

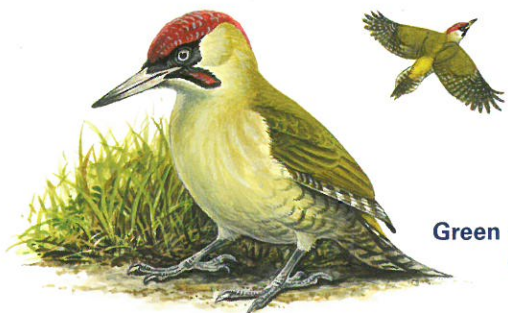
again to allow the flowers to complete their cycle. The majority of the plants found in these traditionally managed meadows are perennials and are well suited to this form of management. Where grazing is unable to remove the scrub and bramble encroaching into the grassland, it is cut back to prevent it from becoming established. The pathways through the woodland are cut back periodically to maintain access. Hazel and other shrubs are coppiced on a rotational cycle, which encourages new growth and helps light reach the woodland floor. Some non-native tree species are managed to prevent them from becoming too dominant. Where possible we leave dead wood to support a wide range of insects. Hedges and hedgerow trees are trimmed when necessary. Maintenance of fencing and gates is required periodically.



Adder's-tongue fern

Access

Unfortunately, parking is limited at the reserve entrance. Please do not obstruct the gateway, as it is in regular use. The reserve is accessible on foot via the Public Right of Way network, from both Fancott and Chalton, where parking may be easier. Please keep your dog on a lead when visiting, to keep it safe and to prevent disturbance of the wildlife, livestock and other visitors.



Green woodpecker

We hope you enjoy your visit

How to find the reserve

Grid reference TL 025 275
OS Landranger Map 166. Explorer Map 193
1 mile south-east of Toddington on the B579. From M1 junction 12, head south on the B530. At the T-junction, turn left onto the B579 Luton Road, the reserve is 500m from this junction on the left-hand side of the road. Bus services between Toddington and Luton stop at Chalton village, then it's a half mile walk to the reserve.

More information

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

The Wildlife Trust, Priory Country Park,
Barkers Lane, Bedford MK41 9SH

Tel: 01234 364213

Email: bedfordshire@wildlifebcnp.org

To join the Wildlife Trust contact:

The Manor House, Broad Street,
Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH

Tel: 01954 713500

Email: cambridgeshire@wildlifebcnp.org

This reserve is supported by:



