

Old Sulehay Nature Reserve is made up of a mosaic of limestone quarries, grassland, woodland and wetland habitats. The nature reserve covers over 210 acres making it one of the largest Wildlife Trust nature reserves in Northamptonshire.

Part of the nature reserve, Old Sulehay Forest, has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to the woodlands varied geology and, therefore, vegetation which attracts a wide variety of birds and invertebrates.

Designation as a SSSI is primarily a legal mechanism to protect sites that are of conservation interest because of the wildlife they support.



Nettle-leaved bellflower



Ring Haw Quarry Grassland

History

Old Sulehay Forest and the adjacent old quarry (Stonepit Close) were purchased by the Trust in 2001. The nature reserve was extended in 2002 with the acquisition of land in the area known as Ring Haw, with an aim to saving these important wildlife habitats from further mineral extraction and development.



Old Sulehay Forest is a fragment of the ancient Rockingham Forest, a royal hunting forest that extended from Wansford to Kettering. The majority of the rest of the nature reserve has historically been associated with quarrying

activities. Stonepit Close was exploited for its limestone, with areas of Ring Haw being part of a larger quarry for limestone, ironstone and silica clay. Remains of the former railway track beds and sidings which were used to transport the quarry products can still be seen. The area known as the "Calcing Banks" was used to refine the extracted iron ore, which after burning here for 3 months produced the semi finished raw material known as calcined ore. These quarry activities have resulted in the landscape, important wildlife habitats and their associated species that we see today.



Green woodpecker

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire,
Northamptonshire and Peterborough
Wildlife Trust



We hope you enjoy your visit

Access

The main access points are via; bridleways leading from the Wansford road between Wansford and Yarwell, the bridleway and footpaths leaving the Sulehay Road between Yarwell and Kingscliffe and the byway and footpaths leading from the Apethorpe Road.

Please do not obstruct any of the gateways when parking. Bring stout footwear as the ground across the reserve is uneven and can be wet and slippery. Please follow the country code at all times. As a result of quarrying there are several steep drops at the edge of the reserve, we would therefore ask that visitors keep to marked paths where possible and keep dogs on leads.
Thank You.

How to find the reserve

OS Grid Reference TL 05 98

From the A47 or A605 take the Wansford road which runs between Fotheringhay and Wansford, through Nassington and Yarwell. On reaching the cross roads at the village of Yarwell turn onto the Sulehay Road. Parking is limited, but the most suitable places to park are in the lay-bys along the length of the Sulehay Road. From here access can be gained to the nature reserve by the various Public Rights of Way.

Further Information

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

If you would like more information about this reserve or about how you can support us please contact the Reserves Manager, The Wildlife Trust, Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton NN3 8BE or telephone (01604) 405285. E-mail: northwt@cix.co.uk

Acknowledgements



Alan Evans Memorial Trust
Bernard Sunley Charitable Trust
BSS International
Chadwyck Healey Charitable Trust
Maud Elkington Charitable Trust
Peter Smith Charitable Trust
Restore UK
The Hamamelis Trust
Local people who gave generously to the appeal to buy this reserve

www.wildlifebcnp.org

Welcome to
Old Sulehay



Photographs by Richard Revels, illustrations by Mike Langman

What to look out for and how the Trust cares for this nature reserve

Quarries, Grassland and Scrub

The limestone grasslands in the disused quarries at Old Sulehay are a very rare resource nationally. This habitat supports a rich assemblage of wild flowers and has a diversity in structure from scrub, through grass to bare ground, which in turn supports many different invertebrates, such as green tiger beetles. These are high speed hunters which like the sun-warmed sandy bare ground. Glow worms, whose larvae feed on snails can be seen in June, in the longer grass. The females glow green at dusk to attract the adult males.



