hand pulling of the brambles on the top section of the Nature Reserve is showing remarkable results with re-growth mightily reduced. Tree Poppers are the Friends' new favourite toy, they enable the uprooting of the saplings that are trying to spread from the woods onto the grassland.

A combination of wood rot and high winds saw both the small notice boards fall over. These were removed to a workshop (aka a volunteer's garden shed) where the legs were replaced and both signs re-erected on the hill.

Funds raised at the Rottingdean Village Fair were spent on 2 new benches. The Friends replaced the David Christie bench, situated by the Dew Pond, with a rustic new model. David's plaque was re-set on the new bench and his family, who live in Scotland, were contacted by a local lady. Through the wonders of FaceBook the Friends have been in conversation with David's sister, who has viewed the photographs of the new bench and passed onto her mother. A local man made a sizeable donation which enabled the creation of a new bench on the easterly path down to St Dunstans which has been dedicated to his father. A third new bench, located on the path along the top of the new extension, was sponsored by a local lady and dedicated to her late husband.

The work is not limited to the hill. During the spring months when the skylarks are nesting and not wanting to be disturbed, the Friends can be found in the woods. A session of ivy ringing has helped reduce the size of the canopy in the most northerly section of the North Woods. The woodland path that runs from Court Ord Road to the recreation ground has been leveled and edged and the steps that lead up from the woods to the Nature Reserve replaced. A fantastic group of volunteers from American Express joined us on 2 sessions this year and will hopefully come back for more fun and games. The final piece of maintenance involved stock proofing the fence that borders St Dunstans. This now means that new extension has permanent fencing on 2 sides, reducing the need for electric fencing when the sheep are in visiting. Leading us nicely on to mention that the volunteers have spent many a windy morning wrestling electric fencing to ensure our sheep don't wander off.

All in all another fantastic year for the Friends of Beacon Hill.



Friends at Work Images by Louise Arnold

Beacon Hub Brighton Eco-education & Visitor Centre

Jay Butler

The Beacon Hub Brighton project (NOT to be confused with the Friends of Beacon Hill - an entirely separate organisation!), is a registered CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation, No:1159583) led by an enthusiastic team of local volunteers, which has been granted a fifteen year rent free lease to redevelop the redundant golf pavilion adjacent to Rottingdean windmill as an Eco-education & Visitor Centre. To achieve its goal, the project's intent is to create a purpose built facility based on the footprint and roof-line of the original building, plus an outdoor teaching area. This will offer exciting opportunities for ad-hoc visitors and organised school groups of all ages and abilities to learn about and connect with nature, ecology, marine biology, local heritage, the arts, geology, astronomy, renewable energy... the list goes on!

For the last eighteen months a wonderful group of hard-working and dedicated volunteers has run a community café/ kiosk and preliminary education programme at the Hub. The project has attracted support from BBC wildlife broadcaster Chris Packham, secured the lease on the building from Brighton & Hove City Council and permission from the South Downs National Park Authority to redevelop the building. In the longer term, an extensive programme of age and curriculum relevant activities for visiting school parties will be lead by professional educators. The Hub as a Visitor Centre, will also act as a 'gateway' to the national park, within whose boundaries it stands - offering interpretation displays and a multi-purpose exhibition space. It will also be available to hire as a meeting room, lectures theatre, etc by local community groups. In the interim, funding will be sought for the redevelopment and equipment, with a crowd-funding initiative to be launched in the near future.

The fabulous location on the Beacon Hill Nature Reserve allows easy access by foot, public transport and bicycle. As a condition of the lease, Beacon Hub Brighton is required to offer public toilet facilities and the car park is now open to visitors during café/kiosk opening hours (Thurs - Sat 10am - 3pm, Sun 11am - 4pm) after the recent installation of a new gate & height restriction bar at the A259 (seafront) entrance.

Please drop by the Hub and support the charity by buying a cup of tea or coffee and cake – you are assured of a warm welcome! You might also be interested in purchasing a specially designed 2018 fund-raising calendar featuring stunning photos of local views - priced at just £8, also available from the Rottingdean Arts Café and Ovingdean shop, with all funds raised going to the Beacon Hub charity.

If you would like to volunteer and help run the café/kiosk or make a donation, please Email:

info@beaconhubbrighton.org

Facebook: BeaconHubBrighton

Website: www.beaconhubbrighton.org



Beacon Hill Panorama from the Ovingdean Gate by Jay Butler

PLANT REPORT 2017

By Peter Whitcomb

Our chalk downland reserve has two speciality plants which flourish and give much pleasure to visitors. 2017 was no exception and the numbers of **Cowslips** were phenomenal, and later on the **Round-headed Rampion** was also in amazing numbers. Risking repetition, I cannot fail to mention the species which grow on the shorter grass within the old dewpond. Here we regularly have **Wild Thyme**, **Squinancywort**, **Bastard Toadflax**, **Kidney Vetch** and **Quaking Grass** – all found again in 2017 in spite of the sheep grazing experiment in May. Unfortunately we could not locate any Autumn Gentian this year.

The flowering year starts at Beacon Hill with **Alexanders**, **Lesser Celandine** and **Cowslips**, followed by blossoms from the shrubs such as **Blackthorn**, **Wild Pear** and various Apples.



