

Find out more...

To join the Wildlife Trust contact:
The Manor House, Broad Street, Great Cambourne,
Cambridge, CB23 6DH
Call: 01954 713500
Email: membership@wildlifebcn.org
Website: www.wildlifebcn.org
follow us @wildlifebcn
like us at The Wildlife Trust BCN

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire
and Northamptonshire.
Registered charity no: 1000412
Photos: Gregory Belcher and Chantelle Kerr

www.wildlifebcn.org



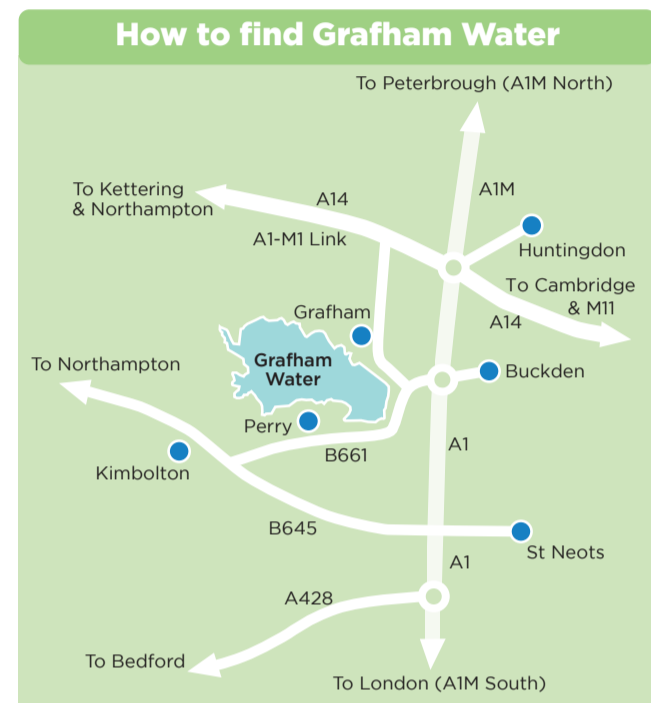
How to get there

Nearest towns... St. Neots and Huntingdon
Access points... are via entrances at Mander Car Park in the village of Perry and at the Hill Farm Car Park, Church Road, near the village of Grafham.
Address... Grafham Water Nature Reserve, c/o The Fishing Lodge, West Perry, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. PE28 0BX.
Call: 01480 811075
Email: grafham@wildlifebcn.org

By bike... national bike route 12 passes through both Perry and Grafham village, there joins the Anglian Water cycle track which passes through the nature reserve.
Map reference... TL 143 671

www.wildlifebcn.org/reserves/grafham-water

Anglian Water
Visitor Centre
Marlow Car Park
Grafham
Huntingdon
PE28 0BH
Telephone: 01480 812154
Email: tic@anglianwater.co.uk
www.anglianwater.co.uk



The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire
Registered charity no: 1000412



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire

Grafham Water
nature reserve

Illustrations by Mike Hughes www.mikehugheswildlifeart.co.uk



The nature reserve

Grafham Water Reservoir has evolved into a nationally important wildlife haven. The western end of the site has been managed by the Wildlife Trust, in partnership with Anglian Water, since 1986 to create Grafham Water Nature Reserve.

The reserve covers over 80 hectares and is a mosaic of ancient and plantation woodland, grassland, hedgerows, scrub, ponds, wetland and open water. Famed for its significant numbers of overwintering and resident waterfowl, the site also boasts an 18 hectare bird sanctuary and a wildlife lagoon with several nesting islands.

History

Grafham Water Reservoir was created in the 1960s to supply drinking water to the new town of Milton Keynes. Originally named Diddington Reservoir after Diddington Brook whose shallow valley it floods, it is the third largest reservoir by area in England but only eighth largest in volume.

The associated treatment works were opened in 1966 by Prince Philip followed by the nature reserve in 1968 by Sir Peter Scott. Control of the reservoir passed to the newly formed Anglian Water in 1974. In 1986 English Nature, now Natural England, designated the reservoir as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Wildlife Trust started working with Anglian Water to manage the nature reserve.

