



CASE STUDIES - ESPC Target 6

At least 30% of production lands managed consistent with the conservation of plant diversity

IAPA—Important Arable Plant Areas
Ranscombe Farm (UK)

GSPC Target 6 (ESPC target 2.9)

Relevant species and habitats: Habitats (arable, chalk grassland and semi-natural woodland)
 Species (*Filago pyramidata*, *Ajuga chamaepitys*, *Althaea hirsuta*, *Valerianella dentata*, *Papaver argemone*, *Silene noctiflora*, *Fumaria densiflora*, *Salvia pratensis*, *Ophrys insectifera*, *Aceras anthropophorum*, *Orchis purpurea*)

Project coordinators	Plantlife International
Partner organisations	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust
Funding mechanisms	Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Natural England



Corncockle at Ranscombe Farm
 ©Bob Gibbons/Plantlife



Bluebells in the woodland at Ranscombe Farm
 ©Bob Gibbons/Plantlife

Description

Ranscombe Farm is Plantlife's largest nature reserve in England, occupying a total area of 560 acres on the slopes of the North Downs in Kent. Recently declared as a country park, the reserve provides opportunities for quiet walks amongst attractive countryside with a fascinating flora.

The Ranscombe Farm landscape includes arable habitats, extensive ancient woodland and relict fragments of chalk grassland. A large part of the site is within the Cobham Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest, and the whole farm is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Ranscombe Farm is one of British botany's classic sites, and a favourite haunt of wild-plant enthusiasts for hundreds of years. The first UK records of two Nationally Rare species, Hairy Mallow and Meadow Clary, were both from Ranscombe Farm, dating from 1699 and 1792 respectively. Both species still survive in the same spot.

(Continued on page 2)



CASE STUDIES - ESPC Target 6

IAPAs Important Arable Plant Areas Ranscombe Farm (UK)

Description (II)

Other rarities include Ground Pine and Broad-leaved Cudweed. The orchid flora is rich, with least six species recorded including Fly, Lady ('Fair Maidens of Kent') and Man Orchid.

The arable flora is also impressive, and two of the fields on the far western side of the reserve are believed to represent one of the best sites for annual plants of arable land in Britain. The flora of these fields includes Corncockle, Blue Pimpernel, Night-flowering Catchfly, Narrow-fruited Cornsalad and Dense-flowered Fumitory.

The woodlands are at their best in spring when a colourful display of Early-purple Orchids and Bluebells can be seen. Although limited in extent, the chalk grassland habitats host a rich suite of plants including Wild Liquorice and Horseshoe Vetch.

Ranscombe Farm is managed in partnership with Medway Council as a nature reserve, working farm and country park. You are welcome to visit at any time, but please keep to the marked footpaths.

Location: Cuxton, Medway, Kent. Grid References: TQ 718 675 (Car Park) TQ 705 680 (Middle of reserve)

What to see and when

April: Bluebell, Early-purple Orchid
May: Lady Orchid, Fly Orchid, Man Orchid
June: Meadow Clary, Hairy Mallow, Ground Pine, Common Milk-wort
July: Corncockle, Clustered Bellflower, Four species of poppy (Common, Rough, Prickly and Long-headed)

* * * * *

Date of case study March 2006 (start of management)

Citations and Publications

Byfield, A.J. and Wilson, P.J. (2005) *Important Arable Plant Areas: identifying priority sites for arable plant conservation in the United Kingdom*. Plantlife International, Salisbury, UK.

Wilson PJ (1998) Assessment of the Conservation Value of Arable Fields at Cuxton. Report to Plantlife (unpublished)

Wilson PJ (2003) Survey and Assessment of Arable Fields at Ranscombe Farm, Cuxton. Report to Plantlife (unpublished)

Contacts

Joe Costley, Reserves Manager, Plantlife (+44 1722 342734)
email: joe.costley@plantlife.org.uk

Website

www.plantlife.org.uk and www.arableplants.org.uk

