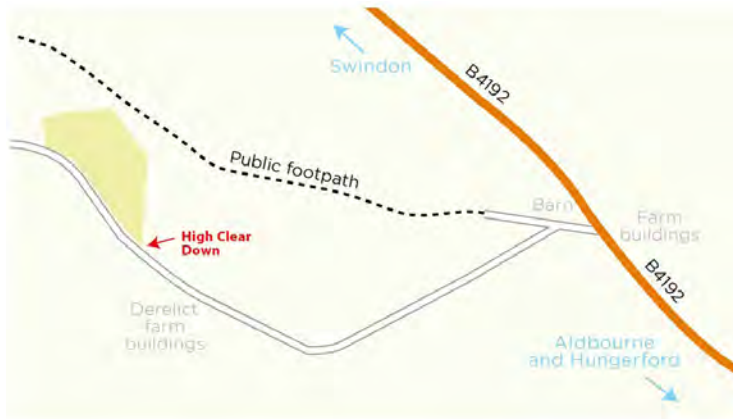
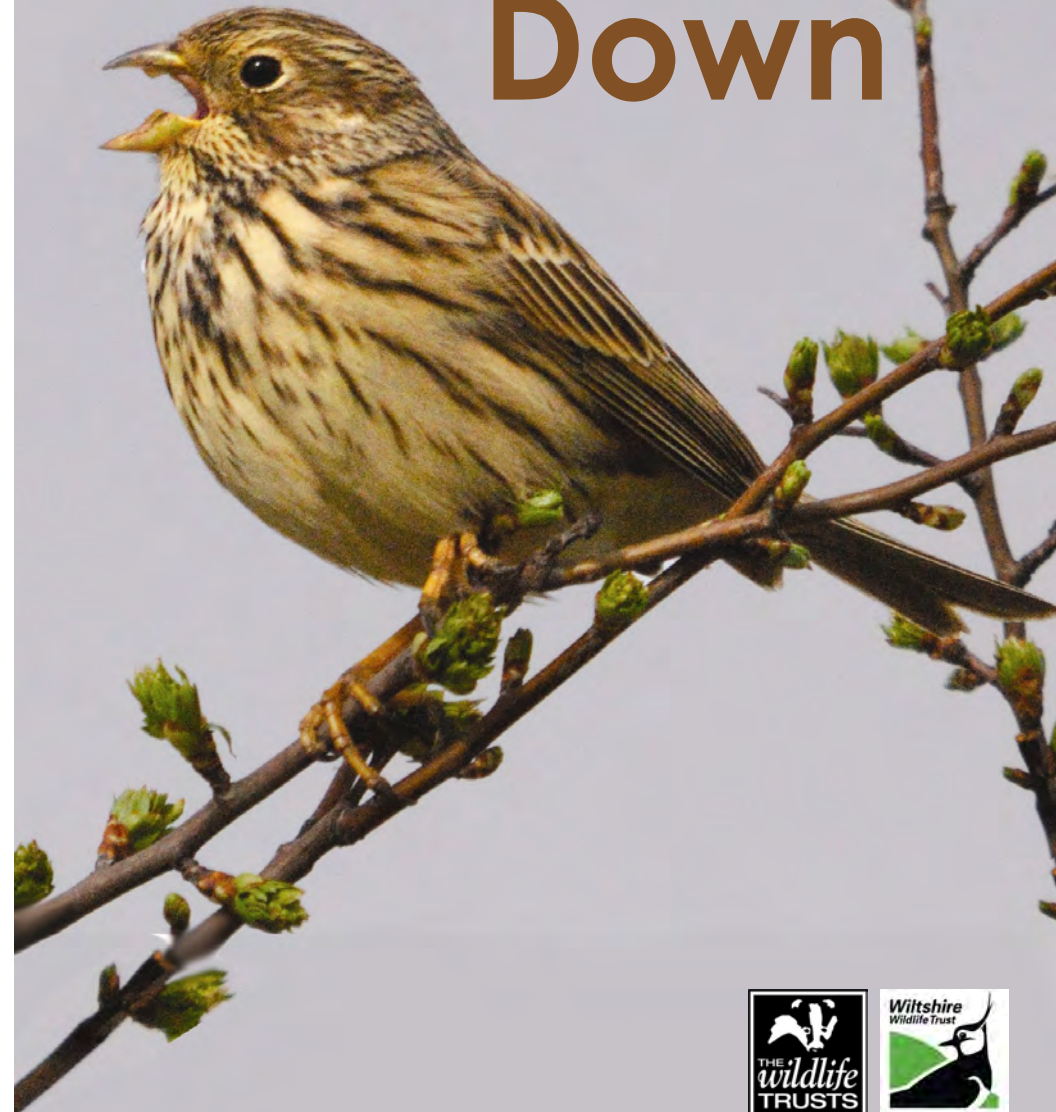


High Clear Down



Location

Marlborough SN8 2LE
Grid ref SU237762

Access - Easier walking at bottom of slope. Not suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs. Dogs on leads are welcome.

Directions

If driving - The reserve is located south east of Swindon, near Aldbourne. From Aldbourne proceed along B4192 towards Swindon for 0.75 miles from centre of village. On reaching barn on left side of road, turn left and park, taking care not to block access for farm vehicles. Walk along track (byway) and after about 250 metres take left fork, signposted Snap and Ridgeway. Walk for a further 1.25 miles along a rough track, passing derelict farm buildings on the left before reaching reserve entrance (kissing gate) on right.

If using bus - The 46/48 Marlborough to Swindon bus service stops in Aldbourne. Walking directions as above. Visit www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets

If cycling - Leave Regional Cycle Route 26 in the village of Aldbourne. Visit www.sustrans.org.uk

Nearby reserves - Clouts Wood Complex

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

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Ltd. Elm Tree Court, Long Street, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1NJ. Telephone (01380) 725670 info@wiltshirewildlife.org

 Join us on [Facebook.com/WiltsWild](https://www.facebook.com/WiltsWild)

 Follow @WiltsWildlife

Registered charity no. 266202.



Front cover: Corn bunting, Amy Lewis



High Clear Down

10.07 hectares

This steeply sloping chalk downland close to the village of Aldbourn has no set footpaths so you can wander freely over the grass. Enjoy the uninterrupted views of **rolling countryside** and, in the summer, the wildflowers.

We graze the slope with cattle between April and October to keep the grass under control. One species that is particularly tough to deal with is tor-grass. If left alone it would invade the down, so we bring experts to apply herbicide directly to each cluster to stop it spreading.

Wildlife

Wildflowers are abundant because through history the down has escaped being 'improved' by fertilisers and pesticides and has been continuously and lightly grazed.

May is one of the loveliest times to visit when the blue **chalk milkwort** is in flower.

We bought the reserve in 1998 partly because it has one of the country's largest populations of the nationally scarce **early gentian** - a little annual with a purple trumpet that flowers in May and June and is unique to Britain.

The gentian will only grow on chalky soil with thin grass that has bare patches, which is essential for seedlings to grow.

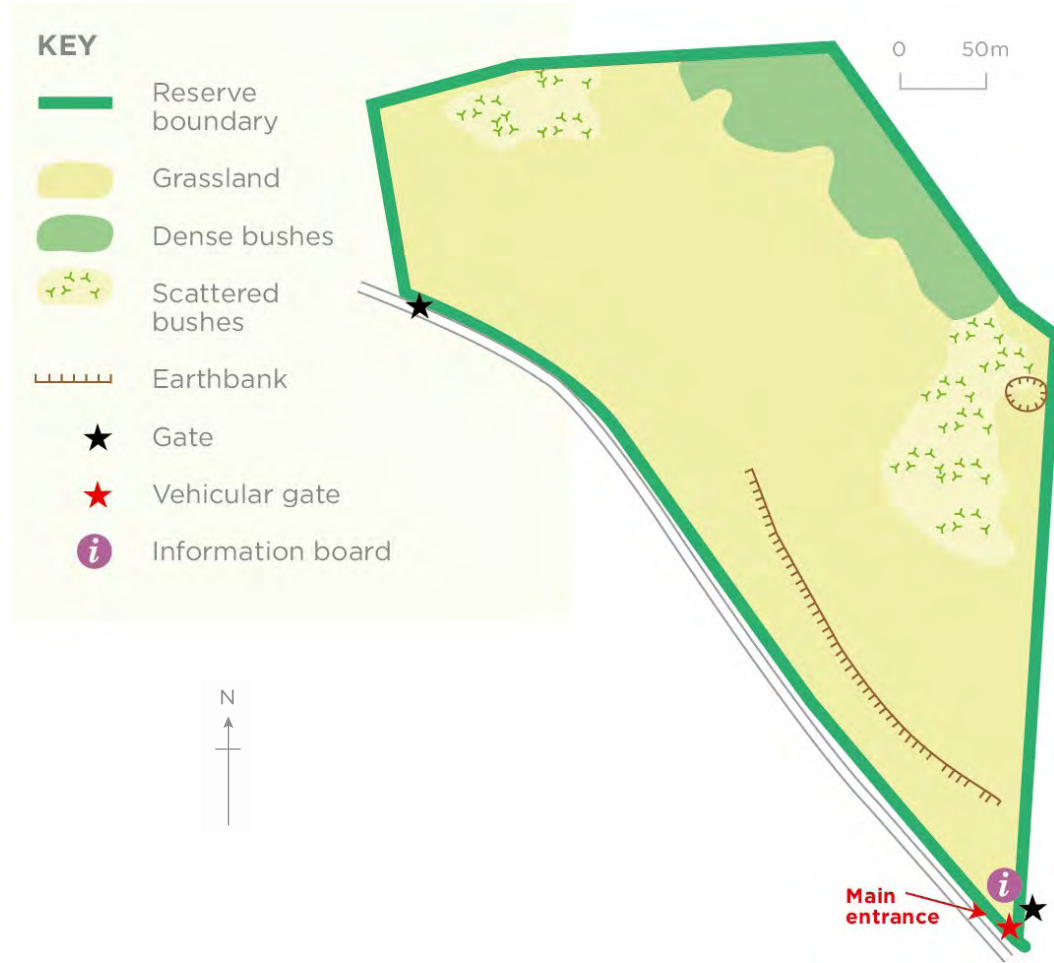
Here you can enjoy the scented pink spires of fragrant orchids, common spotted and pyramidal. In some years you can find green winged and **frog orchids**, and at the end of summer a few spikes of autumn ladies-tresses.

Look for the delicate white stars of the fairy flax and bright yellow of common rockrose, and in late summer the rose-finted mounds of squinancywort as well as harebells and autumn gentian.

These plants provide food for butterflies from late spring and summer. See if you can spot the stunning green hairstreak, marbled white, nationally scarce Duke of Burgundy, **brown argus** and a clutch of blues – the Adonis, common, chalkhill and small.

The reserve is also home to some notable moths including the cistus forester and oblique striped day-flying moths.

Across the top of the ridge is a dense cluster of hawthorn that provides habitat for birds including **corn buntings**. Above your head you may hear the ascending notes of the **skylark**.



Brown argus, Stephen Davis WWT. Chalk milkwort, Richard Aisbitt. Frog orchid, Rob Large WWT. Cattle grazing at High Clear Down, Steve Day WWT. Early gentian, Rob Large WWT. Skylark, Darin Smith. View over open downland, Steve Day WWT

