

LYMAGE HIDE

AQUATIC ANTICS

Lymage hide overlooks our vast, 18-hectare, designated bird sanctuary, which offers a quiet refuge to the waterfowl that frequent the reservoir. Multiple aquatic and shoreline habitats can be observed here, each offering the unique living conditions necessary for our resident and visiting bird populations to thrive. Shoreline willow stands provide ideal habitat for the vast numbers of coot and tufted duck, which come into the shallows to dabble for food. The reed beds are home to the charismatic reed warbler, which builds its delicately woven nest entirely from reed material. Out in the open water cormorants exhibit their characteristic wing drying behaviour aboard rafts originally constructed to provide nesting sites for terns.



Above: coot (top) and soprano pipistrelle bat (bottom).

GRASSLAND GEMS

In the spring the Dragonfly Pond, with its surrounding grassland and scrub, comes to life with a diverse range of plants and animals. Bright displays of grassland flowers such as lady's bedstraw, greater burnet and the common spotted and bee orchid, attract a colourful array of nectaring insects. These insects provide ample food for foraging amphibians that live and breed in the pond, such as the common toad and the nationally rare great crested newt. This abundance of amphibians attracts grass snakes, which nest in the base of haystacks formed as part of our traditional mowing regime, used to manage the grassland alongside cattle grazing.



Above: singing nightingale.

MIDNIGHT MAGIC

In the dark of the night, the skies over Lymage grassland come to life with the aerial acrobatics of our resident bat species. Emerging at dusk from the roosting box nestled on the side of the bird hide, common and soprano pipistrelle bats go on the hunt for flying insects. The dense scrub blocks that surround the Dragonfly pond provide perfect nesting habitat for the secretive nightingale, whose famous song can be heard on the wind in the dead of night. These locally distributed birds are on the decline in Great Britain; here at Grafham, the Wildlife Trust has teamed up with Anglian Water in a pioneering project, which aims to track the movements of our resident population as they migrate south to their wintering grounds in sub-Saharan Africa.



Above: common spotted orchid and common toad.



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