

Location

Salisbury
Grid ref. SU111256

Access – Reserve is steep in places and paths are grass. Limited access for wheelchairs or pushchairs (see main site map).

Responsible dog owners with dogs on leads are welcome.

Directions

If driving - Travelling from Salisbury on the A354 to Blandford, at Coombe Bissett take first turn left after Fox and Goose pub signposted Homington. After about 0.5 miles turn right into Pennings Drove which is on the junction with the Coombe Fellowship Building. Follow road uphill for 0.25 miles. Main reserve entrance and car park on the right.

If using bus – Buses go to Coombe Bissett village. Visit www.salisburyreds.co.uk

If cycling – Visit www.sustrans.org.uk

Nearby reserves - Middleton Down, Cockey Down, Langford Lakes

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 over 20,000 members, look after 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 how you can help the environment, please visit www.wiltshirewildlife.org

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

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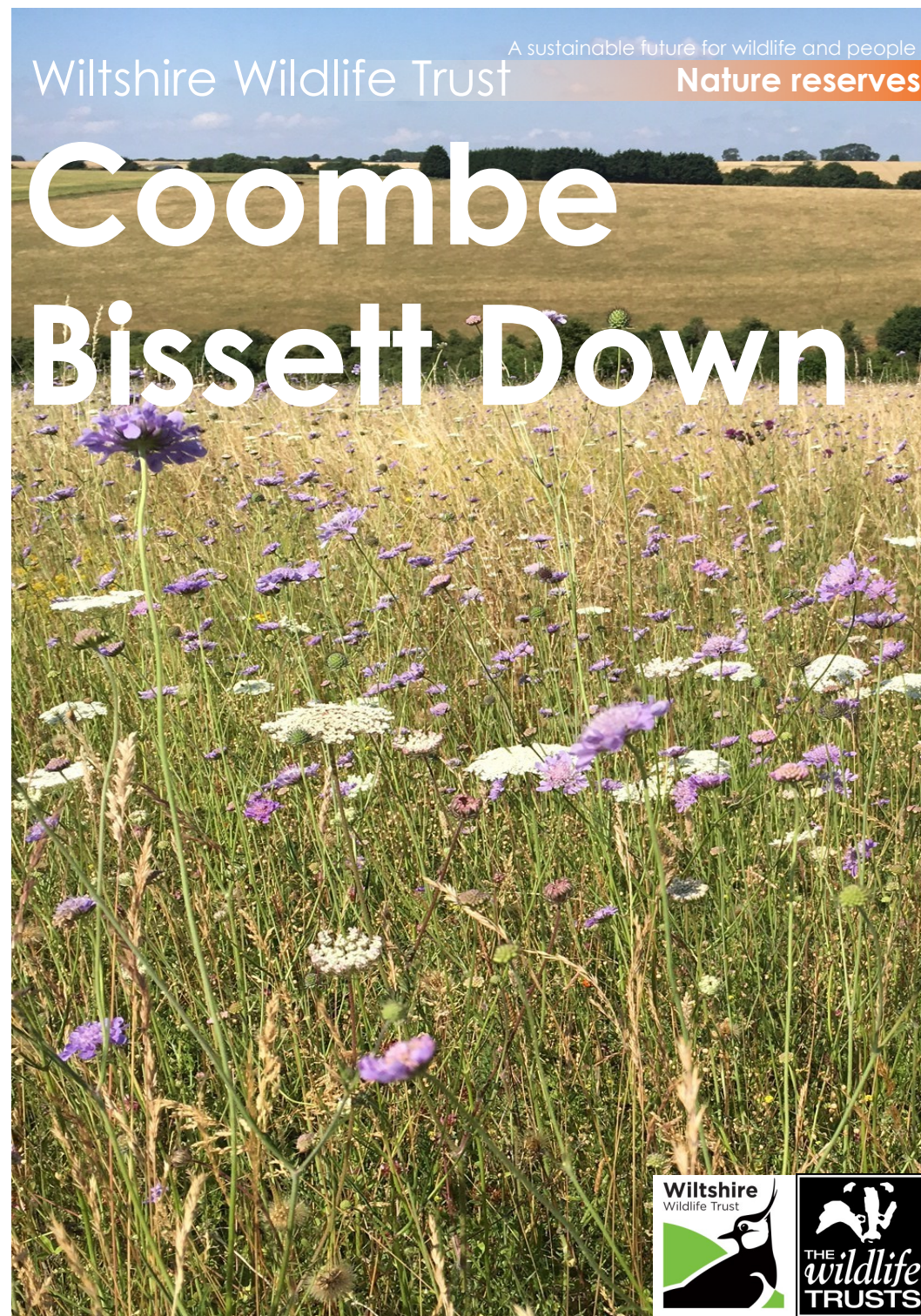
Registered charity no. 266202

