

EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds: Special Protection Area

SALISBURY PLAIN (WILTSHIRE)

Salisbury Plain proposed Special Protection Area contains the largest expanse of unimproved chalk downland in NW Europe, comprising a mosaic of eight main National Vegetation Classification community types. It represents 41% of Britain's area of chalk downland. The site also includes small blocks of woodland and scrub and an area of agricultural land on its periphery. The majority of the site has been used for military training since early this century and has therefore not been subject to intensive farming.

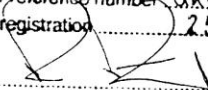
The boundary of the pSPA follows that of the SSSI notified in January 1993.

The site qualifies under Article 4.1 of EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds by regularly supporting nationally important populations of two Annex 1 species. It supports 10% of the British breeding population of stone curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* and 1% of Britain's wintering hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*.

Other Annex 1 species which occur in small numbers include merlin *Falco columbarius* and short-eared owl *Asio flammeus* which winter on the site, and Montagu's harrier *Circus pygargus* which has attempted to breed on at least one occasion.

The site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive by supporting nationally important breeding populations of two regularly occurring migratory species. Approximately 20% of the British population of quail *Coturnix coturnix* and 1% of the British population of hobby *Falco subbuteo* breed on the pSPA.

SPA Citation
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on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment