

Adonis Blue Butterfly (*Lysandra bellargus*)

This blue butterfly breeds on unimproved chalk grassland particularly on steep south-facing slopes. It has two generations a year, with adults flying in May/early June and in August/September. Its larval food plant, Horseshoe Vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*), is usually found in short, heavily-grazed turf.

Current status

National status

The Adonis blue is a highly restricted species which occurs chiefly in Dorset, Wiltshire and the Isle of Wight, with a few colonies in Sussex, Surrey, Buckinghamshire and Kent. Over the longer term, the species may spread north in response to climate change. The Adonis blue underwent a rapid decline in range, estimated at 90% in the 1950s following a decline in stock grazing on unimproved pasture and the loss of rabbits due to myxomatosis. Recent records suggest that there are approximately 250 populations in England.

This species is classified as *Nationally Scarce* and is a UKBAP Priority Species, it is afforded protection under Schedule 5 of the WCA, 1981, with respect to sale only.

Status on the network

Although not yet recorded on the network, suitable habitat for the Adonis blue occurs at several locations on the network including the A303 near Yarnbury in Wiltshire. This species would benefit greatly from linkages provided by appropriately managed road verges elsewhere in its range.

Current factors affecting the species

Loss/fragmentation of habitat

New road developments and road improvement schemes may lead to the loss of the unimproved calcareous grassland needed to support the Adonis blue's larval foodplant and to the fragmentation of habitat which limits dispersal of the species.

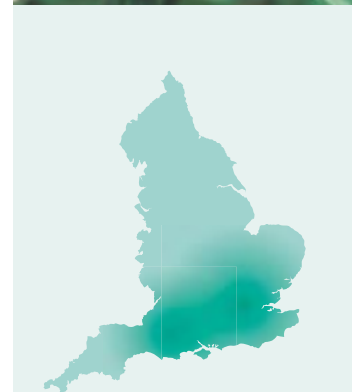
Inappropriate management/deterioration of existing habitat

The Adonis blue requires a short, heavily rabbit-grazed turf and so appropriate management is essential. If the grassland is not managed by cutting or grazing, coarse grasses and shrubs will predominate and horseshoe vetch may be lost from the sward. Calcareous grasslands and their specialist plants are particularly sensitive to spray drift, salt spray from the road surface, as well as pollutants from vehicle emissions.

Current action

Butterfly Conservation published a national action plan for this species in 1997 and there have been recent surveys to assess the butterfly's status in some parts of its range.

Wiltshire has not yet produced a full local Biodiversity Action Plan, and no other local plans have highlighted specific conservation action for this species.



Objectives

The aim of the Highways Agency Species Action Plan for the Adonis blue is to implement appropriate management where this species

occurs and to ensure that new road developments avoid or adequately mitigate any potential impacts on this species and its habitat.

	Objective	Proposed actions
A	To avoid impacts of new road schemes or improvements on the Adonis blue.	3
B	To mitigate unavoidable impacts on the Adonis blue and its habitat and to consider options for habitat enhancement.	4
C	To monitor all road verges where this species is known to occur and safeguard through appropriate management.	5
D	To raise the awareness of HA staff, Managing Agents and consultants regarding the significance of Adonis blue on the soft estate.	1, 7
E	To develop a greater knowledge of the distribution of Adonis blue across the soft estate.	2
F	To enhance the value of the soft estate for the Adonis blue.	6

Proposed action

The following table lists the actions required to achieve the objectives set out in this Plan. For some of the actions, potential partners have

been assigned as likely sources of cooperation. Targets are provided to give an indication of the timescale for the proposed action.

	Action	Potential partners	Target
	<i>Policy, guidance and advice</i>		
1	Provide detailed information to local area managers within network areas 3, 4 and 5 on the management of roadside verges for the benefit of the Adonis blue.	Butterfly Conservation	2005
	<i>Surveying</i>		
2	Survey all areas of suitable verge habitat for Adonis blue and horseshoe vetch and record results on the Environmental Database. Share this information with Butterfly Conservation.	-	2007
	<i>Mitigation</i>		
3	For all new road schemes and road improvements in network areas 3, 4 and 5 include search for records of Adonis blue in desk study at stage 1 and in surveys at stage 2. Avoid habitat loss for the species wherever possible.	-	Ongoing

	Action (continued)	Potential partners	Target
	<i>Mitigation (continued)</i>		
4	Where impacts of new schemes and road improvements on Adonis blue habitat are unavoidable, consider the options for compensatory habitat enhancement, linkage and removal of barriers to dispersal.	Butterfly Conservation	Ongoing
5	Ensure that existing sites known to support Adonis blue are managed appropriately to maintain and enhance their value for the species. Draw up a management statement where these are within or adjacent to nationally or internationally designated sites.	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Butterfly Conservation	2005
6	Consider creating specific Adonis blue habitat adjacent or near to existing populations at five sites in the south.	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Butterfly Conservation	2012
	<i>Communications and publicity</i>		
7	Information on Adonis blue should be included in environmental training for HA staff and Managing Agents.	Butterfly Conservation	2003

Links with other plans

This plan should be read in conjunction with the HAP for calcareous grassland.

Adonis blue is not currently listed as a Priority species within any existing LBAPs.

Lead partner

The lead partner for the Adonis blue butterfly is Butterfly Conservation.

