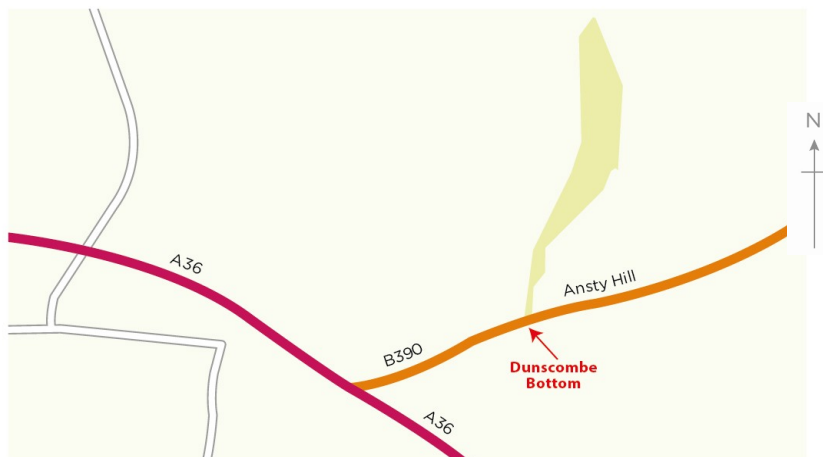


Dunscombe Bottom



Location

Near Warminster
Post code BA12 OJF
Grid ref. ST941431

Access – Entry is by climbing over the field gate; we will be putting in a stile. There is no footpath and the walk takes you over rough grass on a steep slope. Not suitable for pushchairs or wheelchairs. Dogs on leads welcome.

Directions

If driving – The reserve is five miles from Warminster. From the A36 Warminster to Salisbury road turn on to B390 at Knook Army Camp. Immediately after the camp pull into a small layby on the left at entrance to reserve. There is parking for two cars on verge.

If using bus - Route 24 travels from Warminster to Salisbury. Visit www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets
If cycling - Visit www.sustrans.org.uk

Nearby reserves– Smallbrook Meadows

About Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Our vision is to create a county rich in wildlife and help people live sustainable lifestyles that protect the environment for the benefit of everyone.

We have about 18,500 members, look after almost 40 nature reserves, are supported by hundreds of volunteers, and work with local communities, schools, businesses and public bodies to achieve our aims. To do all this we rely on the support of our members.

If you would like to join us, or to find out about how you can help the environment, please visit www.wiltshirewildlife.org

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info@wiltshirewildlife.org

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Registered charity no.
266202



Dunscombe Bottom

5.12 hectares

This stretch of chalk grassland curves across the steep side of a combe (valley) near Knook, on the edge of Salisbury Plain. As you walk over the rough grass, enjoy the **far-reaching views**.

It was leased to us in 2009 by a farmer who for the previous 25 years had managed it for wildlife. It has never been fertilised or improved and has always been used for grazing by sheep and cattle.

Between September and February we graze with **mules**, a special cross of hardy lowland sheep, to take the summer growth down to a short turf. This allows spring sunlight to reach the wildflowers just as they are ready to grow.

We also graze with cattle – their feet poach (disturb) the soil. This kick-starts the growth of seeds such as horseshoe vetch – food plant of the **Adonis blue** butterfly, which is here.

Wildlife

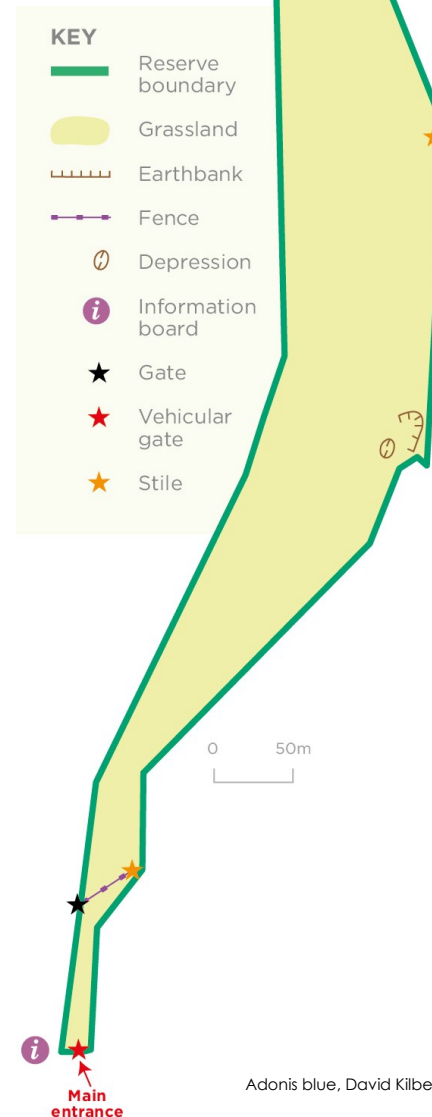
The reserve contains 44 chalk grassland plant species, including seven orchids.

If you visit in the summer the land is a patchwork of colour from orchids, early gentian, **knapweed**, rockroses and eyebright. The bluish tones of milkwort add a cool note to the mix.

The **greater butterfly orchid** grows here. Its pale vanilla-coloured flowers release a sweet smell, stronger at night, which attracts moths. Among butterflies you can also see marbled white and small blue.

Be careful not to trip over the dozens of **anthills** as you enter the reserve. They are an indicator of ancient, undisturbed chalk grassland. Each mound is created by a single colony of **yellow meadow ants**, carrying soil to the surface as they create a network of galleries below ground where they raise their young.

Look closely and you will see purple thyme and yellow **rockroses** flourishing on the sun-warmed anthills, enjoying their own little microclimate created by the 'storage heater' effect of the piled earth.



Adonis blue, David Kilbey. Common rock rose, Rob Large WWT. Greater butterfly orchid, Rob Large WWT

Mules, Sue Litherland WWT. Anthill, Barry Craske WWT