What we do

The many and varied habitats found across the reserve require intensive management if they are to support a wide range of species. Our grasslands are maintained through traditional practices such as cattle grazing and hay-making.

Our scrub habitats provide great nesting and feeding opportunities for many bird species, but if left unmanaged can become less dense, allowing easier access to predators. To prevent this, the scrub is cut but left attached to its stump, which thickens the base of the scrub and encourages vigorous growth.

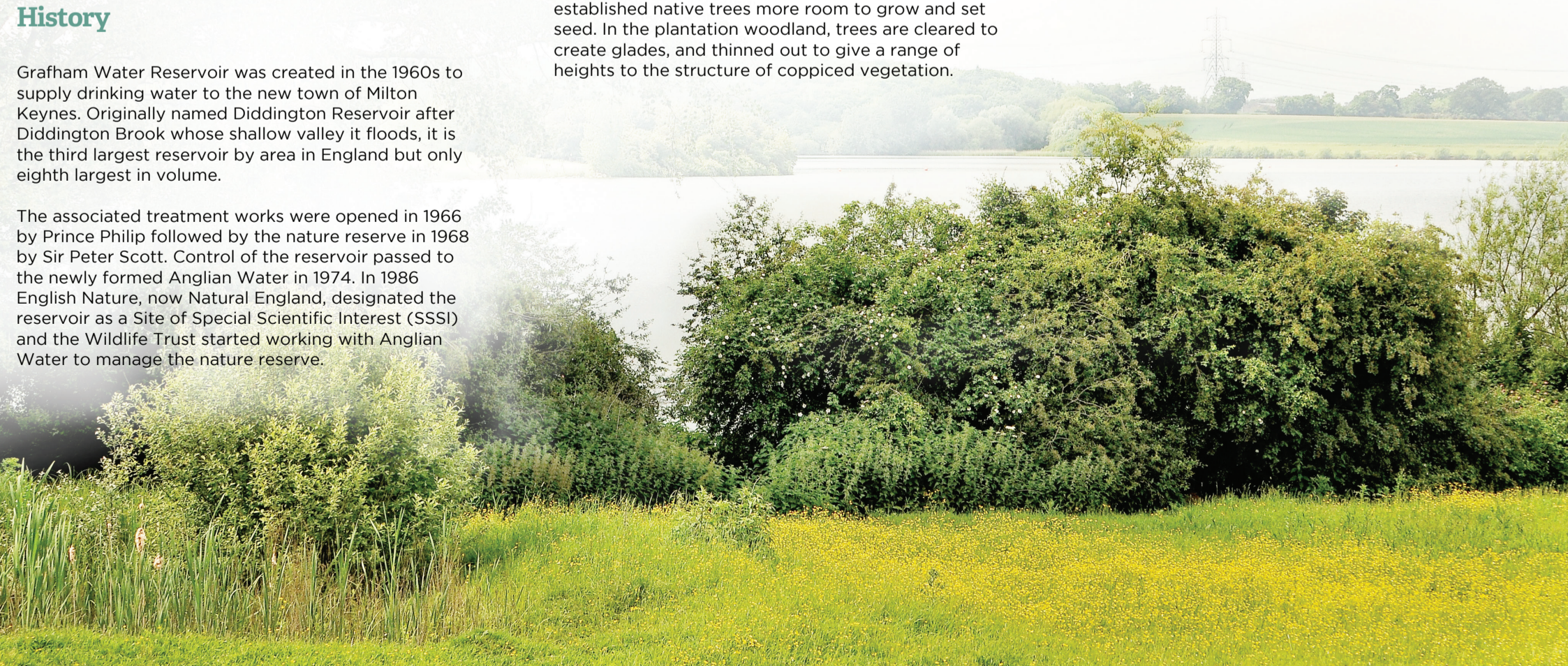
Our ancient woodlands are enhanced through the removal of non-native tree species to allow the established native trees more room to grow and set seed. In the plantation woodland, trees are cleared to create glades, and thinned out to give a range of heights to the structure of coppiced vegetation.

More information

Your local Wildlife Trust BCN protects wildlife and countryside for people to enjoy in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. We are a charity dependent on voluntary contributions.