Blackthorn



Alexanders



Cowslip

A small group of **Common Spotted Orchids** were in the usual place, and have not spread, but **Pyramidal Orchids** did quite well though were not easy to find in the long grasses. There was a discovery of old records of **Common Twayblade** in the woods, and there was a successful find of two plants, though neither had flowered.

Other plants which seemed to rather dominate visits during the summer included **Red Bartsia**, **Agrimony** and the **Knapweeds**, as well as **Ladies** and **Hedge Bedstraw**. Incidentally see also the Miscellaneous Report where rare insects were attracted to the abundance of Red Bartsia. There were also umbellifers such as **Wild Carrot** and **Hogweed**. The excellent work done by volunteers to clear areas, together with the rotational sheep grazing, made some great improvements to some sections for plants. The May grazing showed graphic evidence of **Ragwort** control, and the areas also produced many more chalk downland plants than we have seen in the past – such as **Eyebright**, **Cinquefoil** and **Dwarf Thistle**, among others. These have always been present, but not in the numbers found this year. Indeed the productive **Bird's-foot Trefoil** may have accounted for the increase in Common Blue butterflies which is their larval food plant.



Bird's-foot Trefoil



Common Spotted Orchid



Eyebright

There were two new plant species found this year – **Hemp Agrimony** and **Three-cornered Leek**, the latter being an unwelcome garden throw-out. Garden and allotment 'escapes', not unsurprisingly, are quite frequently found on the reserve and they include **Fennel**, **Purple Cranesbill** and **Spring Starflower** – all seen this year.

I have a particular interest in discovering plants which have a colour anomaly and this year the first example of a **white Round-headed Rampion** was found by Joanne Spickett while doing her surveying. Also present this year were white versions of Greater Knapweed and Red Bartsia.



Round-headed Rampion – white colour form



Red Bartsia – white colour form

THE BUTTERFLY MONITORING REPORT 2017 By Peter Whitcomb

It is only fair to say it has been a rather strange year for butterfly monitoring. The overall total reflected an improvement on the previous two years – 1153 in 2015, 1078 in 2016 and 1346 in 2017. However if it wasn't for two species doing really well, the result would have been yet another poor year with so many species performing badly or not at all.

Small Heaths, in particular, totalled over 300 easily exceeding the previous year total of 275 in 2012. Their sightings were continuous from the end of May right through to September, with a peak of 51 on 28th August. **Common Blues** did well too, with a total of 189 – this is the highest total since 2013.



Small Heath



Clouded Yellow

But it was the other species which created the below-average numbers. Not one **Painted Lady** was seen this year on the transect walks, though one was seen in early September; there were no **Small Tortoiseshells** since the first week of recording; **Small and Large Whites** were very low in numbers; and **Marbled White** with a total of only 111 being the lowest total since 2009. Further disappointments were very few **Clouded Yellows** and no **Wall** or **Brown Argus**.

In addition to the weekly transect walks, it was pleasing to see that **Small Blues** were recorded at the end of May. It is hoped that by grazing management and an introduction of more vetch plants that this, and Adonis and Chalkhill Blues, may recur on the Hill again as resident populations. Also of interest was the sighting of **White-letter Hairstreaks** by the Hog Plat elm trees in July. There are no elms along the route of the transect walk, but a new butterfly species for the reserve and worth looking out for in the future. Grateful thanks to Steven Munday for these two sightings.



Dark Green Fritillary



Small Blue (SM)



Common Blue (BW)

The totals for each species seen on transect walks are commented on separately below. The figures in brackets for comparison purposes are the average for the seven years since 2011, these being the years when representative weekly counts have been undertaken in recent times. The normal flight periods have also been incorporated:

SMALL/ESSEX SKIPPER 58 (92) End June/July

One of many species having a poor year, the lowest total since 2010. The maximum count was 20 on 9th July. The two species are linked together as they are almost inseparable in the field, with the main difference being the colour of the antennae!

LARGE SKIPPER 6 (5) June/July

A better than average year, but it is a species which ought to be present in larger numbers.

DINGY SKIPPER 0 (1) Mid May/June

None found this year.

CLOUDED YELLOW 2 (2) Aug/Sep

Sightings as usual were in mid-summer.

BRIMSTONE 0 (1) End Mar-May, Aug/Sep

Five years running now – no records on the transect counts, but a male recorded in April by a visitor.

LARGE WHITE 10 (32) End May/Jun, Aug/Sep

An extremely poor year, mostly seen in early summer. One recorded on the last count of the year could conceivably have been a migrant from across the Channel.

SMALL WHITE 80 (109) May/Jun, Aug/Sep

Well below the average numbers with most being seen in close proximity to the allotments. The higher numbers towards the end of Aug and early Sep reflect the late flying period. As Small Whites are more likely to be seen, there has been a general assumption over the recording years that most of the 'smaller' whites are recorded as such, rather than female Orange-tips or Green-veined Whites.

GREEN-VEINED WHITE 1 (1) May/Jun, Aug-early Sep

Only one seen close enough to identify from Small White (see above).

ORANGE-TIP 0(1) May/Jun

None seen this year.

SMALL COPPER 4 (3) *May, Aug-end Sep*

Above average but nevertheless a poor year for this attractive species.

