

# Welcome to Brampton Wood

We hope you enjoy your visit.

## How to find the reserve

OS Sheet 153 Grid Reference TL 184 698

Leave the A14 at exit 22 (Brampton), one mile east of the A14/A1 junction. Take the Brampton exit (B1514) at the first roundabout. At the next mini-roundabout turn right into Grove Lane, then after 100m turn right again at the T-junction. Follow this road through the village, over the A1, towards Grafham village. The reserve is on the north side of the road 1.5 miles out of Brampton. The reserve entrance is signposted with a Wildlife Trust sign. Park in the small car park.

Paths are mostly grassy and compacted earth so can be muddy and occasionally flood in wet weather. Please stay on the paths and keep dogs on a lead.

## More information

Your local Wildlife Trust protects the special wildlife and habitats of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. We are a charity dependent on voluntary contributions.



Primrose

**To contact us** about this reserve or about how you can support us please write to:

The Wildlife Trust,  
The Manor House,  
Broad Street,  
Cambourne,  
CB23 6DH.

**To join** the Wildlife

Trust please contact  
The Wildlife Trust,  
The Manor House,  
Broad Street,  
Cambourne,  
CB23 6DH.



Wood Anemone

Tel: **01954 713500**

E-mail: [cambridgeshire@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:cambridgeshire@wildlifebcn.org)

Website: [www.wildlifebcn.org](http://www.wildlifebcn.org)

This reserve is supported by:



Building communities. Transforming lives.



Forestry Commission



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



Bedfordshire  
Cambridgeshire  
Northamptonshire



# Brampton Wood

## Nature Reserve



wildlifebcn

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

Photo: Chantelle Kerr Illustrations: Mike Langman

02216

## The Woodland

Designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1954, Brampton Wood is an exceptional example of ancient woodland and the second largest woodland in Cambridgeshire. At least 900 years old and spanning 132 hectares, the woodland hosts a myriad of plant, animal and fungi species. Following a successful appeal to conserve this magnificent area, the Trust purchased the site in 1992.

Bisected by streams and grassy rides, and characterised by variable geology, the woodland boasts a great variety of habitats. These habitats play host to a number of rare and protected plant and animal species. Dominated by chalky-boulder clay soils, lime-loving plants such as common spotted orchid thrive here. Whilst in isolated patches the soil is acid enough to support pockets of bracken. A mixture of oak, ash, aspen, birch and field maple form the bulk of the canopy which hangs above an understorey of hazel, hawthorn and blackthorn.



Badgers

## History

The first records of Brampton Wood date back to the Domesday Book of 1086AD. Created in the Middle Ages, the boundary of the wood is marked by a ditch and large earth mound, which would have served to protect the woodland from wandering livestock.

Common Spotted Orchid



For centuries the woodland has been managed for resources such as timber, hay and hazel poles, and to provide pasture for livestock. The first map of the wood, drawn for the Earl of Sandwich in 1757, illustrates three principal rides - Main Ride, Cross Ride and West Ride. Likely much older than the map indicates, these rides were the highways of the woodland; roads by which timber and other woodland products could be extracted. As time passed and industries changed new uses of the wood were explored. In the 1860s bark stripped from the large oaks became an important product in the tanning industry. The wood has changed hands several times since the 1950s. In 1956 The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food purchased the site from timber merchants, primarily as a safety zone for the Grafham firing range. The land was subsequently managed by the Forestry Commission who planted around one fifth of the woodland



Green Woodpecker

## Flora

Over 340 plant species have been recorded at Brampton Wood. Ancient woodland indicator species such as dog's mercury, bluebell, wood primrose, wood sedge and violets can all be found in the woodland. Visit in spring to admire the conspicuous bluebell blooms that carpet parts of the vast woodland



Bluebells

**With almost 340 recorded species, Brampton Wood hosts an exceptional diversity of species and habitats. From ancient woodland, to grassy rides, streams and ponds this magnificent woodland supports a great array of wildlife throughout the seasons.**

## Wildlife

Shortly after in the 1980's, the Ministry of Defence took over management of the wood until the range's closure in the early 1990s. At this time woodland was uncertain. But following a hugely successful appeal to save and conserve this magnificent site the Wildlife Trust purchased the wood and took over management in 1992.

