

## Pipeline works

New housing to the North of Desborough has required that a pipeline be buried through the centre of the nature reserve. This may appear to be highly destructive in the short term, however in the long term such 'disturbances' can often be beneficial. The Plens was created through a similar process that brings rocks and poor soils to the surface providing new areas for plants and insects to colonise.

The wildflowers and animals that make this site important are highly dependent on these conditions. With growing numbers of visitors to the site, it is increasingly important to be sensitive to nature, for example simply by cleaning up after dogs and general recreational activities.



**Common spotted orchid**

## Access

Access to the reserve is by foot through the Country park to the East of the reserve or alternatively, via the Desborough to Stoke Albany footpath, which runs North- west through the reserve. Some places are steep and slippery, and can be muddy in wet weather. Stout footwear is advisable.

Please enjoy your visit and be sensitive to the needs of the wildlife dependant upon this site. Please follow the country code and keep dogs on a lead.

We hope you enjoy your visit

## More Information

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

If you would like more information about this reserve or other reserves in Northamptonshire, please contact:

Reserves Manager  
The Wildlife Trust  
Lings House,  
Billing Lings, Northampton  
NN3 8BE  
Tel: 01604 405285  
E-mail: northamptonshire@wildlifebcnp.org

This site is supported by:



Through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme



Market Harborough Round Table No. 618



[www.wildlifebcnp.org](http://www.wildlifebcnp.org)

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



Bedfordshire  
Cambridgeshire  
Northamptonshire  
Peterborough

Welcome to  
**The Plens**  
Nature Reserve

Photograph by Nathalie Hueber, illustrations by Mike Langman

Protecting wildlife  
close to home

## History

The name 'The Plens' dates from the Nineteenth century and probably means that the land was at a time flat and ordinary. However quarrying and the creation of a railway line have resulted in a more varied topography and diverse habitat. Remains of a railway track can still be seen along the bottom of the cutting, and near the entrance is a large concrete block, which formed the loading bay.

In 1966 the site was abandoned and allowed to become overgrown until 1986 when the Wildlife Trust took over the management of the land.

## Wildflowers and shrubs

The reserve has a range of areas at different stages of colonisation by plants; grassland, tall herbs, hawthorn scrub, and areas developing into woodland are all found on this site.

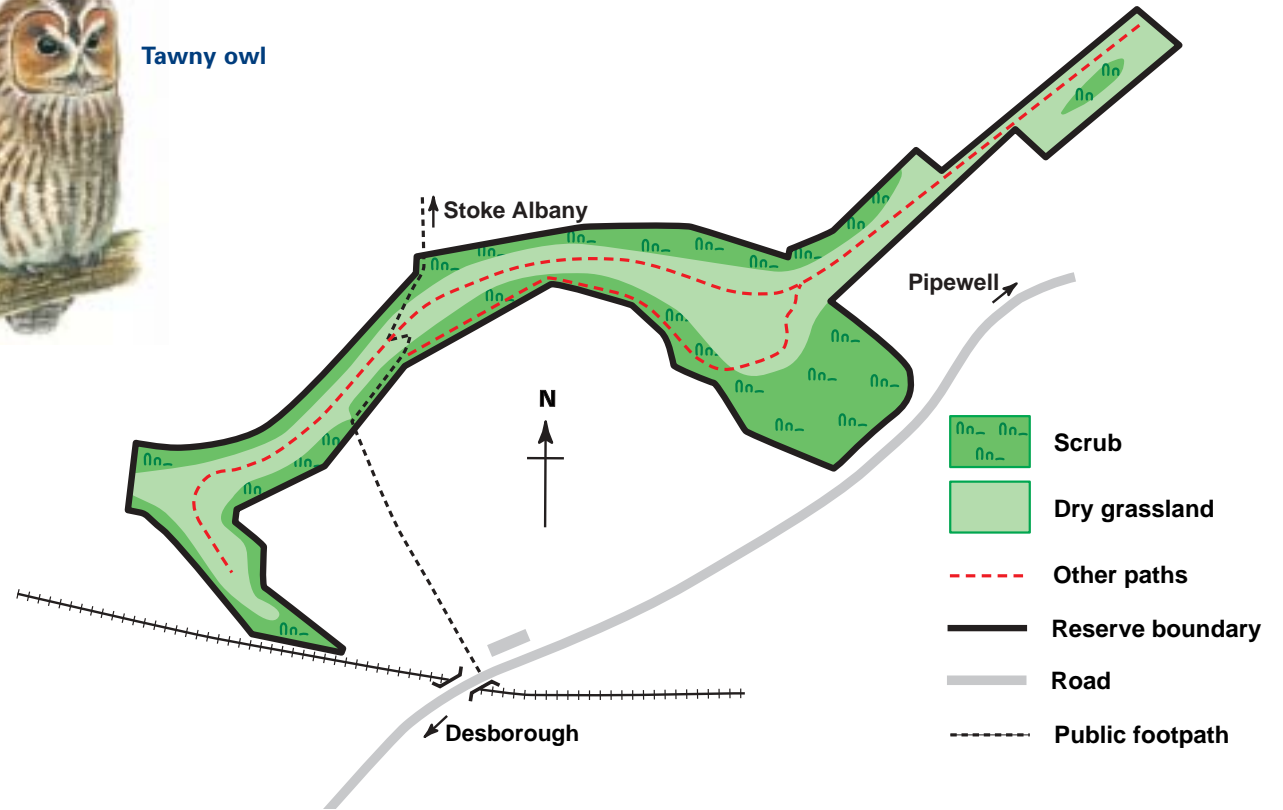
The grassland is dominated by the grasses false-oat grass, and red fescue but also contains many wildflowers including wild basil, which is pollinated by bees, butterflies, and moths, common spotted-orchid, vetches, and bird's-foot-trefoil which bears fruit pod resembling the long toes on a bird's foot. The uncommon grass vetchling also occurs here. This species can be distinguished by 1 or 2 brilliant crimson flowers on long stalks, hence the name 'crimson shoe', but is often difficult to find amongst the dense grass foliage which it prefers. Clearings in the scrub are filled with dense growth of hogweed, rose-bay willowherb, hedge woundwort which as the name suggests has healing properties. The woodland areas contain ground-ivy,



Greater knapweed



Tawny owl



sanicle, hart's tongue and dog's mercury. Look out for Moschatel in the spring which with its small flowers on four faces of a stalk resembles a town hall clock, giving rise to its common name.

## Fauna

The reserve contains a range of habitats of value to wildlife. As well as supporting a good invertebrate fauna, particularly noticeable the butterflies, the reserve is home to many birds and mammals. There are several rabbit warrens and voles can sometimes be heard rustling through the undergrowth. The scrub is a good place for nesting birds, especially warblers. Willow warblers and chiffchaff are regularly sighted. Similar to warblers, chiffchaffs can be distinguished by their song which gives rise to their name.

## Management

Without management the site would soon scrub over and lose the interesting grassland plants and associated butterflies and mammals. The Trust therefore carries out a scrub clearance programme in order to keep some areas as open grassland. In doing so, a complex matrix from short grass areas to patchy and dense areas of scrub is created. In addition paths are kept clear and steps have been installed to make access around the site easier and safer.



Field vole