BROWN ARGUS 0 (3) *May/Jun, Aug/Sep*

None recorded this year. A good close-up view is necessary to clinch the identification, as brief in-flight views are very similar to female Common Blues.

COMMON BLUE 189 (155) *Mid May-end Jun, Aug/Sep*

Seen from 25th May, and an encouraging increase with a peak count of 29 on 13th August. Well over the seven-year average.

CHALKHILL BLUE 0 (5) *Mid Jul-end Aug*

Another big disappointment with none recorded for three years. The caterpillar's food plant is Horse-shoe Vetch and there is very little of this on the reserve and it is hoped that by adding plug plants the species may return and even increase in numbers. This attractive butterfly is a South Downs speciality and it deserves to be a regular sight here at Beacon Hill.

ADONIS BLUE 0 (1) *End May-mid Jun, end Aug-Sep*

None recorded again. It was last recorded here in 2011. It is perhaps not so surprising this blueist of all blue species is not found in any numbers here as its larval foodplant Horse-shoe Vetch is quite scarce. Same sentiments as above.

HOLLY BLUE 7 (6) *Apr/May, Aug-mid Sep*

After last year's high count it was disappointing to record only average numbers alongside the woodland edges. of the woods. Five on the early date of 29th April was the highest count.

RED ADMIRAL 11 (14) *Jun-Oct*

Below average year with the usual late season improvement and typically seen in the second half of the year. While the count was low, there were many more in September attracted to ivy flowers along the woodland edges which were just away from the transect route.

PAINTED LADY 0 (2) *Jun, Aug/Sep*

Strangely none recorded on transect walks this year in spite of reports from nearby gardens and elsewhere.

SMALL TORTOISESHELL 8 (15) *End Mar-May, end Jun-Oct*

After some recent high totals, the numbers sadly dipped again. It is quite extraordinary that the only sightings were on the first day of the counting – on 3rd April. There are a few patches of nettles around the transect route, but no caterpillars were noted.

PEACOCK 6 (5) *Mar/Apr, Aug/Sep*

Most were seen early on during the warm spells in Spring, but an average year.

COMMA 2 (1) *Apr-early May, Jul-Oct*

Never a regular species here, but probably more in the immediate vicinity of the woods and horse paddocks, just outside the transect route.

DARK GREEN FRITILLARY 6 (7) *Jul/Aug*

With last year's negative, it was pleasing to record this beautiful chalk grassland speciality again, with 4 on 19th June being the peak.

SPECKLED WOOD 6 (9) *Apr-Oct*

A poor year for the species, and recorded mostly along the woodland fringe of North Wood.

WALL BROWN 0 (2) *May/Jun, Aug-mid Sep*

Another disappointment with no sightings this year.

MARBLED WHITE 111 (191) *End Jun-mid Aug*

This was the lowest total in seven years and significantly below the average. The peak count was only 42 on 26th June. Their flight period generally extends into August but the last were on 23rd July.

GATEKEEPER 81 (159) *Jul/Aug*

Another large drop in numbers.

MEADOW BROWN 444 (619) *Jul-early Sep*

Another poor year even allowing for a couple of missed counts in July, their main flying period. Peak count was only 126 on 26th June.

SMALL HEATH 314 (162) *May/Jun, Aug/Sep*

The undoubted success of the year. After a couple of poor years, the total of 314 is the highest count ever for the Reserve. They were recorded on every visit from the end May right through to September, with a peak of 51 on 28th August. This species has a distinctive habit of keeping its wings closed when alighting, so it is practically impossible to see a photograph with open wings.

Photographs by Steven Munday, Bob Webzell and Peter Whitcomb

SPECIES RECORDING

For those readers who are interested in what happens to sightings and records for Beacon Hill, many are entered on iRecord, a website run by the Biological Records Centre (BRC). This is a useful way of record keeping nationally and around our local Brighton area. A representation of butterfly sightings are entered, as are significant plant and insect finds. This enables anyone accessing the website to search for Beacon Hill LNR and get an idea of species seen from year to year. The software allows transfer of records to various bodies including the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC), County Recorders and Societies for Plants, Butterflies and Invertebrae.

As a member of the Sussex Ornithological Society I send direct records of occasional breeding local birds and passage sightings during Spring and Autumn.

BEACON HILL 2017 FIGURES BY SECTION

Species	Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Small/Essex Skipper		8	23	8	7	3	9	58
Dingy Skipper								
Large Skipper			4		1	1		6
Grizzled Skipper								
Clouded Yellow			2					2
Brimstone								
Large White		4	2		2		2	10
Small White		38	12	8	3	2	17	80
Green-veined White		1						1
Orange-tip								
Small Copper			2	1		1		4
Small Blue								
Brown Argus			1			1		2
Common Blue		40	76	11	24	18	20	189
Chalkhill Blue								
Holly Blue		1	6					7
Red Admiral		1	4		1		5	11
Painted Lady								
Small Tortoiseshell		2	3	1	2			8
Peacock		2		2	1	1		6
Comma		1				1		2
Dark Green Fritillary		1	1	1	2		1	6
Speckled Wood			5			1		6
Wall								
Marbled White		10	37	24	14	11	15	111
Gatekeeper		3	19	7	16	22	14	81
Meadow Brown		63	126	57	60	29	109	444
Small Heath		49	88	19	55	48	55	314
Ringlet								
TOTAL 2017		223	410	139	189	137	248	1346
2016		160	277	131	151	143	218	1078
2015		146	372	182	255	73	125	1153
2014		173	563	227	312	159	292	1726
2013		286	654	216	368	238	352	2114
2012		315	901	316	364	300	240	2427
2011		144	676	156	278	163	133	1550
2010		227	519	106	238	94	261	1445
2006		149	420	163	94	113	182	1113
2004		137	393	181	137	180	229	1257
2003		228	424	143	245	264	218	1522
2002		159	265	123	160	100	208	1015
2001		180	278	126	198	169	279	1230

