

NEW FOREST
NATIONAL PARK

CONSERVATION IN THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

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Conservation designations

Crab Tree Bog

Site protection in the UK

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 has been central to the protection of the British countryside for almost 50 years. It allows national parks to be designated and includes measures to protect other parts of the countryside.

The Act established powers to designate Local and National Nature Reserves. The system of designating Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) also grew out of this act. The Act is still in operation and has been amended by more recent legislation.

Introduction

The New Forest National Park is one of the most important sites for nature conservation in lowland England. Land within it is owned by the Crown and a large number of private landowners, local authorities and private trusts.

This complex ownership and the many aspects of the environment that require conserving, make legal protection desirable. One of the ways that this is done is through the designation of protected areas. This factsheet examines the many designations, international, national and local, which aim to protect the wildlife and landscape of the New Forest National Park.

National Park status

The New Forest became a National Park in March 2005 and this put it in the premier league of wildlife conservation and protection. As with all national parks there are two core purposes that underpin all that takes place within the Park. The first is to look after (or conserve) the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park. The second purpose encourages the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. On top of this the Environment Act, 1995 introduced a duty to foster the social and economic well being of communities within it. National Park status therefore conferred an extra degree of legislation that affords environmental protection for this unique and special area. In addition the National Park Authority has become the local planning authority and now has the opportunity to enhance conservation through the planning system.



Bog Pimpernel, Hatchet Pond

New Forest Acts

The New Forest has several Acts of Parliament which relate specifically to its protection from development and its management for the benefit of commoning, wildlife and amenity. The New Forest Acts are administered by the Verderers and the Forestry Commission and together with the protection offered through Crown ownership have helped to ensure the New Forest's survival to the present day.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

This is a national designation which seeks to conserve the best examples of wildlife and geological sites in the country. Natural England is the statutory agency responsible for notifying sites and advising on their management. The National Park contains 20 SSSIs but is dominated by the main New Forest SSSI which covers almost 29,000 hectares. For more information see the factsheet on Habitats of the National Park.

The New Forest SSSI

This includes heaths, mires, grassland and woodland as well as other habitats. Nowhere else in lowland Britain contains such a mix and such large areas. It is also home to a huge number of notable species. It is estimated that nearly half of the 2,500 species of butterfly and moth have been recorded in the New Forest. Many of these, and other invertebrates, are considered rare. In addition 9 rare and 25 nationally scarce species of vascular plants are recorded.

As well as this ecological wealth, the New Forest SSSI also contains areas which are of geological interest.

Sections through the Bracklesham beds contain rich and well preserved fossils of marine animals.



Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP)

The Government has identified national priorities for conservation action and established targets for the recovery of particular habitats and species in a national BAP. The Hampshire BAP translates this process into a more local context.

The National Park in partnership with others is developing a BAP for the National Park Area to coordinate conservation action with a range of stakeholders.

Public bodies such as local councils and transport agencies have a duty to have regard to biodiversity in delivering their work. Those habitats and species covered by BAPs require special consideration when undertaking work or issuing consents such as planning permission.



Curlew © Carnyx Films

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

Special Protection Areas are designated due to their international importance for birds. The main New Forest SSSI is also a SPA because of a number of rare and vulnerable birds that are supported by its habitats. These include honey buzzard, nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler.

In addition, the Avon Valley SSSI, on the western edge of the Park is an SPA along with the SSSIs along the coastline. These coastal areas contain important breeding colonies of birds such as the sandwich tern and little tern, along with wintering populations of waterfowl such as dark bellied Brent geese.

Local Sites

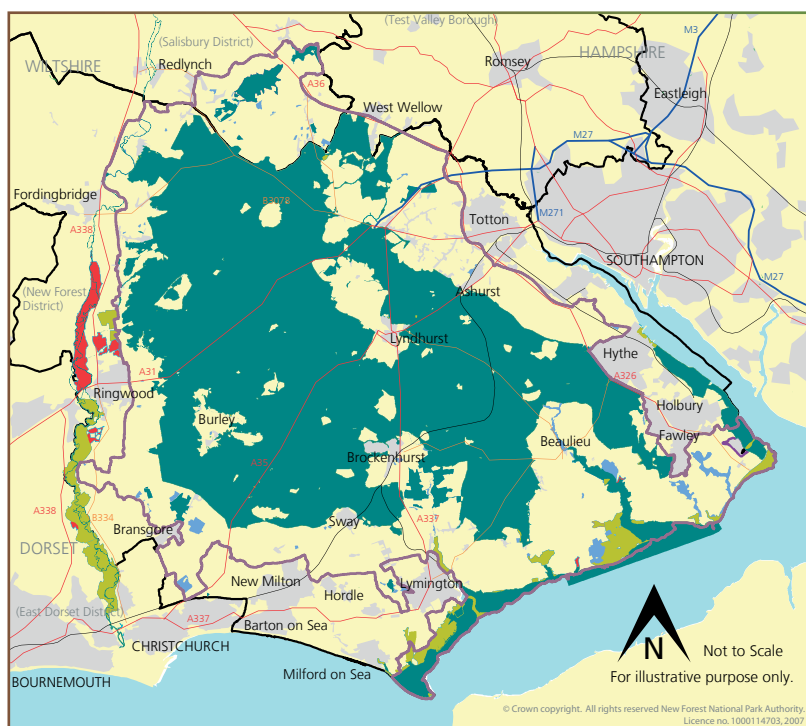
Local Sites are areas of land with recognised nature conservation value which help to protect biodiversity outside of other designations. Many sites of nature conservation importance fall outside of the SSSI designation system as it merely identifies a representative sample of habitats rather than a comprehensive suite of sites.