If you would like more information about this reserve, other reserves in Cambridgeshire or about how you can support us, please contact:

The Wildlife Trust, The Manor House, Broad Street,
Great Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6DH
Call: 01954 713500
Email: cambridgeshire@wildlifebcn.org



Water world

There are seven bird hides in the nature reserve overall, three of which offer superb views over our 18 hectare designated bird sanctuary. This provides a refuge for waterfowl by preventing boat and foot access within its margins.

The varied shoreline and open water habitats offer unique living conditions for a diverse range of resident and migrant birds. In winter, look out for vast mixed flocks of coot, teal, tufted duck and great crested grebe, which fly here from Siberia and Scandinavia to overwinter or feed up before continuing further south.

One of the hides overlooks the settlement lagoons found on the southern side of the reservoir. This unique habitat offers sheltered islands and insect-rich mudflats enjoyed by ground nesting birds and foraging waders such as redshank, snipe and green sandpiper. Visit in early spring for a chance to see the iconic avocet, which has successfully bred here in recent years. Bittern have made occasional visits in harsh winters as other water bodies freeze over. The lagoons also support several reed beds, which are used for nesting by many songbirds including: reed bunting, reed warbler and the vocal Cetti's warbler.

Singing scrub

Scrub consists of thorny species such as hawthorn and blackthorn, intertwined with climbing plants such as dog rose and bramble. Well-managed scrub can support a wide range of wildlife by providing food in the form of nectar, berries and seeds, as well as shelter and nesting sites protected from disturbances.

In the springtime many different songbirds nest in the scrub including bullfinches and several warbler species. In early spring, walk along the Nightingale trail near Lymage hide for a chance to hear the famous song of this rare bird. Recent research has allowed us to track our birds to Gambia and back.

Wondrous woodland

Journey through ancient woodland along the nature trails of Little Wood and Savages Spinney to discover the hidden gems of this rare and diverse British habitat. Continuously wooded since the 1600s, it is possible these woods are remnants of the great wildwood, which once covered huge expanses of Great Britain.