BEACON HILL LNR WEEKLY BUTTERFLY COUNTS 2017

Week	-1	1	5	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	17	18	20	21	22	23	25	26	Total	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Date	3.4	7.4	29.4	25.5	29.5	5.6	13.6	19.6	26.6	4.7	9.7	23.7	1.8	13.8	20.8	28.8	9.9	16.9	28.9	58	64	78	124	143	83	94
Small/Essex Skipper								5	13	16	20	4								6	7	9	4	2	1	5
Large Skipper								5	1											0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Dingy Skipper																				0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Grizzled Skipper																				2	0	3	3	3	1	0
Clouded Yellow												2								0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Brimstone																				0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Large White								1	1	2	2	1	1			2			1	10	31	51	26	60	22	27
Small White		1	3	2	2			2	2	3			2	12	5	24	8	14		80	123	100	72	180	86	127
Green veined White				1																1	7	0	0	1	0	1
Orange Tip																				0	0	0	1	0	3	3
Small Copper									1						2	1				4	1	0	9	3	2	3
Small Blue																				0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brown Argus																				0	2	1	10	1	0	8
Common Blue				18	12	14	4	6	1	3	26	28	28	29	27	13	6		2	189	51	145	167	301	133	105
Chalkhill Blue																				0	0	0	4	4	15	14
Adonis Blue																				0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Holly Blue			5	1						1										7	15	7	1	1	3	4
Red Admiral				1						1	1	1		1			1	4	2	11	16	8	10	4	31	18
Painted Lady																				0	0	4	2	5	0	0
Small Tortoiseshell	8																			8	6	19	30	32	4	5
Peacock	2	1	1							1						1				6	3	6	4	13	2	3
Comma	2																			2	1	1	0	2	0	0
Dark Green Fritillary								4	1	1										6	0	5	6	7	13	11
Speckled Wood		1		1	1		1									2				6	5	9	19	12	7	8
Wall Brown																				0	0	2	9	4	1	0
Marbled White								19	42	22	26	2								111	150	149	188	201	231	307
Gatekeeper										8	39	26	6	1	1					81	80	134	273	236	185	124
Meadow Brown					1	3	32	108	126	70	56	8	19	12	6	3				444	454	353	682	741	1151	500
Small Heath				12	26	13	28	28	22	8	2	3	34	28	37	51	16	6		314	62	66	80	157	275	181
Ringlet																					0	0	0	0	0	0
WEEKLY TOTALS	12	3	9	36	42	30	65	178	209	129	151	74	90	83	78	97	31	24	5	1346	1078	1153	1743	2114	2255	1553
Temperatures	16	15	14	22	23	15	17	28	20	19	22	19	20	20	19	23	16	17	17							
% Sunshine	100	60	100	100	60	15	70	100	100	100	100	70	100	100	100	100	90	40	100							
Wind Direction	E	SW	SE	E	SW	SW		SE	S	SW	S	W	S	SW	SW	S	W	NW	SW							
Wind Force	2	4	2	3	2	5		2	3	4	2	3	3	1	4	1	4	2	3							

Beacon Hill Birds 2017

By Peter Whitcomb

It is somewhat disappointing to report that regular sightings and monitoring have not been available as they have in the past. When I walk my butterfly transects in the middle of the day, I can generally miss any migration action which would take place earlier in the day. I do not take much notice of the breeding success of common birds as I walk round as I am concentrating more on the butterflies and insects. In reality it should be local people who report sightings and keep an eye on what is happening. It would have been ideal to know whether the **Buzzards** reared young successfully, or whether **Stock Doves** and summer migrant warblers bred in the woods.

So this report tends to rely on occasional reports and visits from other birders. Without these the report would be in a sorry state. In February **Stonechats** were frequenting the southern section. Later in the Spring a **Yellowhammer** was seen along the western edge, a surprising first for the reserve; and a **Firecrest** was seen in the woodland. **Ravens** were noted twice. Passage of **Willow Warblers**, **Blackcaps** and other warblers was reported by a number of observers, but likely only **Common Whitethroats** remained to breed. Other passage birds included **Wheatear** and **Whinchat**.



Stonechat



Firecrest (SM)



Goldfinch (BW)

In May perhaps the oddest sighting was a **Whimbrel**, a smaller relation of the better known Curlew, which was resting in the grass and photographed by Steven Munday. The annual Bird Walkabout was held in unseasonal conditions and the wind reduced the chance of too many sightings, though a good spread of warblers were noted plus singing **Skylark** and **Meadow Pipit**. Jay Butler reported **Sand Martins** and Bob Webzell had a **Red Kite** drifting west. In June a **Hobby** was seen.



