

Chairborough

Local Nature Reserve...

explore...

1 The Reserve is dominated by large areas of dense scrub, a mixture of native species such as Hawthorn, Dogwood, Field Maple and Blackthorn with Dog Rose and Field Rose. This scrub provides plenty of cover and food for birds like Blue Tit, Greenfinch and Chaffinch who are joined in the summer by Chiffchaff and Blackcap. The aim of the management of this site is to create a mixed aged structure to this scrub by cutting a small area each year. This 'bed and breakfast' approach to habitat management ensures the various birds and insects always have somewhere suitable to nest and feed.

2 Chalk grassland glades burst into life in the spring with Primroses, Cowslips and Violets - Chairborough's speciality. Four species are recorded here: Early dog-violet, Common dog-violet, Hairy and Sweet Violet. These provide a nectar source for the spring butterflies such as Brimstone, Peacock and Orange-tip. To provide habitat connectivity for plants and insects between the glades, the paths are kept wide and open. This allows plenty of light in so the wildflowers can flourish. In the summer, plants such as Bird's-foot-trefoil, Salad Burnet and the sweetly-scented Marjoram are abundant. Watch for butterflies such as Common Blue and Comma as they visit the flowers in search of nectar.

3 Areas of the site have been replanted with tree species such as Ash, Cherry and Whitebeam to increase biodiversity. Where light can get through the understorey of Dogwood and Holly, ground flora species can be found such as Cow Parsley and Lords & Ladies (also known as Arum Lily or Cuckoo pint).



4 A small Hazel coppice was planted in the mid 1990s and is cut every 10 years. Hazel helps the site's small mammals such as Wood Mouse and Field Vole get through the winter with a plentiful supply of nuts in the autumn. Listen for the piping call of the Bullfinch in this part of the Reserve.

5 A summer highlight is sitting in a glade watching for House Martins and Swallows hunting insects over the site whilst Swifts characteristically scream round overhead. Stay on into the evening twilight and the birds are replaced by Pipistrelle bats. They hunt their prey (up to 3,000 moths and midges per night!) along the hedges, paths and glades. Their calls (echolocation) are inaudible to the human ear but can be picked up on a bat detector - a device that turns their sounds into clicks which we can hear.

6 The open amenity grassland is a good place for a family picnic - keep an eye out for Red Kites soaring and performing their acrobatics above and maybe even spot a Sparrowhawk darting out of the Hawthorn Wood in search of its prey such as a Great Tit.

7 Cross the small bridge into the unusual Hawthorn woodland which occupies the south west of the site. It is a good place to find invertebrates such as Woodlouse, Violet Ground Beetles and Scorpion Flies. These all rely on rotting wood for part of their lifecycle and/or diet and the Hawthorn Wood has lots of it! Woodland plants grow here too including Dog's Mercury and Yellow Archangel.



The white flowers of the Hawthorn produced in May have a sweet scent

Muntjac Deer