



Warwickshire

Welcome to

Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow

Part of the  Dunsmore Living Landscape

Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow consists of 45 hectares of ancient woodland and grassland providing important habitats for local wildlife. The woodland trail takes visitors on a circular route around the wood. The meadow trail takes in views over the two main pools and the neighbouring woodlands of Wappenbury Wood and Ryton Wood SSSI. Beyond the reserve, there are further trails to explore.

About the nature reserve

Bubbenhall Wood is believed to have been here since at least 1600 and is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Once farmland, the area now known as Bubbenhall Meadow, was quarried for sand and gravel from 2001 – 2006. It has since been restored to an area of ponds, grassland and native woodland plantation, which is supplemented by natural regeneration. The reserve is an important wildlife corridor within the landscape, connecting local habitats allowing rare species to thrive. It is owned and carefully managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to ensure the diversity of habitats remain and are enhanced for wildlife.



Cuckoo displaying
© 2018 Andy Morflew (WildNet)

Things to see

With a variety of birds including cuckoo and green woodpecker, butterflies such as the silver-washed fritillary and purple hairstreak and interesting fungi, there is always plenty to see in all seasons. Between the hazel, holly, ivy and elder, flowers pop up in spring - from bluebells to wood anemone, wood avens to honeysuckle.



Things to do

- There are two waymarked trails on the reserve. The woodland trail takes visitors around a one mile (1.3km) loop, taking up to 30 minutes. The meadow trail is a short 0.3 mile (0.6km) path which links up with trails in neighbouring woodlands and country park, whilst providing panoramic views over the meadow and woodland plantation. Visit www.warwickwildtrails.org.uk for more information and to download the trail.
- A bird screen in Bubbenhall Meadow provides opportunity to see birds and other wildlife up close.
- Listen out for the tell-tale tapping noise of the woodpecker or call of the elusive cuckoo.
- The reserve offers a number of stopping points so why not stay a little longer and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature.
- Dogs are permitted on a lead to avoid damaging sensitive wildlife and habitats. We request that dogs owners do not allow their dogs to swim in the pools for the safety of their pets.



Apple blossom
© 2018 Gavin Heritage



Tawny Owl
© 2018 Margaret Holland (WildNet)

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Grassland, lake and old quarry face at Bubbenhall Meadow © 2018 John Roberts

Wood Farm sand and gravel quarry © 2018 Warwickshire Geology Conservation Group

Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow © 2018 Ben Passow

Bubbenhall Meadow has changed considerably since the turn of the century. The information gathered from oral histories, the previous owners, Smiths Concrete, local natural history groups and the Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group (WGCG) has captured every aspect of the meadow's history from farmland to industrial gravel pit and its return to nature. We can learn much by studying, conserving and restoring this landscape.

History

Bubbenhall Meadow was formerly agricultural land, originally part of Wood Farm. Although the farmland at this time had little value for wildlife, the surviving hedgerows contain hawthorn, blackthorn and occasional oak and willow, providing nesting sites for farmland birds including yellow wagtail and meadow pipit, species that have suffered serious declines across the UK.

Historically, Bubbenhall Wood was managed through a traditional technique called coppicing. There is evidence of a Victorian plantation of oak but the wood was largely unmanaged throughout the second half of the 20th Century. In time, the structural diversity of the wood will improve and careful management will ensure a wide range of habitats, allowing a greater number of species to make their home here.

Traditional woodland coppice management © 2018 Ben Passow (WWT)

Geology

When quarrying commenced at Wood Farm in 2001, clues about Warwickshire's Ice Age past were revealed. The sands and gravels were deposited by a powerful river during a relatively warm period in the Ice Age. Its wide valley extends from Bubbenhall to Baginton. Underneath the gravels, channels of the ancient river bed contained fossil evidence of temperate interglacial fauna. Fossil remains include the neck bone, teeth and tusk fragments of a straight-tusked elephant.



In 2004 a Lower Palaeolithic hand axe, was discovered at Wood Farm that confirmed that our distant ancestors lived in this area more than 350,000 years ago - possibly Heidelberg Man (*Homo heidelbergensis*).

Layers of sand and gravels at Wood Farm © 2018 Paul Allen

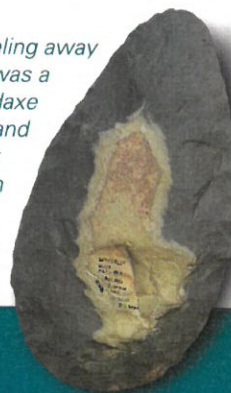
Back to nature

Quarrying ceased in 2006 and the area was partly restored and planted with native trees. The nature reserve has been surveyed by local wildlife enthusiasts since 2008. These surveys have revealed that Bubbenhall Wood hosts a range of ancient woodland species including bats, badgers and a number of rare butterflies.