Whimbrel (SM)



Common Whitethroat

Very few reports were received during the summer months. My own observations were that the **Skylarks** nesting in the middle section were pretty much unaffected by the experimental sheep grazing in May. At least three pairs of **Meadow Pipits** probably nested on account of singing males heard. A new species was recorded in early August when a wind-blown **Ringed Plover** was found exhausted by the southern perimeter fence by a dog-walker. A few dozen young **Swallows** were congregating on wires near Beacon Hub in August, but most of the village's **Swallows** and **Martins** departed in mid-September when they were noted leaving in their hundreds.



Juvenile Swallows



Meadow Pipit



Female Blackcap (SM)

Generally it was a rather poor autumn for passage migrants. A maximum count of 3 **Wheatears** and a **Spotted Flycatcher** in September were the highlights while in October **Chiffchaff** and **Goldcrest** numbers increased dramatically. A couple of **Firecrest** were present for a few days in the woods and **Blackcaps** were last seen on 22nd.

I am indebted to the following for submitting bird sightings during the year: Jay Butler, Libby Darling, Steven Munday, Cliff Nankervill, Bob Webzell, Andrew Whitcomb.

An updated status list of the Bird Species is shown below:

The Birds of Beacon Hill – updated list (2017) and local status

Fulmar	Breeds on the cliffs; occasionally flies over the Hill
Cormorant	Flies over
Grey Heron	Flies over
Little Egret	Flies over
Brent Goose	Very occasional fly-over
Honey Buzzard	Rare autumn passage migrant
Red Kite	Occasional wandering individuals
Hen Harrier	Scarce passage migrant
Sparrowhawk	Breeds locally
Buzzard	Seen quite frequently, attempts to breed
Kestrel	Resident and probably breeds locally
Merlin	Scarce winter visitor – two recent records
Hobby	Passage migrant
Peregrine	Resident locally
Pheasant	Resident and probably breeds in the area
Lapwing	Seen during winter hard weather movements
Ringed Plover	One record in 2017, injured by wind
Golden Plover	Rare; flies over on passage and in winter
Woodcock	Rare winter visitor – one old record
Whimbrel	Passage migrant
Black-headed Gull	Winters
Mediterranean Gull	Passage migrant
Common Gull	Winters
Lesser Black-Backed Gull	Winters
Great Black-backed Gull	Occasional fly-over
Herring Gull	Resident; winters; breeds nearby; non-breeders summer
Sandwich Tern	Wandered off the coast
Feral Pigeon	Resident locally

Stock Dove	Resident and breeds (2-3 pairs) in the woods
Wood Pigeon	Resident in the woods; autumn passage migrant
Collared Dove	Resident locally
Barn Owl	Seen in hard winters
Little Owl	Was once resident in the Allotments; has bred
Tawny Owl	Status uncertain, heard only
Long eared Owl	Rare, one recent record only
Swift	Passage migrant and summer visitor
Wryneck	Rare passage migrant – one record
Green Woodpecker	Resident locally
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Resident locally
Skylark	Resident; breeds (5-8 pairs); erratic in autumn and winter
Sand Martin	Passage migrant
Swallow	Summer visitor; breeds locally; passage migrant
House Martin	Summer visitor; breeds locally; passage migrant
Meadow Pipit	Passage migrant; breeds (2-3 pairs); winter visitor
Tree Pipit	Occasional passage migrant
Yellow Wagtail	Passage migrant, especially autumn
Grey Wagtail	Occasional autumn passage visitor
Pied Wagtail	Passage migrant, especially autumn; resident locally
Wren	Resident; breeds
Duncock	Resident; breeds
Robin	Resident; breeds
Redstart	Passage migrant
Black Redstart	Scarce passage visitor – two records
Stonechat	Autumn and occasional Winter visitor
Whinchat	Passage migrant
Wheatear	Passage migrant
Ring Ouzel	Passage migrant
Blackbird	Resident; breeds
Fieldfare	Seen during winter hard weather movements
Song Thrush	Resident in very small numbers; probably winter visitor
Redwing	Winter visitor
Mistle Thrush	Status uncertain
Reed Warbler	Passage migrant
Sedge Warbler	Passage migrant
Lesser Whitethroat	Passage migrant; a pair may breed
Whitethroat	Summer visitor; breeds (3-4 pairs); passage migrant
Garden Warbler	Occasional passage migrant
Blackcap	Summer visitor; breeds (1-2 pairs); may appear in winter
Yellow-browed Warbler	Rare autumn passage migrant
Chiffchaff	Summer visitor; breeds (1-2 pairs); may appear in winter
Wood Warbler	Scarce spring migrant
Willow Warbler	Passage migrant
Goldcrest	Passage migrant; may winter
Firecrest	Passage migrant
Spotted Flycatcher	Passage migrant
Pied Flycatcher	Scarce passage migrant
Long-Tailed Tit	Resident; breeds (1 pair)