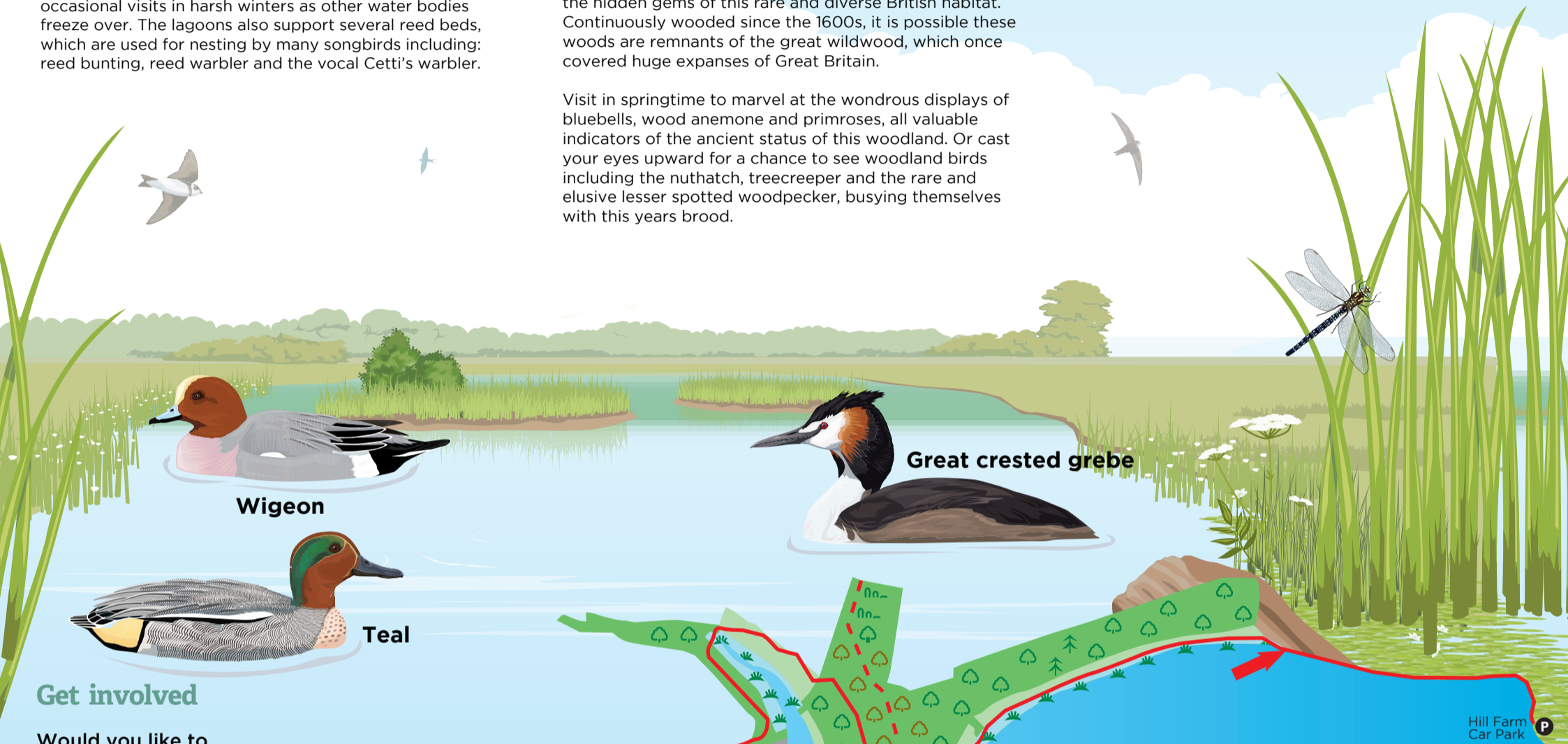
Visit in springtime to marvel at the wondrous displays of bluebells, wood anemone and primroses, all valuable indicators of the ancient status of this woodland. Or cast your eyes upward for a chance to see woodland birds including the nuthatch, treecreeper and the rare and elusive lesser spotted woodpecker, busying themselves with this year's brood.

Glorious grassland & plentiful ponds

Grassland habitats break up the woodland and scrub across the site. Many of the grasslands have an associated pond and together these rich habitats support a wide array of plants and animals, including 16 species of dragonfly and damselfly.

Visit the Valley Creek Grassland's just metres from the car park, to see hundreds of common spotted orchids come into bloom in early summer, alongside bright displays of Bird's-foot-trefoil, lady's smock and common knapweed. The abundant nectar attracts a range of bees and butterflies, including the common blue and peacock butterfly.

Peer into Valley Creek nature pond, for a chance to spot the nationally rare great crested newt. These amphibians breed in the pond in spring, before moving out to forage and hibernate in the surrounding grass and scrub.



Get involved

Would you like to...

Gain new practical skills in a friendly atmosphere?
Learn about nature conservation from our experts?
Meet new people from your local area?
Spend time outdoors?

...Why not come along and join our team of volunteers, to help us look after this beautiful nature reserve? We welcome all ages and abilities, all you need is a pair of sturdy shoes and we'll get you started!

