

Habitat management for the Straw Belle

The overall aim is to maintain a habitat mosaic with variable sward height, abundant herbs and some bare patches of chalk, as well as some patches of longer grass available during the adult flight period of July and August.

- ◆ On many sites, light cattle grazing may be a suitable method of maintaining the appropriate sward. Sheep grazing is not likely to be suitable, as this tends to create a more uniform sward and less ground disturbance.
- ◆ Some scrub removal may be necessary to maintain or restore habitat, but care should be taken not to remove too much as it provides shelter on otherwise exposed sites.
- ◆ A few sites on steep slopes appear to be self-maintained through natural erosion, and require little or no management apart from periodic and selective scrub removal.

How to survey/monitor

Adults readily fly during the day if disturbed from the vegetation and fly naturally at dusk. Monitoring has been undertaken on some sites by day using timed counts of adults. The species has also been recorded at light-traps. The Yellow Belle *Semiaspilates ochrearia* is superficially similar but has two brownish cross-lines on the forewings and is predominantly a coastal species. The Vestal *Rhodometra sacraria*, an immigrant species, is sometimes mistaken for the Straw Belle, but is a smaller, more delicate moth and holds its wings closer to the body at a steep angle.

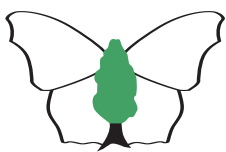
Butterfly Conservation should be contacted if the species is suspected to be present on a site.



above Larvae often occur on dead grass stems

below left Ideal chalk grassland

below right Broken turf favoured by Straw Belle larvae



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

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