Marsh Tit	Scarce in coastal areas
Coal Tit	Rare here – one old record
Blue Tit	Resident; breeds (3-4 pairs)
Great Tit	Resident; breeds (2-3 pairs)
Nuthatch	Accidental
Jay	Resident; breeds
Magpie	Resident; breeds
Jackdaw	Resident; breeds locally; occasional passage migrant
Rook	Resident; breeds (25-35 nests in North Wood)
Carrion Crow	Resident; breeds
Raven	Flies over
Starling	Breeds locally; winter visitor
House Sparrow	Resident locally
Chaffinch	Resident; probably breeds; winter visitor
Brambling	Occasional winter visitor
Greenfinch	Resident locally
Goldfinch	Resident; breeds; passage migrant
Siskin	Passage migrant
Linnet	Resident, possibly breeds
Common Crossbill	Rare wanderer
Yellowhammer	Surprisingly one record only
Reed Bunting	Occasional visitor outside breeding season

THE MISCELLANEOUS REPORT 2017

By Peter Whitcomb

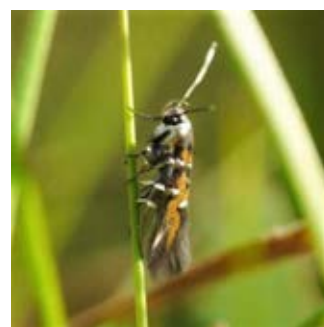
This section lumps together moths, insects, reptiles and mammals which can be seen on the Reserve. The year has been significant for the finding of rare moths by Tim Wilton. In July a **Bank Conch** was found. This is the first seen in Sussex since mid 1980s. It is a Nationally Scarce A species whose larva feed on Red Bartsia. Also found were **Violet Cosmet** and **Raspberry Clearwing**, the latter seen near Hog Plat allotments.



Bank Conch (SM)



Raspberry Clearwing (SM)



Violet Cosmet (SM)

Among the more mundane day-flying moths there were very few **Six-spot Burnet** and even less **Cinnabar**. Even the caterpillars of the latter were hard to come by on their Ragwort foodplant. Other species noted during transect walks were **Wood Carpet** and **Apple Moth**. Steven and Tim added **Cinerosus Pearl**, **Orange Conch**, **Common Carpet** and **Hook-marked Straw**. Jack added **Kent Black Arches**, a Nationally Scarce B species; also **Ghost Moth**, **Shaded Pug** and **Reddish Light Arches**.



Kent Black Arches (JK)



Six-spot Burnet (PW)



Yellow Belle (SM)

An up to date list of the moths that have been found on Beacon Hill over the years is shown below. There was plenty of insect interest around the Hill from the numerous **St Mark's Fly** in April, through the summer with hoverflies, various bees and **Soldier Beetles**, and in late summer a couple of **Devil's Coach Horse beetle** and a **Red-legged Shieldbug**. At least three of the UK's largest hoverfly, **Volucella zonaria** were attracted to snowberry flowers by Hog Plat allotments. Belated news came of **Red Bartsia Bee** *Melitta trincinta* which was noted by Jack Kellett in the summer. This is a National Scarce species found only in Southern England. There were numerous sightings of hoverflies and other insects, most of which were given a mention in the seasonal Nature Notes with relevant photos. Insects are a category which needs closer study and expertise.



Devil's Coach Horse



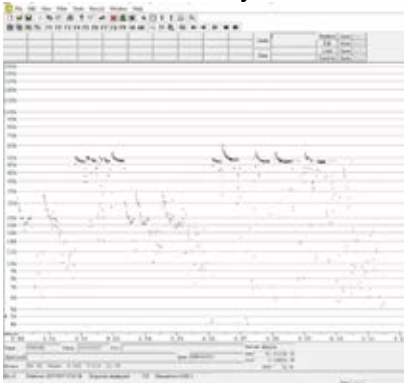
Volucella zonaria



Red-legged Shieldbug

Lizards and **Slow-worms** were spotted a couple of times, while the **Wasp Spiders** were noted in their usual spot in the grassland alongside North Wood. A **Dusky Slug** was a new species. Very few dragonflies alighted long enough for identification or to even photograph, but were likely to be Migrant Hawkers or Common Darters. Grey Squirrels, Foxes and Badgers are present, but rarely get reported.

For a short period in mid-October Jack Kellett put up sonogram detector units to check on bats in the area. **Common Pipistrelle** and **Noctule Bat** were identified, but a third sonogram was too brief for identification. Many thanks to Jack for this. Here are two examples of the sonograms:



Common Pipistrelle



Unknown bat species

Thanks go to the following for their photos and observations in this section of the Report: Jay Butler, Jack Kellett, Steven Munday, Tim Wilton.