Local Sites are termed non-statutory as their designation does not afford specific special legal protection. However the sites are given special consideration in Government policy, the planning process and the targeting of grant schemes for management.

The National Park Authority in conjunction with biological records centres such as the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre identifies Local Sites. Such areas are also referred to as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and County Wildlife Sites.

Other SSSIs within the National Park

A number of other sites within the National Park have been notified as SSSIs. These include areas of grassland, lowland bogs as well as ancient semi-natural woodland, many sites of which are outside the Open Forest. A number of large SSSIs are also associated with freshwater and marine environments. These are important for breeding, over-wintering and migratory birds, as well as coastal plants.



Map showing the sites with conservation designations


Key:

 New Forest National Park boundary

 Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

 Special Protection Areas (SPA) (Where not also a SAC)

 Ramsar site (where not also SPA or SAC)

 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (NNR) where not also a SAC, SPA or Ramsar site

 Urban habitats/Built up areas

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

Special Areas of Conservation are designated under the European Commission's Habitats Directive. Within the National Park there are several sites of SAC including maritime ones.

- The New Forest SAC encompasses around 29,262 hectares and includes most of the unenclosed Forest and Inclosures together with Langley Wood, Whiteparish Common, Landford Heath and Loosehangar Cope and Meadows in the north, and Royden Woods in the south.
- The Solent maritime SAC extends for 11,325 hectares and comprises the Solent coastline and maritime habitats to the mean high water mark, including estuaries of the Beaulieu Rivers and Southampton Water north to Hythe.
- The Solent and Isle of Wight lagoons SAC is 36 hectares and includes the saline lagoons of the Pennington Marshes and adjacent areas.
- The River Avon SAC comprises the river and river valley from Breamore south to Christchurch. It covers 450 hectares in total.

Ramsar sites

This is an international designation denoting wetlands of international importance. It was formed at the Ramsar convention in Iran in 1971. The UK Government has signed this agreement and within its policies has extended the level of protection given to SACs and SPAs to Ramsar as well. This means if planning permission is required the same stringent procedures need to be adhered to.

The main New Forest SSSI is a Ramsar site largely because of the rare plant and invertebrate species associated with its wetlands. The Solent and Southampton Water is another important Ramsar site within the National Park. The Solent coastline includes a complex of low cliffs, shingle spits, saltmarsh and mudflats of national and international importance for nature conservation.

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Table showing the conservation designations within the New Forest National Park

Designation	Site in National Park
Ramsar	New Forest, Solent and Southampton Water
SPA	New Forest, Solent and Southampton Water
SAC	New Forest, Solent Maritime, Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons, River Avon
SSSI	New Forest, Poors Common, Burton Common, Sowley Pond, Langley Wood and Homans Copse, Loosehanger Copse and Meadows, Norley Copse & Meadows, River Avon System, Avon Valley (Bickton-Christchurch), Fletchwood Meadows, Landford Bog, Landford Heath, Whiteparish Common, Lymington River Reedbeds, North Solent, Hurst Castle and Lymington River Estuary, Roydon Wood, Lymington River, Hythe to Calshot Marshes, Dibden Bay
NNR	North Solent, Kings Great Common, Langley Wood
Local Nature Reserve	Boldre Foreshore, Lymington-Keyhaven Marshes, Calshot Marshes



Sea lettuce at Calshot

Further reading/ useful information

Other New Forest National Park Authority fact files

The New Forest: Colin R. Tubbs, 2001

Summary of major designations by RSPB: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/policy/sites/naturedesignations.asp>

Wilts BAP website: www.wiltshirewildlife.org/Default.asp?mainmenu=standingup&PageID={65D6D602-316D-4BB1-88E0-D37A8DF15BC8}

UK biodiversity website: www.ukbap.org.uk/

Hampshire BAP website: <http://www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk/>

Wiltshire records centre info on wildlife sites: <http://www.wsbrc.org.uk/Default.asp?mainmenu=homepage&EntityID={2EE176BC-69CB-4305-BA7C-BF0A6D492DC6}>

Info on SINCs from HBIC website: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity/sincs.htm>

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk Factsheet available on CD, in large-print, or Braille on request

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