Green tiger beetle

Many of the wild flowers present are rare within this county and include ploughman's-spikenard, wild thyme, viper's bugloss, common cudweed and yellow-wort. As you walk you will see a wide range of butterflies, such as common blue, brown argus and dingy skipper. On the warm spring days of May look out for the energetic and restless grizzled skipper butterfly in Stonepit Close, on the disused railway lines or at the calcining banks.



Yellow wort

The areas of scrub in and around the grasslands and quarries support several bird species, such as whitethroat and bullfinch. Listen out for the soft musical purring of the turtle dove and the maniacal ringing laugh of the green woodpecker in the summer months.

In order to maintain the varied habitat structure and the associated species of these areas the Trust is selectively cutting areas of scrub with a future aim to introducing sheep grazing to the grassland to control vegetation growth.

Woodland

The woodlands are ancient abandoned coppice of ash, oak and field maple. They have a diverse ground flora particularly in Old Sulehay Forest including toothwort, bluebells, wild garlic and carpets of wood anemones. Both great and lesser spotted woodpecker live within the wood, along with nuthatch and tree creeper. Both muntjac and fallow deer are often seen. Look out for the wild service tree. The fruit from this tree called chequers was used in the past to make a beer or mead.



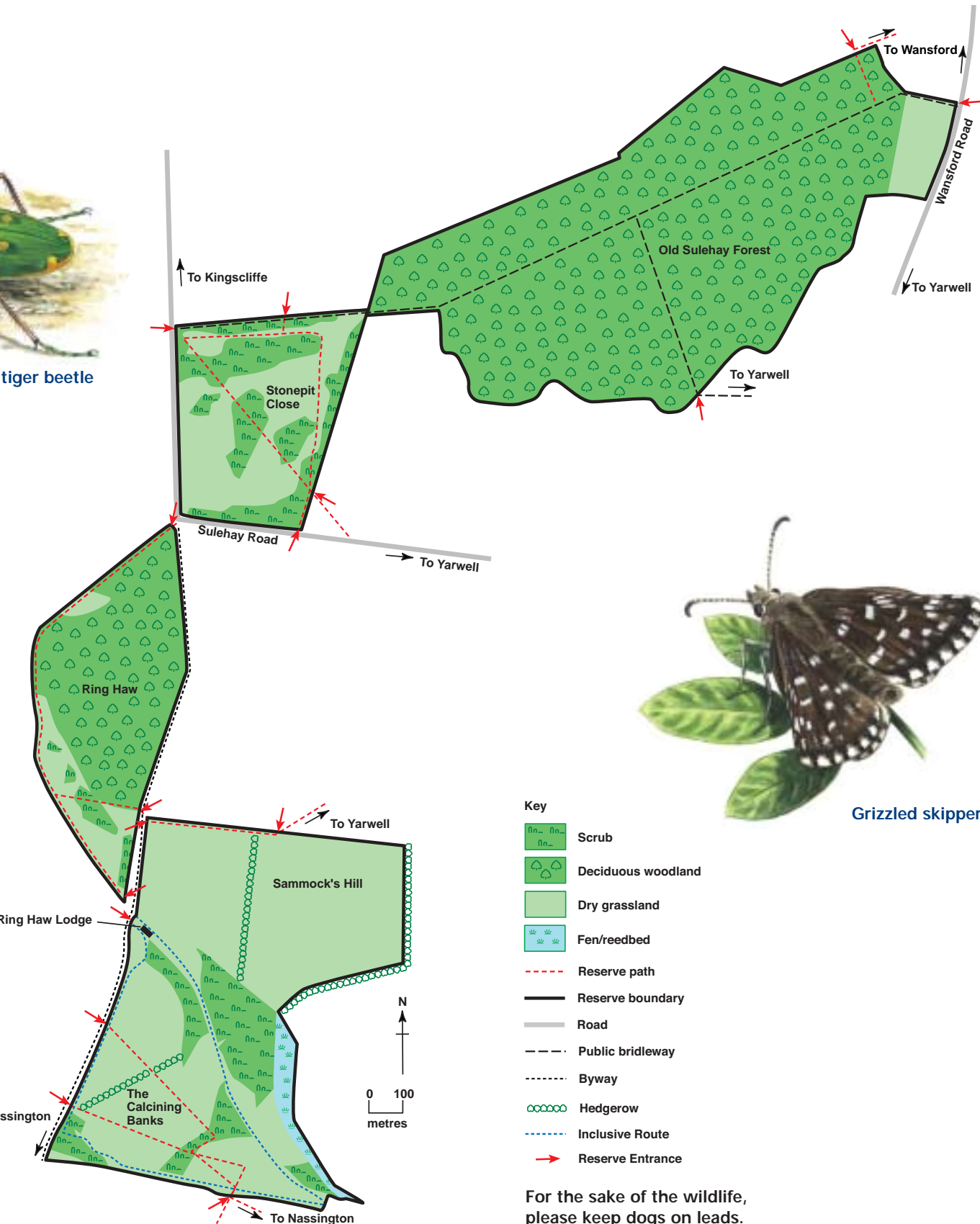
Nuthatch

A number of rides run through the woodlands. These are bound on either side by distinctive ditches and

banks known as wood banks. They indicate that these avenues were created in the 19th Century. It is necessary to manage the rides by cutting back the trees and shrubs to the wood bank and mowing the lower grassy vegetation. This prevents vegetation encroaching on these historic track ways and enables sunlight to reach the floor of the ride, encouraging plants



Wood anemone

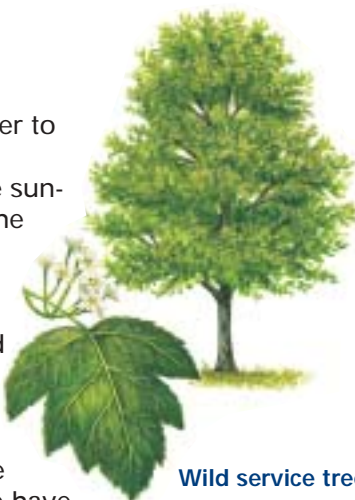


Grizzled skipper

- Key
- Scrub
