

The variety of habitats and wildlife make this a very special place. Its 39 hectares (96 acres) are packed with wildflowers, insects, birds and more. See how many you can spot on your visit.

Between the picnic area and the small information centre beside the old warden’s house, you’ll pass ponds that are home to newts, diving beetles and pond skaters. Pause at the centre to discover more about the history of the nature reserve and local area before heading down a steep bank and into the orchard.

The circular trail in this leaflet is approximately 3km long. It takes in the orchard, meadows, woodland and meanders alongside the Leigh Brook. It is hilly in parts and can be muddy in places. The trail is marked on the map in the middle of the leaflet and is waymarked on the ground.

It’s important for wildlife, livestock and other people that you keep dogs on leads and leave gates as you find them. There are picnic benches and a toilet near the main entrance; we ask you not to picnic elsewhere on the nature reserve.

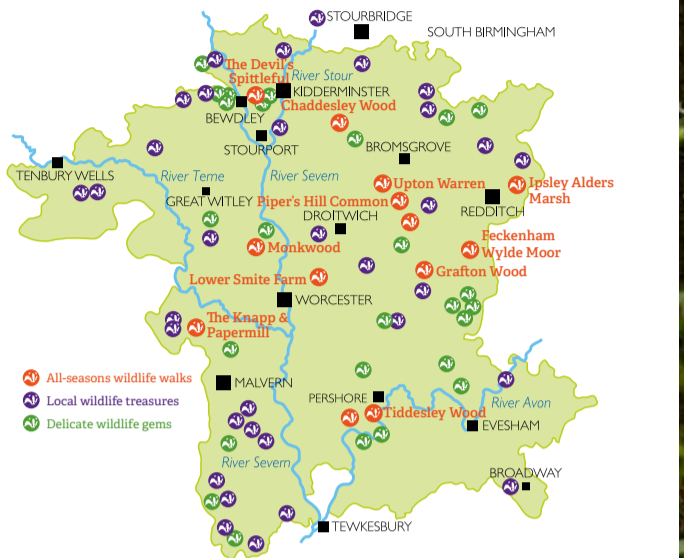
We hope you enjoy your visit. Perhaps you can photograph and share with us what you see via email or on social media.



Access: We do not charge an entrance fee but donations to help manage this beautiful place are welcomed www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/donate

Download an audio Woods and Wildlife Walk, which links The Knapp and Papermill, Blackhouse Wood, Crews Hill and Ravenshill nature reserves. www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/worcestershire-woods-wildlife-walk

The Knapp and Papermill is one of over 75 nature reserves owned and cared for by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. We want to see a wilder Worcestershire with more nature everywhere for everyone. We work with land managers and communities to lead nature’s recovery through people taking action.



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.

Visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk

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Front cover photo © Paul Lane



Elusive wildlife lives here. After a long period of industrial use the river is now secluded, wooded and undisturbed with good quality water – perfect for otters.



Shiny wildlife lives here. Noble chafer beetles are found in just three areas of the UK and we’re lucky enough to have them here. Their larvae spend up to three years living off the dying and dead wood of fruit trees. You might see the adults feeding on flowers in June and July.



Long-distant migrants live here. Listen out in spring for the onomatopoeic call of the chiffchaff. Whilst some now spend their winters in the UK, most arrive in spring from Africa. They nest low in vegetation, which is why it’s important to keep to paths as you walk.



Rare wildlife lives here.

Land caddis only live in Worcestershire and neighbouring counties. There are almost 200 species of caddis in the UK and the larvae of all other species live in water; land caddis larvae live in leaf litter and the adults only fly for a couple of weeks each autumn.



Special trees live here. Wild service trees, seen at the top of Papermill Meadow, are relatively rare and are usually confined to ancient woodland.

The fruit of these trees are known as chequers and were once used to flavour beer and treat colic.

Snoozy wildlife lives here. Dormice are the UK’s sleepest wildlife; they can hibernate from October to April. Keep a look out for nibbled hazelnut shells as you walk. Dormice create a perfectly round hole to get at the nut inside.



