

# EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

<b>Name:</b>	Salisbury Plain
<b>Unitary Authority/County:</b>	Hampshire, Wiltshire
<b>SAC status:</b>	Designated on 1 April 2005
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SU077497
<b>SAC EU code:</b>	UK0012683
<b>Area (ha):</b>	21438.10
<b>Component SSSI:</b>	Parsonage Down SSSI, Porton Down SSSI, Salisbury Plain SSSI

### Site description:

Salisbury Plain in central southern England is believed to be the largest surviving semi-natural dry grassland in Europe and is therefore the most important site for this habitat in the UK. It supports extensive examples of upright brome *Bromopsis erecta* grassland, the most widespread calcareous grassland in the UK, with significant areas of *Avenula pubescens* grassland and the rare sheep's-fescue – mouse-ear-hawkweed – wild thyme *Festuca ovina* – *Hieracium pilosella* – *Thymus praecox* grassland. The wider site supports the largest UK population of the nationally scarce burnt orchid *Orchis ustulata*, together with significant populations of green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* and frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*, both uncommon orchids associated with calcareous grassland.

Salisbury Plain represents *Juniperus communis* formations near the southern edge of the habitat's range on chalk in southern England, where it is particularly rare. This site is the best remaining example in the UK of lowland juniper scrub on chalk. The juniper is juxtaposed with extensive semi-natural dry grassland and chalk heath. Other scrub habitat has developed recently by invasion of open chalk grassland, some areas containing few typical shrub species and others with the southern mixed scrub type, enriched by roses *Rosa* spp., wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, wayfaring tree *Viburnum lantana* and other species characteristic of the type.

Salisbury Plain also supports an important population of marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* on dry calcareous grassland with large sub-populations breeding on chalk grassland.

**Qualifying habitats:** The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands. (Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands)
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone)
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (important orchid sites). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone, including important orchid sites)\*

**Qualifying species:** The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:

- Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas* (*Eurodryas*, *Hypodryas*) *aurinia*

Annex I priority habitats are denoted by an asterisk (\*).

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0012683

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs