

Great Oakley Meadow lies in the South of Corby District and was saved from urban development, thanks to the generosity of the Commission for New Towns and co-operation from Corby District Council. The site is now managed on behalf of the District Council by the Wildlife Trust.

Traditionally managed grassland is now rare, both in the County and throughout the Country as a whole. Much was lost by conversion to arable use or 'improved' by reseeded, drainage and applications of herbicides and fertilisers. At Great Oakley, traditional low input management by grazing and cutting has allowed a tremendous diversity of flowers and associated animals to thrive on the reserve. Such a reserve is an important visual amenity for the area that the trust intends to manage for wildlife and people, today as well as for future generations.



Salad burnet

How to find the reserve

From the roundabout on the A6014, follow the road signs for Great Oakley. Immediately after the fly-over the reserve is on the left-hand side of the road.

Access

Access is by stile from the A6104 at the north-west corner of the site, by footpath and stile from Lewin Road at the north-east corner, or by stile from The Headway. Please park considerately, and avoid blocking the gateway. Bring stout footwear, as the lower part of the reserve can be very wet. For the sake of wildlife please keep dogs on a lead. Thank you.

We hope you enjoy your visit

More Information

Your local Wildlife Trust protects wildlife and countryside for people to enjoy in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough. We are a charity dependent on voluntary contributions.

If you would like more information about this reserve or other reserves in Northamptonshire, please contact:

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This site is supported by:



Through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme



www.wildlifebcnp.org

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



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Welcome to

Great Oakley Local Nature Reserve



Photograph by Nathalie Hueber, illustrations by Mike Langman

Protecting wildlife
close to home

History

This meadow is the best remaining fragment of the ancient field system of Great Oakley. The prominent ridge and furrow at the upper (southern) end of the reserve shows this area was in arable cultivation prior to the Enclosure Act of 1784.

Management

The natural course of events for any area of grassland is to revert to scrub and eventually woodland. In order to maintain the site as a meadow a traditional management of mowing and grazing is used. The meadow is grazed in early spring and is then left for about three or four months to grow. The resulting hay crop is cut in late summer. Remaining stubble and any later re-growth is then grazed until winter.

What to look out for

Birds

The hedgerows and grassland are popular feeding grounds for birds. Finches, such as yellowhammer, goldfinch and linnet, are attracted by the plentiful supply of seeds and invertebrates.

Starlings are frequent visitors, probing among the short grass for grubs. Flocks of redwings and fieldfares are regular winter visitors, foraging both on the grassland and along the hedges and in spring Skylarks are quite common. On summer evenings, flocks of swallows, swifts and house martins feed on insects taken on the wing over the meadow.



Skylark

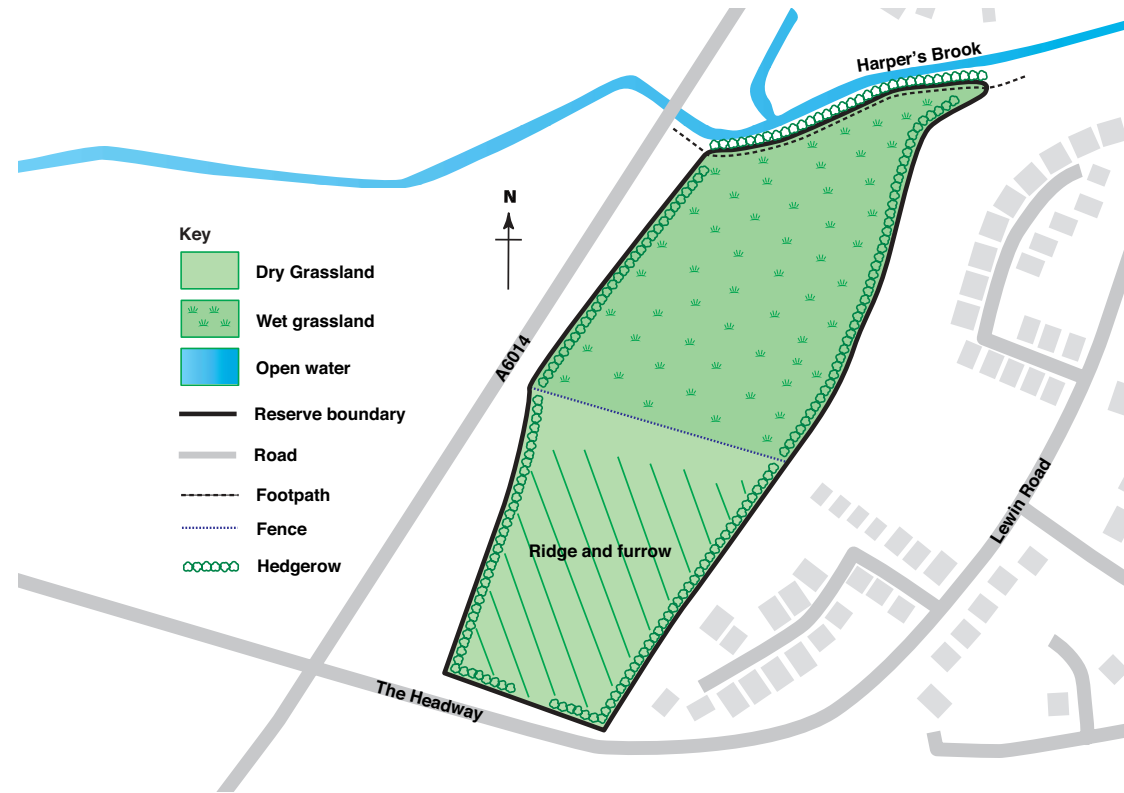


Black knapweed

Wildflowers

The meadow is home to a wide variety of plants, each with its own preferences. The drier tops of the ridges display a colourful mosaic of species, including cowslip, creeping cinquefoil, pignut, common knapweed, rough hawkbit and quaking-grass. The alternating damp furrows are much poorer in species with dandelion, meadow fescue and tufted hair-grass

dominating. The lower slopes carry the greatest diversity of species, with most of those listed above, together with meadow foxtail, common sorrel, pepper-saxifrage and meadow vetchling, whilst the limiest patches are highlighted by glaucous sedge, salad burnet, hoary plantain and dwarf thistle. The meadow closest to the brook supports some characteristic plants of damp ground, such as lady's smock, hairy sedge and great burnet.



Cowslips