Thousands of flowers live here.

Common spotted orchids are one of the most common flowers in the meadows. Once in flower, look for the day-flying moths that are attracted to their fragrant flowers, which vary from white to pink with darker pink patterning.



What to see

Spring:

cowslips, brimstone butterflies, blackcaps

Summer:

green-winged orchids, marbled whites, beautiful demoiselles

Autumn:

red admirals, green woodpeckers, spotted flycatchers

Winter:

long-tailed tits, redpolls, redwings

Growing a nature reserve

The nature reserve began life as just six hectares of orchard and woodland, donated to the Trust by Hugh and Shifa Doncaster in 1968. Since then we've been able to acquire further land with financial support from supporters, gifts in wills, other conservation bodies and from Christopher Cadbury.

Ponds

In 2023, we restored the old pond at the main entrance into a wetland with two ponds and areas of bog garden linking them together. Within a week, smooth newts had moved in, followed by great crested newts as we added different levels of vegetation! Aquatic plants are important for newts to lay their eggs on.



Batty about bats

Papermill Cottage no longer houses people but instead plays host to summer maternity colonies of bats. The cottage was restored in 2018 to stabilise the roof and add lots of interior features for roosting bats.



Let in the light

Coppicing is a traditional method of managing woodland. Trees are cut down almost to ground level; new shoots grow and can be harvested a few years later. Coppicing different areas on rotation ensures a variety of age and structure in the woodland and allows sunlight to reach the woodland floor, essential for flowers like bluebell, wild garlic and wood anemone.



Old pasture

Papermill Meadow is an old pasture that has not been ploughed or sprayed and retains a rich mixture of plants and insects. In summer the sheltered conditions attract up to 25 species of butterfly and in early autumn look out for the tall purple devil's-bit scabious, now quite a rare plant. Patches of hawthorn and bramble add to the diversity of the meadow and create scrubby edges, perfect for insects like glow worms.



Commercial and medicinal

Daffodils were once grown commercially in Daffodil Meadow, whilst a thin strip alongside Big Meadow was known as comfrey field. Comfrey is known for its medicinal qualities and was probably planted to treat pack ponies that transported material to the mills. Big Meadow was once part hopfield and part arable.

Fruit trees

The old lichen-encrusted trees of the orchard attract nuthatches and you may see green woodpeckers foraging in the grass below. In autumn and early winter butterflies and birds, such as red admiral, peacock, redwing and fieldfare, feast on the fallen fruit. Look out for the vertical deadwood towers as you walk through.



Watery habitat

The Leigh Brook has cut a winding valley with steep woodlands and rich meadows. It is home to a wide variety of wildlife, both in and alongside the water. Look for grey wagtails that nest along the brook in spring and summer; in winter the brook-side alders are good places to see flocks of long-tailed tits and siskins. Dragonflies and damselflies thrive here and otters have returned in recent years. There are many natural tree holes and roots for otters to rest in during the day but our youth group and volunteers have also created artificial holts for them.

Hidden wildlife

It's not just obvious wildlife like otters and kingfishers that use the Leigh Brook. We own almost 2km of this sinuous watercourse, which is home to myriad unseen species.

- Fish like stone loach and bullhead live under and amongst the stones and gravels of the Leigh Brook bed.
- Female large dark olive mayflies lay their eggs on stones in the brook and the nymphs feed from algae on the stones.
- Pollution-sensitive river limpets live in moderate to fast-running water like the Leigh Brook where they cling to stones and also feed on algae.
- The metallic blue/green river shingle beetle *Bembidion tibiiale* is one of few ground beetles that specialise in living amongst the gravel of streams.

Our smaller wildlife of the Leigh Brook are particularly vulnerable to disturbance and this is one of the reasons we ask you to keep out of the water.

If you'd like to help us manage the habitats here, why not join our friendly volunteer team.
Visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer for more information.