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

A sustainable future for wildlife and people

Nature reserves

Coombe Bissett Down



Coombe Bissett Down

70 hectares

Enjoy the views and bask in the beauty of nature and the sound of birdsong. To encourage breeding and overwintering birds and flourishing wildflowers, we ask that dogs are kept on leads and any waste is removed from the site.

Coombe Bissett Down Nature Reserve is located south-west of the city of Salisbury. The reserve encompasses rolling downland, steep slopes and a dry valley. Part of the reserve has been designated as a **Site of Special Scientific Interest** (SSSI) because of the rare flora and fauna found here.

The reserve is worth a visit at any time of year for its sweeping views. In spring, yellowhammer, **skylark** and whitethroat can be heard singing while kestrels hover overhead hunting small mammals. In the winter months look out for flocks of linnet, mistle thrush in the scrub, and the soaring red kite surveying the land from above.

Peak time for wildflowers is late May and early June but the downland is ablaze from April to October with cowslip, birds-foot trefoil, **harebell**, dropwort, horseshoe vetch, knapweed, lady's bedstraw, devil's-bit scabious, pyramidal and common spotted orchids and Wiltshire's county flower - the **burnt orchid**. Anthills covered with purple wild thyme and yellow rock-rose pepper the steepest slopes. The flora supports a rich invertebrate interest, including butterflies such as **Adonis blue**, small blue and dingy skipper.

People have had a close relationship with Coombe Bissett Down for millennia. Artefacts from the Iron Age and Roman period have been found here. On the reserve in between early Medieval strip lychets (terraces that were cut into the slopes to grow crops) lie ancient chalk downland banks, created and then enhanced by grazing animals over thousands of years.

Today the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust continues to manage Coombe Bissett Down through livestock grazing. The reserve is sectioned by fencing which enables us to vary grazing pressure and timing to suit different species. Our flock of hardy **Herdwick sheep** and herd of light-footed Dexter cattle are bred from our farm base here and moved on and off the land to provide conservation grazing across our southern nature reserves.

Species-rich grassland habitats including chalk downlands have undergone a huge decline over the last century. Now small and isolated fragments, they have little chance of surviving unless they are linked to other sites. At Coombe Bissett Down we are gradually restoring a number of former arable fields back to downland for the benefit of a range of species of conservation concern. Our work here sets out to reconnect the mosaic of chalk grassland for the survival of Wiltshire's wildlife and for the enjoyment of everyone. For more information visit: <https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/coombe-bissett-project>

Walking trails

- Easy access trail** ●●●
Distance: 1.2km / 0.7 miles
Allow: 20 minutes
- Short loop** ●●●
Distance: 2km / 1.2 miles
Allow: 30 minutes
- Hillside loop** ●●●
Distance: 3.2km / 2 miles
Allow: 1 hour
- Valley loop** ———
Distance: 3.2km / 2 miles
Allow: 1 hour

Key

- P** Parking
- B** Bench
- X** Kissing gate
- Butterfly bank
- View point
- Education area
- Fence
- Area border
- Road
- Bridleway
- 0 100m
- Farm (no public access)



Photos from left: Goldfinch, Darin Smith. Harebell, Rob Large WWT. Wasp spider, Steve Day WWT. Marbled white on field scabious, Steve Day WWT. Burnt orchid, Rob Large WWT

