

Castlefield & Rowliff Wood

your Local Wildlife Site...

explore...

1 As you enter the site from Dashwood Avenue, you are immediately met by the first signs of the turmoil the woodland faced in 1990 where a bench has been created from one of the many trees that came down. As you go past the bench, you walk down a wide track flanked by a wide mix of species including large amounts of Hazel that are routinely coppiced, a traditional method of management.

2 As you leave the track, the woodland opens out into an area of grassland and scrub known as Mount Skippet. In the autumn, the scrubby margins are full of wild berries including blackberries and sloes. These provide great food for our incoming winter migrants such as Fieldfares and Redwings.

3 After crossing the grassland and going past the boundary bank that marks the boundary between Castlefield Wood to the north and Rowliff Wood to the south, you come to a larger area of chalk grassland and scrub that sits on a steep slope. It is well worth exploring in the summer months when you will find a wide variety of flowers including some very robust Common Spotted Orchids. The wild versions of the commonly used herbs Thyme and Marjoram grow here, as do Knapweeds. All are very popular with nectaring butterflies including Common Blue, Meadow Brown and Marbled White. There is also a very healthy population of Common Lizards and Slow-worms that can often be seen first thing in the morning basking in a sunny spot trying to warm up for the day's activities.

4 As you leave the grassland you enter an area of Ash woodland. The Ash allows more light through the canopy than many other trees giving the opportunity for a more diverse ground flora to develop.

5 To the west is a hedgerow that is managed in the traditional way and was last laid in 2009/10. It forms the boundary of the site and creates a natural barrier between the woodland and New Road.

6 As the path curves round and doubles back on itself, it opens up much more, providing a sunny ride that has a variety of plants including Jack-by-the-Hedge or Garlic Mustard, a food plant of the Orange-Tip butterfly. Males can be seen throughout the spring patrolling their patch, defending it from all comers including larger butterfly species, like the Speckled Wood and Comma.

7 As you walk along the top path, the structure of the woodland changes again, with much more Beech interspersed with Cherry, Goat Willow or Sallow, Oak and Hazel. Occasionally you will come across one of the original Beech trees that survived the storms. Listen to and look out for the wide variety of birds that inhabit this area including typical woodland birds such as the Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Jays, as well as smaller birds like the tits and finches. They all take advantage of the many nesting and foraging opportunities to be had amongst the trees, shrubs and brambles. Unusual looking fungi are also occasionally seen in the area including Morels and Earthstars.

Key

- Beech woodland
- Ash woodland
- Chalk grassland
- Hazel coppice
- Scrub
- Amenity grassland
- Hedgerow
- Public footpath
- Permissive paths
- Circular Walk
- Steps
- Gate
- Bench
- Information board
- Parking