Bedfordshire
county council

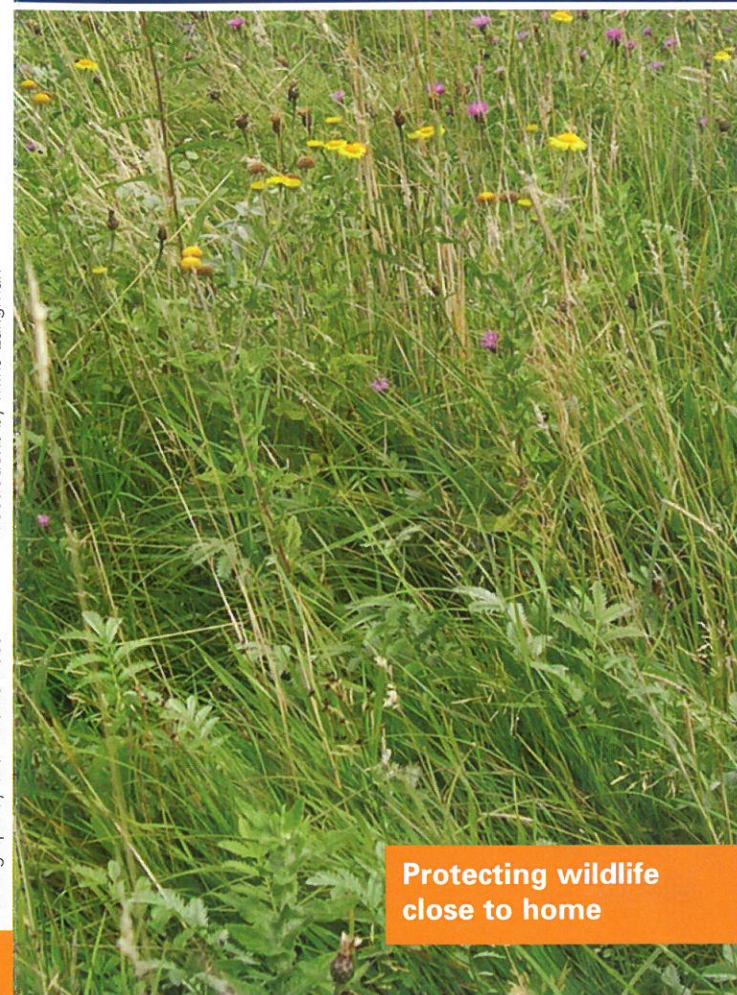
www.wildlifebcnp.org

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



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
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Welcome to Fancott Woods and Meadows



Illustrations by Mike Langman

Photograph by the Wildlife Trust

**Protecting wildlife
close to home**

This 13 hectare (32 acres) Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a fine example of traditional, flower-rich grassland and semi-natural broadleaved woodland. Both these habitats were once much more widespread across the county. Agricultural 'improvement' has meant a dramatic decline of such meadows throughout Britain, where they are now largely confined to the south of the country. The narrow strip of woodland bordering the northern part of the site, together with the smaller woodland in the centre provides both shelter and contrast for the adjacent meadows and linking hedgerows. Traditional management techniques at Fancott have helped preserve this site for future generations to enjoy.

Common toad



alongside the reserve. This, together with additional ditches and the adjacent water treatment plant attracts birds and insects which then use the nature reserve for either feeding or nesting. There are signs that otters are returning to the River Flit. Resident woodpeckers, summer visiting warblers and flocks of winter thrushes are drawn to the reserve, along with regular sightings of buzzards and herons. The grassland is also important for butterflies such as meadow brown, common blue and small copper. If you visit at dusk you may see bats foraging. Pipistrelle's and brown long-eared bats are the most likely visitors.

The rippled effect in the southern meadow is called 'ridge and furrow', and is the remnant of strip ploughing that remains from medieval times, when oxen were used to pull the plough. The land was often ploughed in long strips because it was difficult to turn the ox and plough and the ridges were formed because the ploughs were not reversible, unlike modern equipment. This threw the soil up to one side when ploughed in a clockwise direction. Often different plants grow on the drier top of the ridges to those in the damper bottom of the furrows.

The horseshoe-shaped woodland around the northern part of the reserve is known as Chalton Spinney and has bluebells, primroses, dog's mercury and, later in the year, sanicle, beneath a canopy of ash and oak. Again, the drainage of the soil affects the types of trees found here, with alder found in the wetter parts of the wood. Field maple and hazel form the understorey beneath the canopy. Here too you will find signs of traditional management such as coppicing, from when the woodlands were farmed sustainably for timber. Badgers use the woodland at

night. The smaller woodland in the middle of the site is called Round Spinney. Similar conditions occur here. Fallow deer have been seen feeding on the wood edge.

Grey heron



How the Trust cares for this reserve

We cut hay in the southern meadow before grazing both meadows with sheep and cattle. Grazing prevents coarse grasses dominating, whilst allowing wild flowers to bloom and set seed. The edges of the hay meadow are left or cut, on rotation,

What to look for

The flower-rich meadows vary in dampness and this is evident in the range of flowers and grasses found here. They are home to many plants now rare in Bedfordshire, including adder's-tongue fern, saw-wort and several species of orchid in the drier sections.

Interesting grasses also survive here including quaking grass and sweet vernal grass. You can find great burnet, meadowsweet and ragged-robin in the damper grassland areas, particularly in the northern meadow. The small seasonal pond in this meadow is a magnet for wildlife and in summer dragonflies and damselflies, including the black-tailed skimmer, hunt over the meadows – feeding on other insects caught on the wing. The River Flit rises nearby and flows



Bluebells



Primrose

