

Waterhall

Local Nature Reserve

This 90-hectare (222 acre) former golf course is being managed for nature on behalf of the people of Brighton & Hove. Rare chalk grassland is being protected and restored whilst a rich mosaic of other downland habitats is being established. Grazing animals (cattle, ponies and sheep) are central to the management of the reserve which aims to maximise biodiversity. Insects, mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles will all benefit.

The site is managed in an ecologically sensitive way, avoiding the use of chemicals and fossil fuels wherever possible. This contributes positively to tackling both the climate and biodiversity emergencies. The reserve is already proving to be the perfect living classroom, enabling school children, local residents and community groups to connect with our internationally important local biodiversity.

Chalk Grassland

Sometimes called 'Europe's tropical rainforest' due to its varied wildlife, each square metre of the best chalk grassland can hold up to 40 species of plants. This includes Sussex's county flower – the Round-headed Rampion which can be seen thriving at Waterhall. You can find many classic chalk-loving flowers here including Harebell, Common Rock-Rose, Lady's Bedstraw, Dropwort, Knapweed, Horseshoe and Kidney Vetches.

The wildflowers support a wide variety of pollinators including many species of butterflies including Chalkhill Blue, Brown Argus and Adonis Blue. You can also see colourful day-flying moths such as the black and red Burnet moths and the metallic green Forester moths.

Vulnerable Wildlife

Waterhall is home to many species of bird, many of which are in steep decline in the wider countryside. Some of these like Skylark, Yellowhammer and Corn Bunting nest on the ground, so are very vulnerable to disturbance, especially by dogs.

Adders and Hazel Dormice also live here and they are shy and vulnerable to disturbance, which can prevent them from breeding successfully. Cornered by an inquisitive dog, an Adder can deliver a venomous bite which requires immediate veterinary treatment.



Round-headed Rampion (ML)

Please observe the requirement to keep all dogs on leads, everywhere on the reserve from 01 Mar to 31 Jul, and at all times around livestock.

Events and Volunteering

Volunteers are essential for us to be able to manage this reserve. If you would like to get involved or participate in one of our many guided walks and safaris, search for "Friends of Waterhall".

Waymarked Paths

There are 3 waymarked circular paths of varying distance and levels of difficulty. Each can be followed in either direction. Please refer to the map.

Skylark Stroll. Easy & flat, 1.5 km. Follow the white arrows on blue discs. The path offers great views across the nature reserve and surrounding landscape and from spring through summer you are certain to hear Skylarks singing overhead.

Rock-Rose Ramble. Moderate, 1.8 km with some significant slopes. White arrows on yellow discs. The route passes close to the most biodiverse areas of chalk grassland containing many wildflowers (best seen from May to September).

Buzzard Hike. More challenging, 3.9 km. The route includes some steep slopes with occasional mud and uneven ground. White arrows on brown discs. The longest route which passes through all the major habitats on the reserve (chalk grassland, scrub, mature hawthorn woodland) and loops around the dew pond. You are very likely to see Buzzards soaring overhead at some point ... listen for their distinctive "mewing" calls.

The Clubhouse

The Clubhouse is run by Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and is available for hire. Search for "The Clubhouse Brighton" or see the posters in the clubhouse window for details. www.bhfood.org.uk/clubhouse



Cinnabar Moth (PG)



Skylark (PG)



Buzzard (TS)



Hazel Dormouse (ML)



Forester Moth (PG)



Common Rock-rose (ML)



Adder (PG)

Acknowledgements

Wilding Waterhall is hosted by Brighton & Hove City Council and is part of Changing Chalk - a National Trust-led partnership of organisations connecting nature, people and heritage and working to protect and restore the fragile chalk grassland of the South Downs. Changing Chalk is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to National Lottery players.

Photography credits: (PG) Paul Gorrington, (ML) Mike Luscombe, (TS) Tim Squire.

Changing Chalk
connecting nature, people and heritage



Chalkhill Blue (PG)

