



Sussex
Wildlife Trust

Our species-rich
**Nature
Reserves**



burnt tip orchid © Colin Varndell/naturepl.com

Our top ten species-rich sites



by Graeme Lyons,
Senior Ecologist

Pan-species listing is an approach to natural history that treats all species equally, pushes you into difficult areas and adds a dash of friendly competition. From a burnt-tip orchid to a blue tit, from a silky gallows-spider to a barbastelle bat, they all count as one on your list. My own list has taken something of a back seat recently as I compiled a list for the nature reserves I help manage. A pan-species list for a site or sites, collated down the decades by a complementary consortium of naturalists has profound implications for wildlife conservation...but the dream of every reserve manager in the UK creating and maintaining a pan-species list for their sites has been slow to take off. So I decided to lead the way and produce a species list for all 32 Sussex Wildlife Trust sites.

I felt like I needed to kick start things to show everyone the benefits. I'd had a stab at some of our reserves before but I hadn't maintained a comprehensive species list, just the species totals. So what better way is there to celebrate all the amazing wildlife we look after than to

know exactly what it is and, to really add some value to it, when it was last recorded?

So where to start? Perhaps with why I did it and what I think we'll be able to use it for.

- *We have recorded 9,792 species (expect this to be constantly changing). Of these 5,548 are insects and 6,204 are invertebrates. Interestingly, 63.4% of everything recorded on our reserves is an invertebrate*
- *Vertebrates come in at 406 species (4.2%) demonstrating immediately how important the invertebrates are! There are of course 'unique' species – those seen on only one of our 32 sites. Of the 9,792 species, a whopping 3,802 have only been seen at one site! Rye Harbour nature reserve has the lion's share of 'uniques' with 1,274 being recorded there*
- *This list has value in its own right as an inventory of what we have and when it was last recorded. Using the conservation statuses, you can do all sorts of analyses on site quality and it informs our management plans. For the future, our plans are to only update each site from the records that come in to the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC) every five years*

I have always believed pan-species listing is a good thing for nature conservation. There are some huge gaps in recording that I would never have noticed if I hadn't gone through this process. For example, two of our large wetland sites have not a single fly record!

It's an approach that leaves no stone unturned and favours the little guys as much as it does the big obvious ones – that often get most of the attention.

Our top ten species-rich nature reserves are well worth a visit and many are home to some extremely charismatic and exotic-looking species. You can find full details of all our reserves on our website, with location information, what to see and when to visit to enjoy the wildlife at its best.

sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/visit
brc.ac.uk/psl



© Barry Yates

Rye Harbour

1

With a whopping 4,275 species, Rye Harbour has 44% of everything ever seen on a Sussex Wildlife Trust nature reserve. It has 1,274 species that have been seen there but not at any of our other 31 reserves. It's our top site for birds (297), fish (25 including thornback ray), crustaceans (43), plants (497), beetles (955), dragonflies (27), moths (688), bugs (223), flies (656), spiders (201) and many more! The invertebrate list alone is huge with 3,164 species recorded from the site.



bittern © Barry Yates



thornback ray © Graeme Lyons

Ebernoe Common

2

A total of 3,711 species have been recorded here. This is our top site for fungi (961), butterflies (38 shared with Levin), and lichens (213). Ebernoe Common has 598 unique species and an impressive beetle list with 481 recorded including many rare deadwood species. The rare beeswax bracket is just one of many fungi found at Ebernoe – a fungi that kick-starts the wood decay process. While candlesnuff is the fungus that has been recorded on the most reserves (14).



beeswax bracket © Graeme Lyons



© Mark Monk-Terry

3

Iping & Stedham Commons

This beautifully rich site is our best site for bees, ants and wasps (260), mosses (103) and liverworts (44). Nearly 1,500 species of invertebrate have been recorded here and 2,749 species overall. There are many rare species associated with bare ground and new habitat is made annually for species such as the heath tiger beetle which was reintroduced recently and Iping Common is the only site for this species in Sussex. Beetles are the most speciose group of all on our reserves with a phenomenal 1,837 different species! Seven-spot ladybird is the most frequently found with 25 of our 32 reserves having records.



© Robin Crane



heath tiger beetle © Graeme Lyons

Woods Mill

Woods Mill is our top site for amphibians (6) and oddly, earwigs (3) with a total of 2,202 species recorded in all. It also has a good beetle list (274) and moth list (637). Although the site has no designations, most of our staff is based here and the huge moth list is down to years of moth trapping and includes rarities such as Rannoch looper and dusky hook-tip as well as rare natives like the lappet. We have records of 1,232 moths across the reserve network, with dark arches and silver Y most common and found at 23 of our other sites.



lappet © Graeme Lyons

4



© Richard Cobden

5

The Mens

Top for slime moulds (34) and mammals (38). A good fungi (580) and beetle (327) list too. A total of 2,026 species have been recorded here. The woodland is a very even age and management takes a non-intervention approach. The small meadows known as Badlands however are more managed and are correspondingly rich in plants and invertebrates, being our only site for the early spring-flying, aspen-feeding moth, the light orange underwing. It is the only reserve where I have ever seen a polecat and I actually saw a badger chasing one. Our mammal list stands at 45 species, with human the most frequently recorded species on all 32 of our sites (you can't have a record without a human!).