Speckled Wood Butterfly





# Welcome to Brampton Wood

In summer, the bright grassy rides provide stark contrast to the muted tones of the woodland. Stretching for nearly two miles, they host plants more typical of open meadows, such as common spotted orchid, devil's bit-scabious, water purslane and both hairy and trailing St John's wort.



Devils bit scabious

The wood is also home to some unusual trees; yews, wild cherries and rare wild service trees can be found along the Main Ride. Two magnificent wild pears, found along the western edge of the wood, are two of the best specimens in Cambridgeshire.

## Fungi

Over 500 species of fungi exist in the wood and autumn is the best time to find many of them. Often boasting attractive or quirky names, many of the fungi found in the wood are poisonous and inedible.

Distinctive species found here include plums and custard, false death cap, common bonnet and King Alfred's cakes.

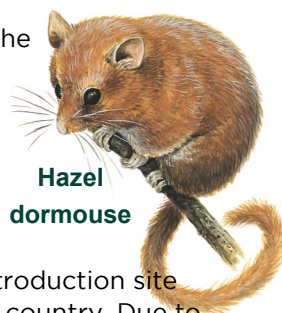


Plums and Custard

## Fauna

From beautiful butterflies to the striped badger, the many and varied habitats within the woodland attract an array of species from across the animal kingdom.

In 1992, Brampton Wood became one of the first re-introduction site for the hazel dormouse in the country. Due to its nocturnal habits and arboreal lifestyle this charismatic critter is exceptionally difficult to see. But regular monitoring of the dormouse by local volunteers informs us that the population has survived to this day and has successfully expanded into most areas of the wood.



Hazel dormouse

The black hairstreak, one of Britain's rarest butterflies, has several colonies in the wood making Brampton Wood one of the best UK sites to see this attractive insect. Many other unusual butterflies can be spotted regularly at the wood including purple and white-letter hairstreaks, brown argus, white admirals and silver-washed fritillary.



Black hairstreak (right) White Admiral (left)



The wood is also home to many bird species. From the robust and conspicuous green woodpecker to the enchanting nightingale and the stealthy sparrowhawk, the wood provides ample feeding and breeding opportunities for many birds to thrive.