 - Deciduous woodland
 - Dry grassland
 - Fen/reedbed
 - Reserve path
 - Reserve boundary
 - Road
 - Public bridleway
 - Byway
 - Hedgerow
 - Inclusive Route
 - Reserve Entrance

For the sake of the wildlife, please keep dogs on leads. Thank you

like nettle-leaved bellflower to survive. A variety of invertebrates thrive in the sun-warmed conditions that the ride management creates and the emerging adults feed on the plant nectar sources such as dogwood and bramble that grow on the ride side.



Wild service tree

In recent years non-native species such as sycamore have become established within the woodlands. If allowed to spread further, this would shade out the woodland floor and reduce the botanical diversity that currently exists. Over time the sycamore will be removed to encourage plants more typical of this area.

Sammock's Hill Limestone Grassland Recreation Project

Limestone Grasslands are important habitats due to the rich diversity of plants and associated invertebrates they support. However, over the last 60 years it is estimated that up to 80% of limestone grasslands have been lost in Britain. This is largely due to changes in agricultural practices, such as cultivation for arable production.

At Sammock's Hill the Wildlife Trust is trying to reverse this trend. The two fields, covering 30 acres, were recently under arable production. The two bands of limestone bedrock which run through the fields, indicate that the fields would previously have been limestone grassland.

Using wildflower seed collected from other limestone grassland sites in the local area, Sammock's Hill is being restored back to its former state. As the grassland vegetation develops it is hoped that invertebrate species associated with limestone grasslands will move in from the neighbouring quarries and grasslands of the nature reserve.

In future years, Sammock's Hill will be able to provide wildflower seed for other Limestone Grassland restoration projects in the local area, further increasing the area of this rare and valuable habitat.



Wild thyme