



Coombe Bissett Down Large Print

Heritage
Ability



Hello and welcome!

**This booklet will provide information about
Coombe Bissett Down, for visitors who
prefer to use Large Print.**

**Please return this guide before you leave.
Thank you.**

Coombe Bissett Down is a 70 hectare chalk downland nature reserve located to the south west of Salisbury.

Bask in the beauty of nature and the sound of birdsong here at Coombe Bissett Down. 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.

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.

In spring, yellowhammer, skylark and whitethroat can be heard singing while kestrels hover overhead hunting small mammals. In the winter months, we have visits from flocks of linnet, mistle thrush in the scrub, and the soaring red kite survey 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.

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.

Walking Trails.

These trails are marked in colours on your map, which correspond with markings around the site to help you navigate.

Easy access trail. This trail is marked in orange on your map.

Distance: 1.2km / 0.7 miles

Allow: 20 minutes

A flat route to a view point and bench.

Short loop. This trail is marked in black on your map.

Distance: 2km / 1.2 miles

Allow: 30 minutes

This route encircles the Medieval strip lynchets.

Hillside loop. This trail is marked in blue on your map.

Distance: 3.2km / 2 miles

Allow: 1 hour

There are some very steep sections to this circular route around the site.

Valley loop. This trail is marked in green on your map.

Distance: 3.2km / 2 miles

Allow: 1 hour

This extended walk encompasses most of the reserve with benches along the way for a welcome rest. Be aware of some steep inclines.

**We hope that you have had a good trip to
Coombe Bissett Down.**

**Please return this guide and the separate
map before you leave.**

**Thank you for visiting Coombe Bissett
Down.**

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