Moths recorded at Beacon Hill LNR, Rottingdean

English Name

Angle Shades
Apple Leaf Miner
Apple-leaf Skeletonizer



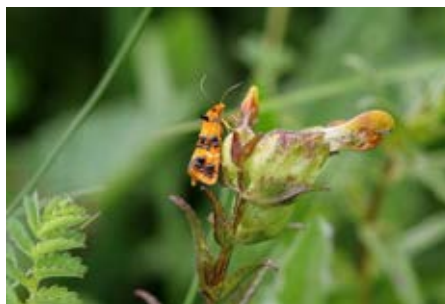
Bank Conch (SM)

Bordered Straw
Brimstone
Brown-tail Moth (larva)
Cinerosus Pearl
Cinnabar
Common Carpet
Common Swift
Common Wainscot



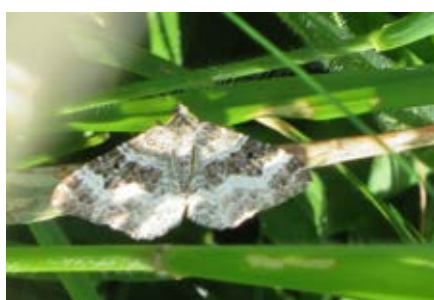
Curren Clearwing (SM)

Dark Arches
Deep-brown Dart
Double-striped Pug
Emperor Moth
Feathered Brindle
Flounced Rustic
Garden Grass-veneer
Garden Tiger
Ghost Moth
Grass Rivulet
Heart and Dart
Hook-marked Straw
Humming-bird Hawkmoth
Kent Black Arches
Large Yellow Underwing
Latticed Heath
Lesser Yellow Underwing
Light Emerald
Lime-speck Pug
Lunar Underwing
Meadow Grey
Oak Eggar



Orange Conch (SM)

Parsnip Moth
Purple Bar
Raspberry Clearwing
Reddish Light Arches
Red twin-spot Carpet
Rufous or Marbled Minor
Rush Veneer
Rustic
Rusty Dot Pearl
Scarce Forester
Shuttle-shaped Dart
Silver Y
Single-dotted Wave
Six-spot Burnet
Small Dusty Wave
Small Elephant Hawkmoth
Small Fan-foot
Square-spot Rustic
Vapourer
Vestal
Violet Cosmet
White Ermine (larva)
Willow Beauty



Wood Carpet (PW)

Yellow Belle
Yellow Shell

Scientific Name

Agriphila geniculea
Agriphila tristella
Blastobasis adustella
Bryotropha terella
Chrysoteuchia culmella
Cochylimorpha straminea
Dichorampha peretivella
Elachista atricomella

Epiblema constipunctana
Eucosma hohenwartiana
Eudonia angustea
Eupoecilia aeneana
Euopocilia angustana
Grapholita janthiana
Incurvaria masculella

Marasmarcha lunaedactyla
Pseudargyrotoza consugana
Pyrausta aurata
Pyrausta despicata
Pyrausta nigrata
Scoparia pyralella

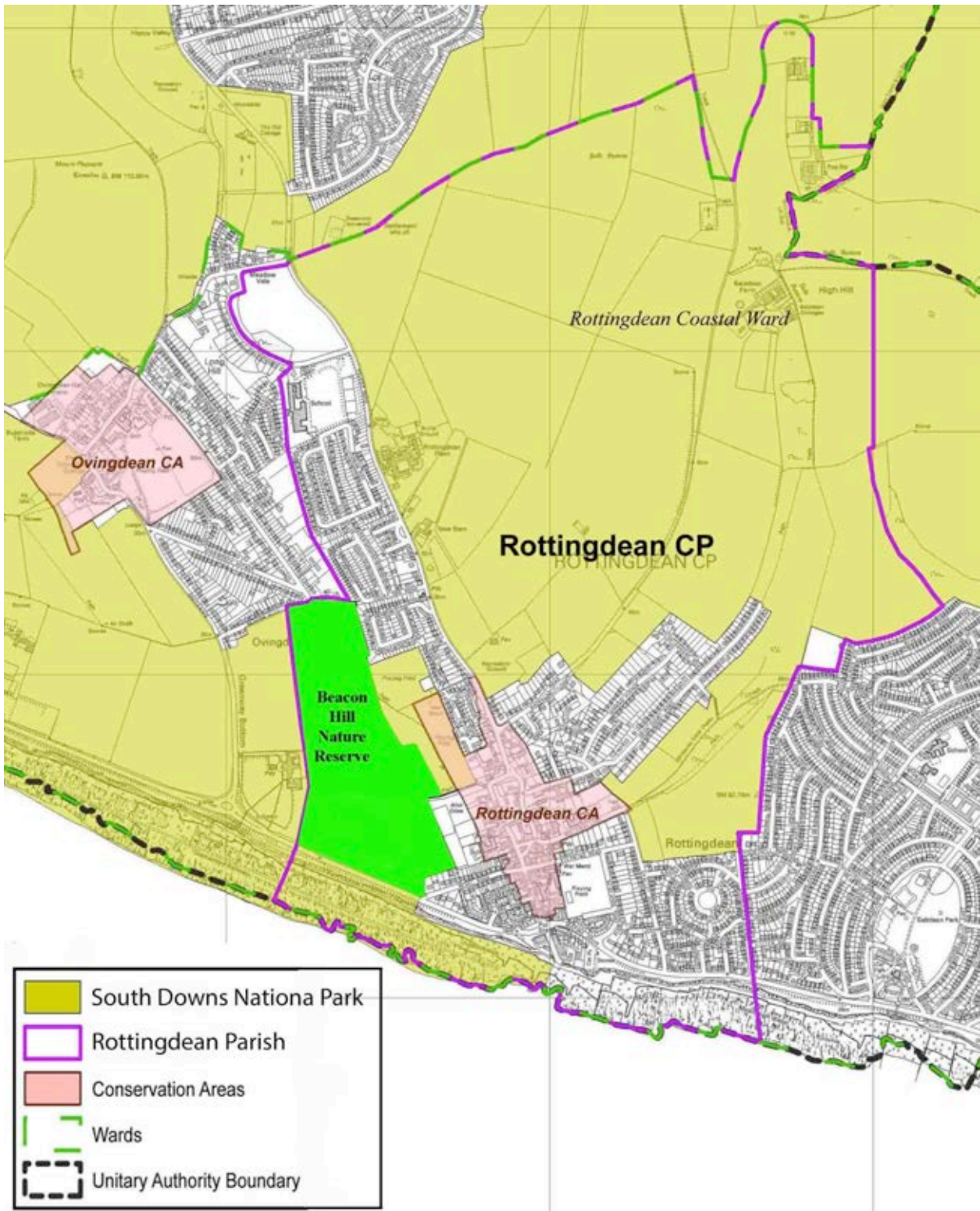
List compiled by Peter Whitcomb mostly based on records from Jack Kellett, Steven Munday and Tim Wilton.



