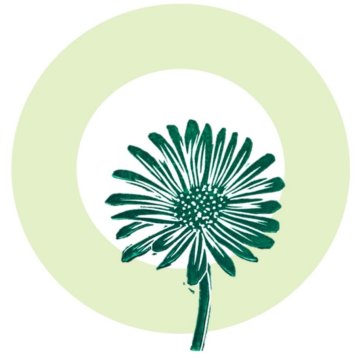


2 CHALK GRASSLANDS



Support Green Plan actions!



Donate here



A UNIQUE HABITAT

Chalk grassland is a unique and very biodiverse habitat. It is sometimes compared to the diversity of tropical rainforests. A really healthy chalk grassland can contain **40 different plant species in a single square metre**. It also supports a wide range of fungi, insects and other organisms.

It is a semi-natural habitat created by grazing animals – particularly sheep – over hundreds or thousands of years. Around **50% of all the world's chalk grassland is in England** in the chalk hills and downs running from Dorset to Lincolnshire.

The sheep are long gone from Watlington Hill and it is now primarily grazed by rabbits.

TOUGH CONDITIONS

The soil is extremely thin, low in nutrients, highly alkaline, dries out rapidly and is generally inhospitable for plant life. Coarse herbs and grasses cannot survive these conditions, but specialist plants adapted to the conditions can thrive. These are often small, delicate and rare species which would otherwise be crowded out.



Wild candytuft, Bee Orchid, Chiltern gentian and Dark Mullein are four of the many special plants to be found on Watlington Hill.



A rare Silver-spotted Skipper butterfly seen feeding on Field Scabious.

WATLINGTON HILL

Watlington Hill is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. It supports some of the **most floristically diverse grassland in the Chilterns** and is also notable for its fungi, mosses, lichens and butterflies. Of particular note is the population of the silver-spotted skipper butterfly.

The White Mark was cut into the Hill in 1764 on the orders of Edward Horne.

Its colour vividly illustrates the geology of the Hill – Chalk!

The **chalk rock** started forming around 145 million years ago in shallow sub-tropical seas. Around 65 million years ago, these soft sedimentary rocks started to be compressed and uplifted and emerged from the sea. Subsequent weathering and erosion have shaped the landscape.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

Next time you're on Watlington Hill: **learn to identify wild plants** to enhance your enjoyment and appreciation of the site.

Hunt out the few remaining Juniper bushes on the Hill – once one of the main species there but has declined drastically over the last century.

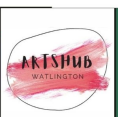
Join Watlington Environment Group to widen your knowledge of our local environment and nature and take part in their activities.

Join in with the National Trust or Friends of Watlington Hill work parties to help maintain the Hill.

Photo credit: Nicola Schafer (Watlington Hill), Mark Batchelor (Dark Mullein, Bee Orchid, butterfly), Snowpeter Photography (Chiltern Gentian), Chilterns Conservation Board (Wild Candytuft)

GREEN PLAN ART TRAIL

CREATED / SUPPORTED BY:



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE GREEN PLAN GO TO:

www.watlingtonclimateaction.org.uk/green-plans