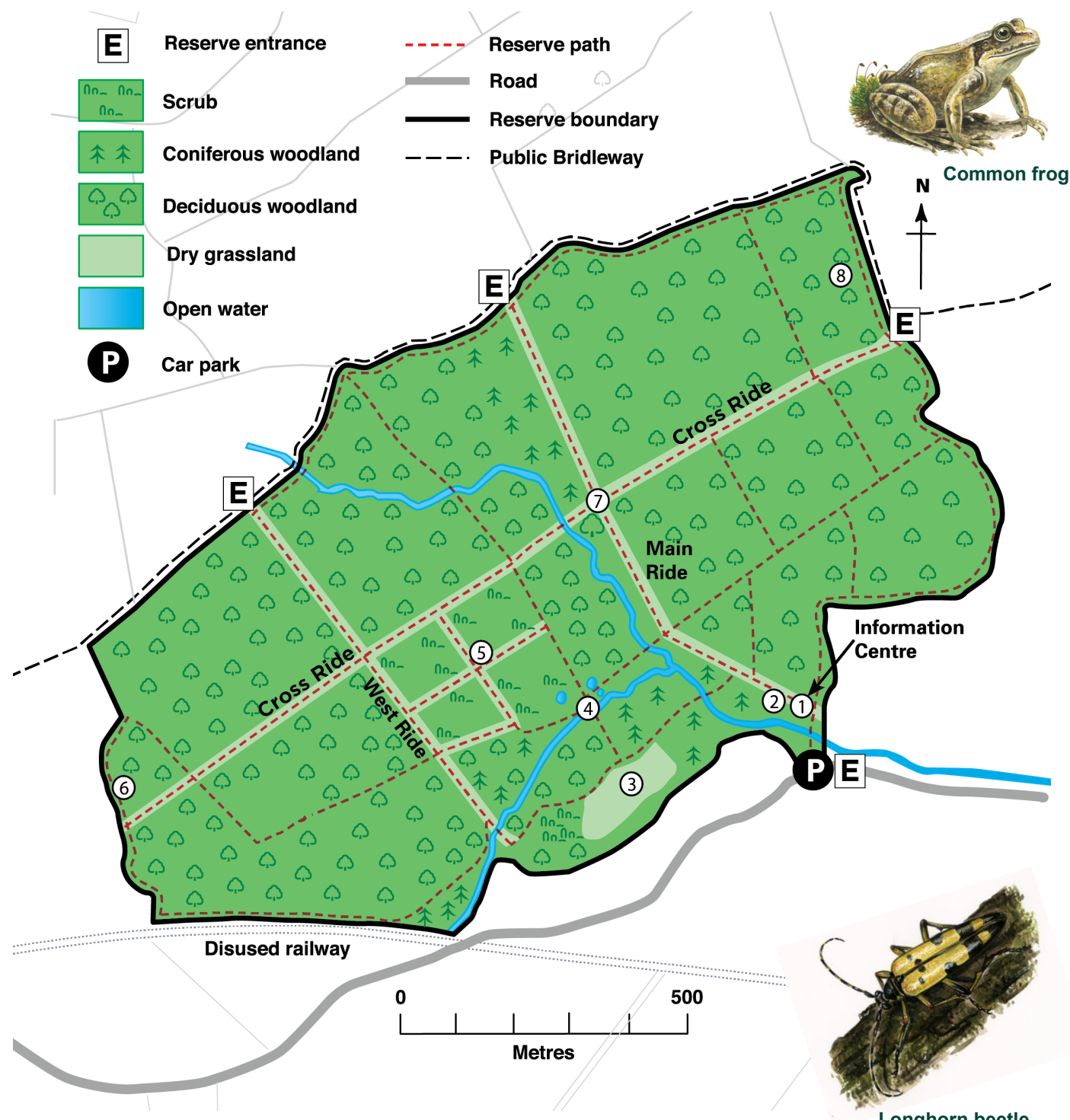


Nightingale

Many smaller creatures also frequently visit the woodland. Rotting wood piles are rife with beetle larvae, including that of nationally rare Longhorn beetles. Whilst ponds provide homes for frogs, toads and newts, including the nationally rare great crested newt.

## How the Trust cares for the reserve

At Brampton, a team of staff and volunteers carry out works year round to encourage diversity of habitats and species. The rides are cut annually on alternate sides and regularly widened to prevent shading. This encourages the diversity of wildflowers and insects found along the rides. The ride edges are also being returned to a coppice cycle to improve the area for insects, birds and woodland plants. The parts of the woodland converted to conifer plantations are being restored by removing conifers, encouraging the native deciduous woodland trees to regenerate in their place.



## Map key

### 1. The Major Oaks

Bordering the wood's entrance these magnificent trees are also known as 'The Master Oaks' and 'The Sentinel Oaks'.



Wild pear

### 2. Cherries and Chequers

A previous owner planted this group of cherry and wild service trees. Typically a rare tree of ancient woodland, the bark of a wild service tree has a chequered pattern - hence the chequer tree.

### 3. The Great Glade

Cleared of conifers and cut annually, the great glade is home to a great variety of wildflowers and insects.

### 4. Ponds

Dug as a convenient source of water by the woods previous owners, the ponds are now home to a great wealth of aquatic creatures.

### 5. The Cross

Conifer trees have been removed in this area to restore the native trees. Wide, sunny grassy rides were created to encourage wildflowers and insects.

### 6. The Wild Pears

Two old and magnificent wild pear trees grow here along the edge of the wood and are two of the best examples in Cambridgeshire. They still fruit occasionally, although the pears are small and hard.

### 7. The Crossroads

This is the main crossroads in the wood - at the junction of the Main and Cross Rides. From here you have an excellent view of the rides and can see the land rising north and east. A crab apple tree is nearby; one of several good examples of Britain's only native apple tree.

### 8. Bluebells

In spring, this is one of several excellent places to see a wonderful display of our most popular native woodland flower.



Longhorn beetle