© Mark Monk-Terry



polecat © Darin Smith

Malling Down

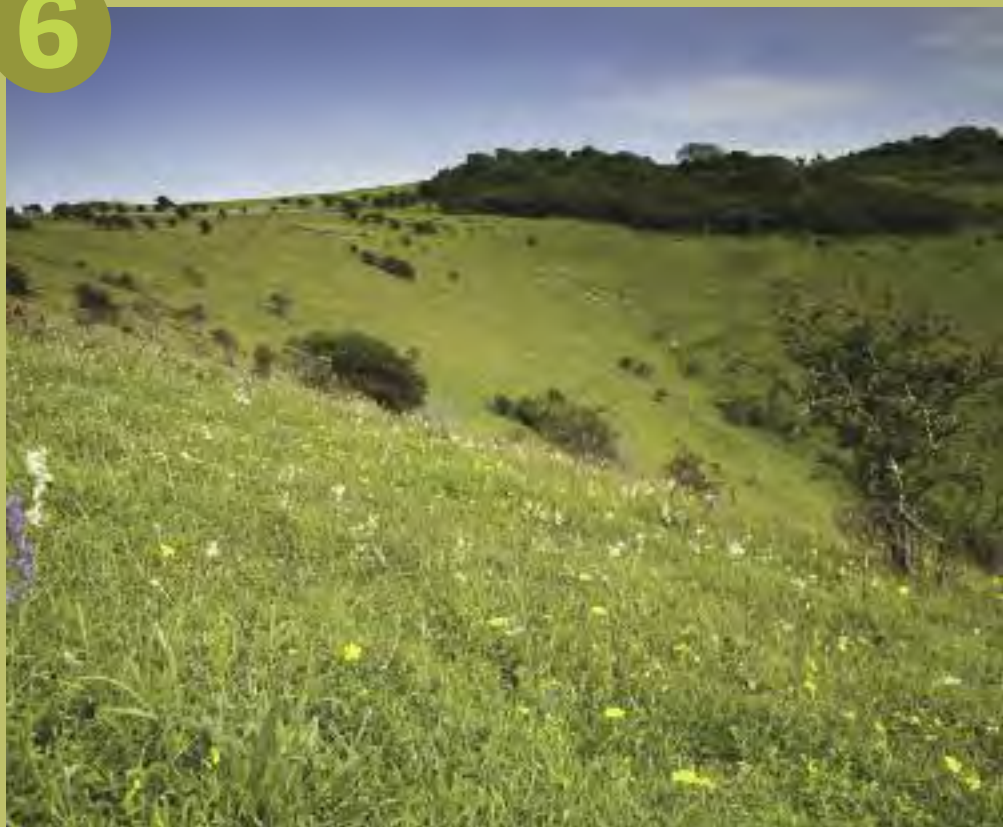
This is our most species-rich chalk grassland site with a total of 1,819 species, including 206 flies, 151 bugs and 547 beetles. The rare phantom hoverfly was recorded during a survey in 2014.

We have exactly as many species of fly (1,330) on our reserves as we do fungi – which is a bizarre coincidence.



phantom hoverfly © Chris Bentley

6



© Nigel Symington

7

Old Lodge

This is our top site for harvestmen (11) and booklice (4). It also boasts 133 spiders, with 1,808 species recorded in total. Old Lodge is our answer to an upland site and has records of species such as the striking beetle *Carabus arvensis*. Not quite a species unique to Old Lodge is the green spider. However, it is perhaps our most striking spider and is a real Ashdown Forest speciality. A total of 375 spiders have been recorded across our reserves with Rye Harbour having the most at 201 closely followed by Iping and Stedham Commons with 199. The nursery-web spider occurs on 18 out of our 32 sites.



© Carole Nicholson



green spider © Graeme Lyons

Flatropers Wood

8

This reserve boasts 1,714 species with an impressive fungi (229), fly (282), spider (92) and moth (305) list. With large populations of red wood ants, it's not surprising that it's our only site (if not the only Sussex site) for the scarce 7-spot ladybird which lives near them.

Flatropers has the highest percentage of unique species after Rye Harbour which is incredible given the fact that it has no designations. It has been a favourite with lepidopterists for many years.



scarce 7-spot ladybird © Graeme Lyons



© Reuben Beckett

9

Burton Pond

A good all-round list with 1,658 species recorded, 268 of which are fungi. Only 210 moths have been recorded here which must be an underestimate. It's the only one of our sites to have records of the amazing longhorn beetle *Agapanthia villosoviridescens*.



© Carole Nicholson



Agapanthia villosoviridescens © Graeme Lyons

Filsham Reedbed

10

A total of 1,625 species have been recorded here. Wonderful bird (168) and moth (486) lists at this small but rich reedbed and wetland site. The reed dagger is a scarce species of moth that inhabits reedbeds. It is brightly coloured as a larva relying on looking unpalatable to avoid being eaten but becomes much more cryptic as an adult so it can hide among the reeds.



reed dagger © Graeme Lyons



© Nigel Symington



I'd like to say a huge thank you to all the people that have helped particularly Bob Foreman and the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre, Chris Bentley (for compiling Rye Harbour's species list), Frances Abraham and everyone of you that has ever submitted a record from one of our nature reserves.



All of this wildlife wouldn't occur without consistent and sustained habitat management by our dedicated staff and volunteers as well as the support of our members.