The former gravel pit partly filled with water and species rich grassland provided a rich mosaic of habitats. The lakes and pools in Bubbenhall Meadow provide a rich habitat for wading birds and aquatic species including the great crested newt.

"Lifting it up and peeling away the clay I realised it was a complete stone handaxe in pristine condition and amazing to think that I was the first person in 300,000 years to have held it."

John Green
Quarry Manager, Smiths Concrete



Lower Palaeolithic hand axe © 2018 Warwick Museum

Reserve management

Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow will continue to be managed to improve and secure the future ecological value and connectivity of the landscape, linking the surrounding ancient woodlands.

People

Many people who grew up close to the wood have memories of exploring and making dens here.

As the site returns to nature, the local community can continue enjoy and explore the landscape for generations to come.



New footpaths and tree planting © 2018 Ian Jelley (WWT)



Walking in Bubbenhall Wood © 2018 WWT



Fossilised Straight-tusked Elephant tusk © 2018 Brian Ellis

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The Dunsmore Living Landscape consists of the largest cluster of ancient native woodlands in Warwickshire. Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow nature reserve lies at the heart of this special area.

The Reserve

Bubbenhall Wood is an ancient native woodland and Bubbenhall Meadow has been restored following gravel extraction. This meadow connects the ancient woodlands of Bubbenhall Wood and the surrounding woodlands in the Dunsmore Living Landscape area: Ryton Wood SSSI, Wappenbury Wood and Old Nun Wood.

Previously used for the extraction of minerals, restoration of the meadow started in 2006 to improve landscape connectivity. Species rich grassland and wetland provides structural diversity and a mosaic of habitats within the area.

Foregloves in Bubbenhall Wood
© 2018 Steven Cheshire (WWT)

"Our vision is to create an ancient wooded landscape with coppice connected by a network of hedgerows and wild flower meadows, rich in wildlife and accessible to all".

Habitats

What is coppice?

Coppice is the term used to describe a woodland arising as vegetative shoots from cut stumps. Historically coppice was cut on a 10 to 25 year cycle to provide poles for building and fencing. The use of coppice materials declined following the industrial revolution. Cutting of mixed species coppice has seen a revival in recent years, due to new habitat conservation techniques.

Managing coppice

A revival in traditional woodland coppicing techniques has substantial benefits for wildlife, whilst helping improve the long term health of our woodlands. Recently coppiced areas allow light to penetrate down to the woodland floor allowing woodland flowers such as bluebells and wood anemone and the insects that depend on them to thrive. Areas of mature growth provide habitat for dormice and shelter for larger mammals.

Coppicing products

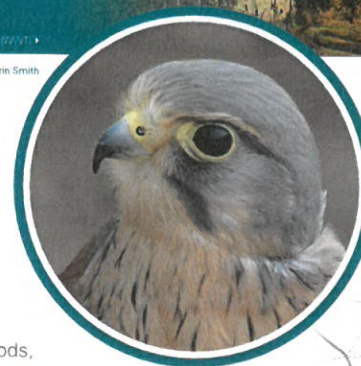
Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) can be used to make bean and pea sticks and hurdles. Osiers (*Salix viminalis*) can be cut for basket making.



A newly coppiced area showing regrowth of hazel stumps and bluebells where sunlight now reaches the woodland floor
© 2018 Steven Cheshire (WWT)

Wildlife

Joining up these habitats allows wildlife to move between these woods, reducing isolation between populations and in turn reducing the chance of local species extinction. New populations of the charismatic, but endangered hazel dormouse were introduced into the nearby woodlands following reinstatement of woodland management in 2017. Bubbenhall Wood, the associated hedgerows and meadow plantation will play an important part in providing landscape scale connectivity for these little creatures.



Kestrel © 2018 Darin Smith



Male Silver-washed Frillfly © 2018 Steven Cheshire (WWT)

People and Wildlife

Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow is part of a network of sites connected by footpaths and trails enabling visitors to explore the wider landscape. The woodlands provide opportunities for training and support traditional woodland practices.

Dormouse © 2018 Steven Cheshire (WWT)



Places to visit nearby

Ryton Wood SSSI - One of the county's largest surviving semi-natural woodland. One mile away, CV8 3EP.

Wappenbury Wood - A large semi-natural woodland rich in birds, plants and butterflies. One mile away, CV23 9QA.

Old Nun Wood - An ancient woodland with colourful displays of wildflowers in the spring. One mile away, CV23 9QA.

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