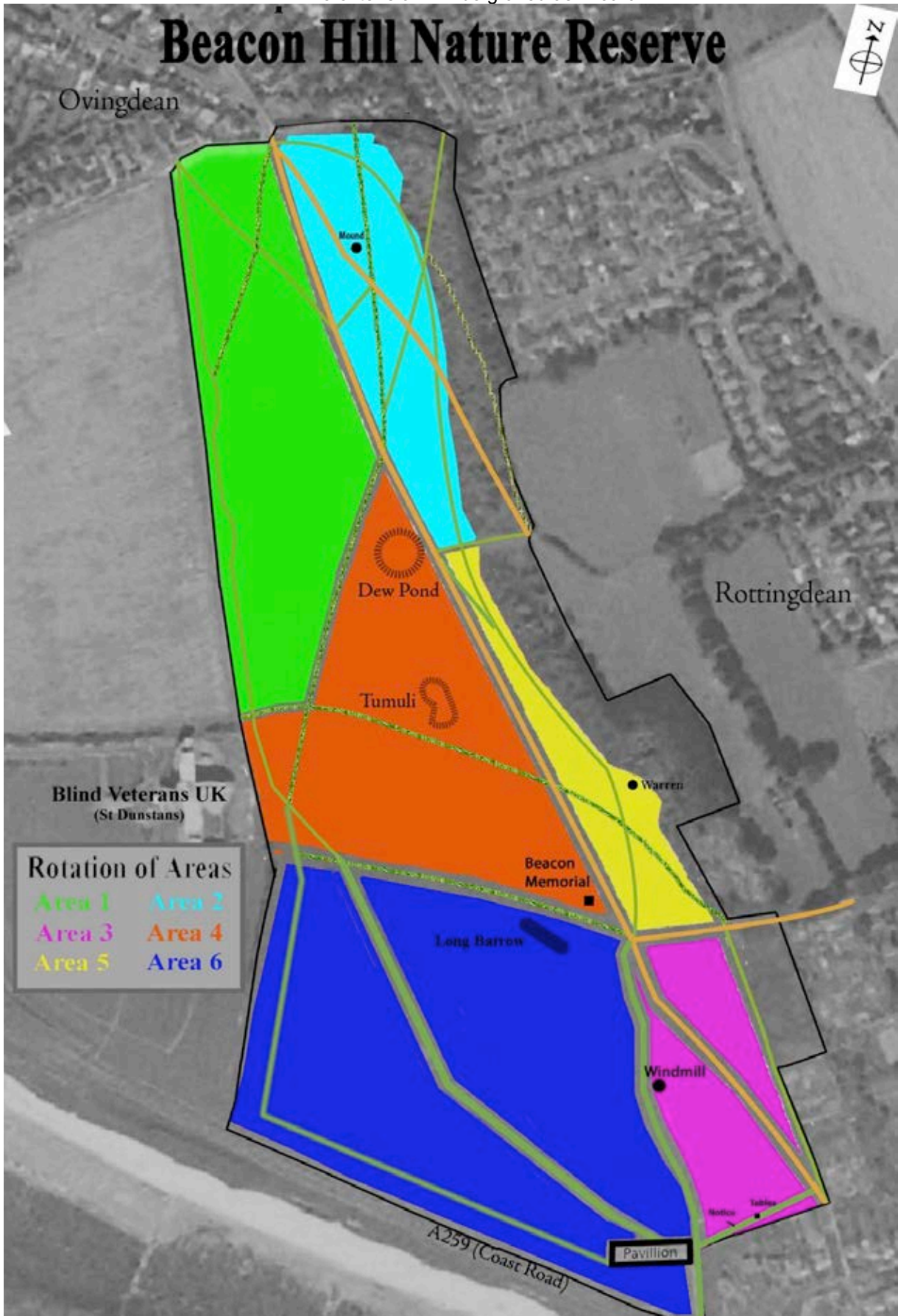
Beacon Hill in May

Peter Whitcomb

THE LOCATION OF BEACON HILL LNR



BEACON HILL GRAZING AREAS
NB The extension will be grazed as Area 6



BEACON HILL BUTTERFLY TRANSECT