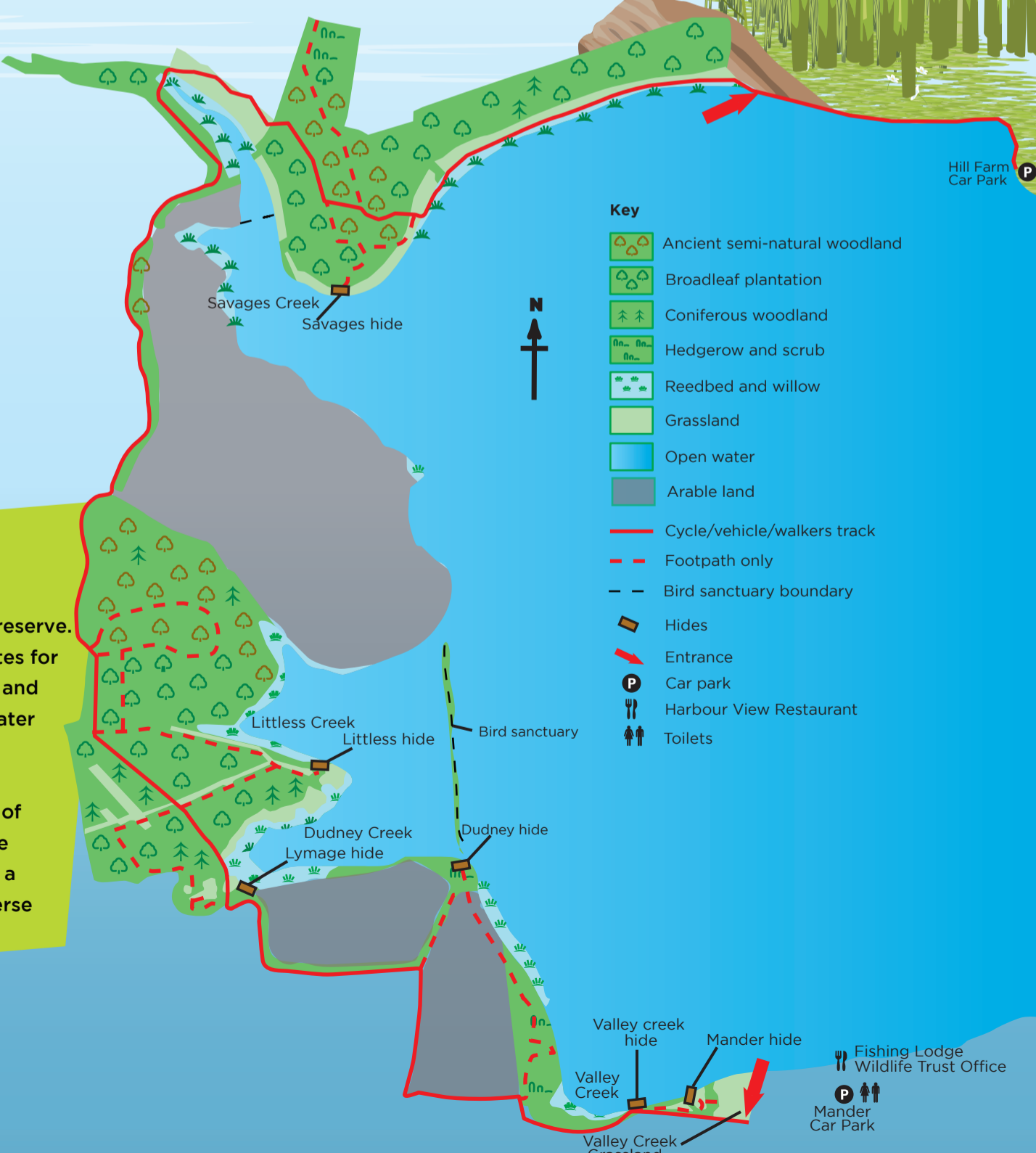
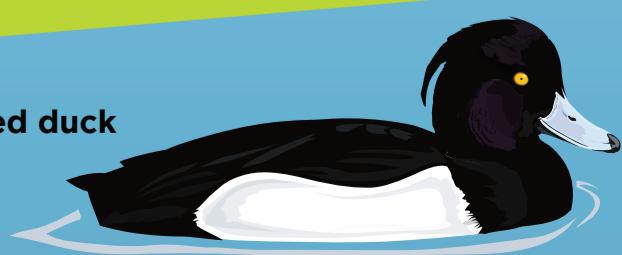
If you are interested please contact grafham@wildlifebcn.org or call us on 01480 811075.

Did you know?

There are **10** species of bat present within the nature reserve. The ancient wood provides both forage and roosting sites for these night time specialists, which include the common and soprano pipistrelle, Daubenton's which feed over the water surface and the rare barbastelle.

In the winter time, Grafham reservoir can host upwards of **30,000** gulls, which often includes species like the Icelandic, glaucous and Caspian gulls. These gulls form a floating raft on the open water in the evening and disperse to the surrounding areas come daybreak.

Tufted duck



Fishing Lodge
Wildlife Trust Office

Mander Car Park