

CHALK GRASSLAND

One of the most species-rich habitats in the UK, with up to 40 plant species per square metre.

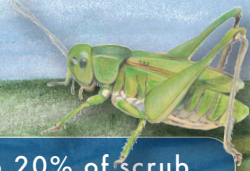


Chalkhill blue



Small blue

Wart-biter bush cricket



SPRING



Cowslip



Carlina thistle



Dropwort



Kidney vetch



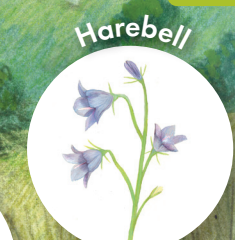
Wild thyme

Up to 20% of scrub to provide shelter for wildlife and livestock.

SUMMER



Bee orchid



Harebell



Greater knapweed



Horseshoe vetch



Small scabious

Up to 30% of taller clumps of grass for invertebrates.

Up to 5% covered in bare patches of ground, for invertebrates and wildflowers.

Grazing is essential for chalk grassland. Without it, coarse grasses and scrub take over, leaving no space for wildflowers.

Different animals graze in different ways. Sheep create an even lawn by nibbling.

Cattle create a tussocky sward by pulling. Hardy breeds of ponies and goats are good at eating coarser grasses.

Some tight, short sward with delicate grasses and flowering plants.



Quaking grass



Sheep's fescue



Ballerina waxcap



SPRING

WHAT TO LOOK FOR.

Short turf with some taller spring grasses & early-flowering plants. Look for cowslips, violets & orchids, & shrubs like hawthorn & blackthorn. Wildlife includes red admiral butterfly, hares, potter flower bee & skylarks.



Cowslip

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Graze lightly in early spring, but remove stock by early April so plants like orchids don't get nibbled off and miss flowering.

WINTER

WHAT TO LOOK FOR.

Look at the sward - if you have a mosaic structure across your grassland, there will be lots of invertebrates, such as caterpillars, hunkered down for winter.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Continue grazing - the cattle will break up the turf & create bare ground for next year's wildflowers. Tight grazing with sheep helps control ragwort. Also, time to tackle the scrub if it is an issue.



Changing Chalk
connecting nature, people and heritage

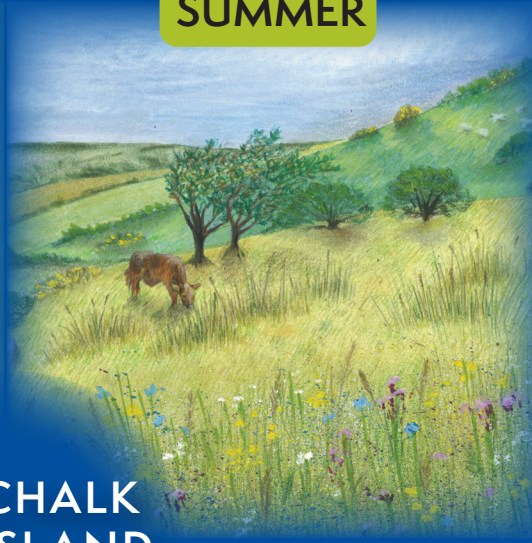


SOUTH DOVENS
NATIONAL PARK

SPRING

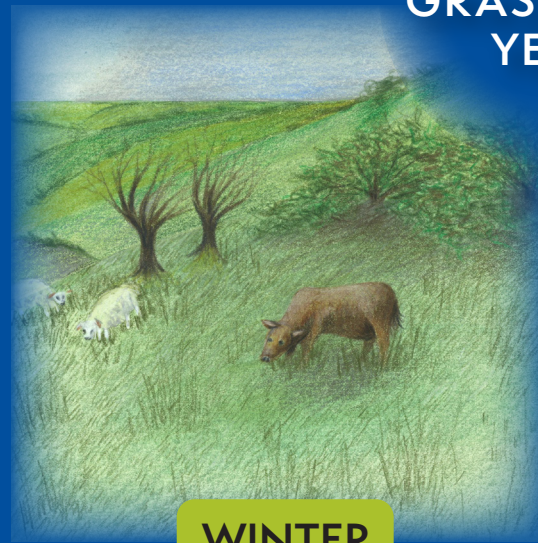


SUMMER

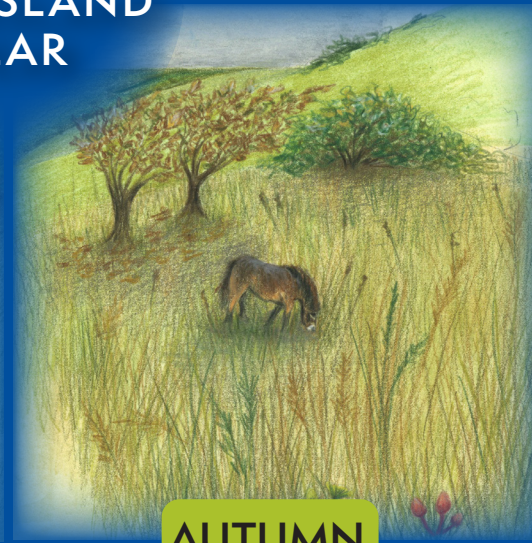


THE CHALK GRASSLAND YEAR

WINTER



AUTUMN



SUMMER

WHAT TO LOOK FOR.

Many chalk species flowering. Scattered scrub provides shade. Tight sward, bare ground & tussocky grass. Look for small scabious & harebell, grizzled skipper & Adonis blue butterflies, cinnabar moths, plus swifts & swallows above.



Adonis blue

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Avoid heavy grazing when plants are in flower. Wait until they go to seed before bringing stock on to graze. Have a look at the structure - this will help you to decide how to graze.

AUTUMN

WHAT TO LOOK FOR.

Plants have largely gone & migrating birds will be leaving. Devil's bit scabious is still showing & some butterflies are still visible. From



Parrot waxcap

September, look for green, red and pink waxcap fungi - a sign of good-quality chalk grassland.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Start tighter grazing in September & continue until February. If the sward wasn't grazed over summer, it may be quite tall. The coarser grasses will be obvious & help you recognise if the area needs harder grazing.



Scarlet waxcap