

Habitats and species

The aim of these rules is to protect species of flora and fauna. Extra rules apply if you have land designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

A. You must not

1. deliberately pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy a wild plant of a 'European protected species'¹.

You will not break this rule if you are operating under a licence issued by Natural England to undertake authorised action, or can rely on a legal defence provided in this legislation.

On land designated as a Special Area of Conservation:

B. You must

1. notify Natural England in writing of any proposal to carry out, cause or permit any specified operation² or where a special nature conservation order applies (unless covered by the terms of a management agreement, scheme or notice) and obtain consent before starting that operation;
2. comply with all management notices served by Natural England and the terms of any restoration orders served by a court³.



- 1 For a list of European protected species visit the cross compliance section of our website at rpa.defra.gov.uk/crosscompliance/appendices; contained in Schedule 5 to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the 'Habitats Regulations').
- 2 A 'specified operation' is one which has been identified as likely to damage the special interest features of the area. This information forms part of the notification package for Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- 3 This applies where the purpose of the notice or restoration order is to protect or restore the special interest features of the area or otherwise restore the land to its former condition as may be so specified.

C. You must not

1. intentionally or recklessly destroy or damage the special interest features⁴ of the area or disturb any protected fauna that are a special interest feature. (This rule can apply to actions that take place other than on the SAC itself but which have the same consequences.)

You will not break the rules for a SAC (B1, B2 and C1) if you have reasonable excuse⁵.



Further advice and guidance

The appendix for habitats and species (SMR 5) is available on our website at rpa.defra.gov.uk/crosscompliance/appendices

You can find out if your land is in a SAC by contacting Natural England, or you can visit the Nature on the Map website at www.natureonthemap.org.uk or www.natureonthemap.co.uk

Natural England: 0845 600 3078

- 4 'Special interest features' of an area are interpreted as the notified interest features of the Site of Special Scientific Interest that are also relevant to the SAC.
- 5 A 'reasonable excuse' may include: you have planning permission to carry out the work; you have consent from a public body or statutory authority that has complied with its duty to consult Natural England before giving the consent; it is an emergency operation (provided that Natural England is told as soon as possible after the emergency).