

WINTER fieldfares, redwings, large flocks of finches, linnets, yellowhammers
AUTUMN apples, rowan and blackberries, migrant hawkler and common darter dragonflies
SUMMER flower-rich margins and meadows, whitethroats, meadow brown and gatekeeper butterflies, red-tailed and honey bees, emperor dragonflies
SPRING cowslips, common spotted and pyramidal orchids, chittichaffs, reed warblers, skylarks, brimstone and orange tip butterflies

What to see



Corn buttercup

... Lower Smite Farm is home to a number of arable plants like corn buttercup and mouse-tail. These have become scarce because of modern farming practices and the use of herbicides. In turn, this has affected the insects and birds that rely on them for food.

... volunteers regularly count the number of bees in our demonstration field. They estimate that on a sunny summer day the flower-rich mix can attract around 15,000 bumblebees per hectare (more than two football pitches).



Carder bee



Lower Smite Farm is both a working farm and home of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's HQ. The trail starts from the wildlife garden in front of the main farmhouse.

Please call into the farmhouse for leaflets or more information as well as to browse our merchandise including bird food, nature reserves guide, cards and calendars. Rucksacks containing activities for children are available to borrow. Our offices are open Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

The circular trail is approximately 2km (1.5 miles) and takes in many of the farm's habitats. There are several gates and most of the paths are mown grass; it can be muddy and uneven in parts so wellington boots are advised in wet weather.

Please follow the instructions in the leaflet and use the map to help find your way around. This is a working farm so please keep to the trail, avoid machinery and supervise children at all times.

Ground-nesting birds make their home on the farm and cattle graze here during parts of the year – dogs are welcome but please keep them on a lead and leave gates as you find them.

The buildings around the main yard are not open to the public as they function as classrooms and are hired out for meetings. Around 4000 children a year visit us through our education work and events and hiring our rooms helps to fund this important work.



... farmers and landowners visit Lower Smite Farm to share ideas on how we can farm for wildlife. It's a chance to see rotations of crops and green manures working in practice; encouraging land managers to use less of the expensive, fossil-fuel-based chemical fertilisers. We don't leave the ground bare – that's a waste of the sun's energy. Farmers also see the benefit of wide field margins, sympathetic hedgerow management, traditional hay making and more.

... we're working really hard to improve the health of the soil across the whole site; intensive farming strips the soil of organic matter, worms and, ultimately, fertility. By planting phacelia, Persian clover, duckweed, mustard and other nectar-rich green manures, we're rebuilding soil nutrients naturally as well as helping the bees and butterflies above the soil.



Planting to improve soil fertility

Location: Lower Smite Farm is signposted from the A4538 between the M5 (Jct 6) roundabout and Martin Hussingtree. Parking is available on our car park during office hours, there are lay-bys outside these hours.

Nearest station – Droitwich (3 miles)
 Nearest bus – Martin Hussingtree (1 mile)

Access: The farm trail is open at all times; the office is open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm. Please keep to the trail, keep dogs on leads and supervise children.

Group and school visits by arrangement: 01905 754919

Lower Smite Farm is one of over 75 nature reserves owned and cared for by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust that form part of our vision for a **Living Landscape** for Worcestershire. By working with other landowners, managers and communities we aim to **restore, recreate and reconnect** fragmented habitats to achieve a landscape where wildlife can flourish and people can live happier and healthier lives.



Ways to get involved:

- Become a member
- Volunteer
- Make a donation
- Leave a gift in your will
- Adopt a species
- Buy wild bird food

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust relies on the support of its members and on donations and grants.

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk

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Charity No. 256618

Lower Smite Farm Trail Guide



Worcestershire



Creating a Living Landscape

... we farm our 65ha (150 acres) to make the most of our farm for wildlife. Our land is in a number of environmental stewardship agreements and grant schemes. More than half the farmed land is managed organically and all of it is used to share information with farmers on how we can manage farmland to improve soil health, crop production and wildlife.



Did you know...

... connectivity is really important to wildlife so all the habitats here form part of a network. We've reinstated more than 3km of hedgerow across the farm – that's almost double what was here when we began to manage the farm in 2004. All the new species-rich hedges and new woodland have been planted by volunteers.



Volunteers planting hedgerow

... we've lost more than half the UK's ponds since the 1950s. We're helping to remedy the loss of this vitally important habitat with four ponds, one scrape, a reedbed filtration system and one wetland at Lower Smite. Most of the ponds connect with each other and provide a great series of habitats for a range of wildlife.



