

# British Camp Malvern Hills



The Malvern Hills Conservators' shepherd with the conservation flock

## GRAZING ON THE HILLS AND COMMONS

The distinctive open grasslands of the Malvern Hills and Commons have been created by centuries of grazing by sheep and cattle. Historically, these animals have belonged to Commoners, the inhabitants of nearby farms and cottages who exercised their ancient rights to graze stock on the land. However, today few Commoners are willing to graze the Hills and Commons because of the risk to their animals from busy roads and dogs.

The decline in grazing is already having a significant impact on this beautiful landscape. Dense bracken, scrub and trees now cover many of the slopes, in some places right up to the ridge. As a result, many of the magnificent views from the Malvern Hills have already been lost and many more are threatened.

## BIRDS

The decline in grazing not only affects the appearance of the Hills; it also alters the delicate ecological balance of this unique area. The Malvern Hills have been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of their national importance as a wildlife habitat. Much of the special wildlife on the Hills is associated with the open grassland historically created and maintained by grazing; now, many species are under threat. The number of Skylarks on the Hills has halved in the last decade, largely because of the loss of the open grassland they need to feed and nest. However, disturbance by dogs and walkers could also be a factor; please help to conserve Skylarks and other ground-nesting birds by staying on the paths and keeping dogs under close control between March and August (the nesting season).



High Brown Fritillary caterpillar

## BUTTERFLIES

Many other forms of wildlife also benefit from the conditions produced by grazing. The High Brown Fritillary is one of the country's rarest butterflies and relies on violets growing on sunny bracken slopes to feed its caterpillars. The best conditions for the violets (and therefore the butterflies) are found in areas of bracken kept open by livestock wandering through and trampling the ground. Other butterflies you may see on the grassland are the Marbled White, Grayling and Common Blue.

## PLANTS

The plant life on the Malvern Hills is very special: most of the grasses and flowers found here would normally only appear in the British uplands, although the Malverns are just 435m at their highest point. The unusual geology of the Hills creates the perfect conditions for nationally rare plants like Spring Cinquefoil and Upright Chickweed; however, these species are threatened by the encroachment of scrub and trees.

## REINTRODUCING GRAZING ON THE HILLS AND COMMONS

In recent years, the Malvern Hills Conservators have tried to control the spread of scrub and trees with machines and by hand. However, this has had only limited success and it is clear that the only way to safeguard the open grassland of the Hills and Commons is to reintroduce grazing. The Conservators now have their own conservation flock of sheep and the stocky white Cheviot ewes are a regular sight on the southern Hills. The Conservators also recently introduced a small herd of Galloway and Belted Galloway cattle onto the northern Hills. Together, the sheep and cattle will ensure that the Malvern Hills retain something of the appearance which inspired their Celtic name - "moel-bryn", the bare hills.



Cheviot lambs and ewes with the shepherd



High Brown Fritillary butterfly

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR DOG OWNERS

The Malvern Hills Conservators welcome responsible dog owners onto their land, but recognise that there can be a conflict with other users of the Hills and Commons.

Although designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and home to several rare species of wildlife, the Malvern Hills and surrounding Commons are open to the public for a wide range of recreational uses, including walking, horse riding and cycling. They are also used for grazing stock, in accordance with local Commoners' ancient rights.

To enjoy the Hills and Commons and avoid conflict between dogs, wildlife, grazing stock and other users, we ask dog owners to follow these simple guidelines:

1. Keep your dog under control at all times and do not allow it to chase livestock or to disturb wildlife. Sheep are particularly vulnerable to disturbance during the winter and early spring when the ewes are in lamb; they may abort if frightened.

**REMEMBER that worrying stock (which includes chasing) is an offence for which the destruction of the dog can be ordered.**

2. If you lose your dog, or see a stray dog or a dog worrying stock, please report it to the Police or the Dog Warden.

3. **DOG FOULING** is a constant source of concern. We cannot provide dog bins at all sites because of the high cost of emptying them; please help us keep the Hills and Commons clean by taking your dog's waste home. **IMPORTANTLY**, please do not leave plastic bags with dog waste in them lying on the Hills and Commons, as this takes longer to break down.

## Useful Numbers:

Police	01905 723888
Dog Warden (Office)	01684 862306
(Out of Hours)	01684 892700
Malvern Hills Conservators	01684 892002

Address: Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 3EY.  
Email: [conservators@malvern hills.org.uk](mailto:conservators@malvern hills.org.uk)



Skylark (courtesy of rspb images.com and David Tipling)



Malvern Hills Conservators  
Manor House  
Grange Road  
Malvern  
WR14 3EY  
Tel: 01684 892002  
e-mail: [conservators@malvern hills.org.uk](mailto:conservators@malvern hills.org.uk)  
[www.malvern hills.org.uk](http://www.malvern hills.org.uk)

The Malvern Hills Conservators are one of Britain's oldest conservation bodies set up under the Malvern Hills Act of 1884 to conserve and manage the Malvern Hills and surrounding Commons for public recreation. Their funds are obtained by a levy on local Council Tax payers, car parking revenue and grants from outside organisations. The total area under their care is now over 1200 hectares (3000 acres).