Common toad

Start from the wildlife garden in front of the farmhouse.

1 The garden has nectar and pollen rich plants, natural habitats like tree cover and long grass plus log piles, bug hotels and nest boxes. It attracts bumblebees, butterflies and bugs; if you're lucky you may spot a grass snake or a newt.

The garden is visited by hundreds of schoolchildren who learn about the lifecycle of plants, growing food and wildlife.

Leave by the gate, cross the road and up the path to the Granary.

2 The many bats on the farm roost inside this 300 year old building as well as in numerous bat boxes and trees. Kestrels often shelter in the eaves.

This half of the farm isn't organic but we don't use insecticides or slug control here. Depending on the time of year and the rotation of crops you may see herb-rich swards, rye grass leys or cereals; all bordered with wide flower-rich margins and hedgerows.

Follow the path left to the pond.

3 The series of ponds and wetlands allow species to move between habitats. Reed warblers nest here through summer and great crested newts use this and other ponds. From April to October look for damselflies and dragonflies.

Continue to the wooden bridge.

4 The wetland area to your right was created in 2009 and acts as a silt-trap. The surrounding reedbed is home to reed buntings, mallards, frogs and toads.

Bear left and walk through the gateway to the left-hand field and along the hedge line.

5 If conditions are right you may see the rare corn buttercup on the edges of the field and sloe, hawthorn, field maple, dog rose and crab apple in the hedgerow. We're managing the blackthorn to encourage young growth that may attract rare brown hairstreak butterflies.

Go through the gate in the hedge, cross the road and over a footbridge to enter the orchard.

6 Traditional varieties of apple, pear and plum are planted on the site of an old orchard. Many are dedicated to a loved one or to mark a special occasion (please ask in the office for more information).

The long grass offers shelter for voles and mice, providing the perfect hunting ground for owls and kestrels. Long uncut grass is also home to insects such as crickets and grasshoppers.

Head straight across to the gate and turn right to the ponds.

7 Listen for the beating of dragonfly wings and the song of birds perched in nearby trees. In the evenings Daubenton's bats catch insects from above the water surface; vegetation between the two ponds is kept low for their flight paths.

Go through the gate at the end of the path and turn left; follow the fence/hedge, go through the kissing gate and follow the hedge to your right.

8 We're gradually increasing the range of plants by spreading hay from a nearby meadow here. We cut as late as possible to allow the pupae of butterflies, moths and other invertebrates to develop and hatch. When we do cut, we avoid heavy machinery and drive slowly to give wildlife a chance to get away.

Go through the gate into Oaktree field.



11 You can enjoy the view of the farm from here – notice the diversity of habitats and crops spread out in front of you.

Go through the gate and bear left down the hill, through another gate and down to the bottom right corner of the field.

12 Look down to the ridge and furrow that hints at the past use of this field. Also notice that Lower Smite Farm sits in a mosaic of differently farmed landscapes with a more heavily urban landscape nearby.

Go through the gate, turn left and follow the fence line. Follow the path between the building and the fence into the woodland.

13 The woodland is relatively new and is a mix of native species. School groups use it to learn more about wildlife habitats.

Follow the path straight ahead.

14 This small area on your right has a little of everything we're doing on the farm - winter wheat, spring oats, arable flora and more. Whitethroats breed near here – listen for their scratchy calls in late spring and early summer.

Follow the path round until you reach the gate into the garden in front of the main farmhouse.

15 In spring look for orchids, cowslips and other flowers in the meadow to your left before you turn into the garden; they support a wide range of insects and birds. Hay from the meadow has been spread in the orchard to increase plant species there. The reedbed filters the grey water that leaves the main farmhouse.

We hope you've enjoyed your visit and that you'll come back to see the changing seasons. If you're interested in joining our volunteers on the farm or in the garden, please visit our website or call in and have a chat.

9 This is our demonstration field. We cut at different times and aim to always have nectar and pollen rich plants in flower (both day and night). The plant cover is great for ground-nesting birds like skylarks – listen for their song in spring and early summer.

Follow the mown path past the oak tree and turn left when you reach the fruit beds at the top of the field – head for the gate.

10 Mousetail is a rare arable plant and sometimes grows in profusion here. All arable flora needs disturbed ground but even when it's not growing, it's waiting in the soil for the right conditions.

Turn left and follow the hedge until you reach the bench.