Welcome to... Keep Hill Wood

Local Wildlife Site...


Chaffinch

Explore...

Keep Hill Wood is a mosaic of habitats from mature woodland to hazel coppice together with chalk grassland glades and rides. Its value for wildlife is only maintained by a constant regime of cutting. This replicates centuries old management which helped Keep Hill develop into the woodland of today.

Coppicing...

The systematic cutting at ground level, of Hazel *(Corylus avellana)* and other understorey tree species, is a traditional woodland management technique. The cut stools are covered by brash (or branches) to protect them from deer. Coppicing provides a sustainable supply of materials such as charcoal, kindling, stakes, poles, hurdle fences, thatching spars and more. It also creates a dynamic, varied age structure to the woodland essential for the wildlife which has evolved to thrive in this changing habitat. This includes wildflowers like Cowslip & Violets and invertebrates such as Orange-tip and Silver-washed Fritillary butterflies which feed on the plants. As the coppice re-grows, it forms a dense thicket which is a perfect nesting habitat for birds such as Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Chaffinch and many more.


Silver-washed Fritillary



Key

- Mature woodland
- Coppice
- Young woodland
- Chalk grassland
- Bridleway
- Public footpath
- Permissive paths
- Circular Walk
- Steps
- Picnic Site
- Information Board
- Orienteering Start Point
- Gate
- Bench

Beech Pollard

Pollarding...

The systematic cutting at approximately 1.8m (6 feet) of tree species, such as Beech *(Fagus sylvatica)*, English or Pedunculate Oak *(Quercus robur)* and Hornbeam *(Carpinus betulus)*, is another traditional woodland management technique. Unlike coppicing, the tree is cut high to protect re-growth from browsing animals. Historically livestock would have grazed the woods to create wood-pasture but the modern day threat is posed by Roe & Muntjac deer. The by-products were never wasted and used for livestock fodder and bedding as well as other more domestic uses such as firewood.

Pollarding these tree species encourages them to develop into veteran trees. These old sentinels of the woods are host to a wide range of specialist wildlife: invertebrates, mosses, liverworts, lichen and fungi. Where rots holes develop, birds including Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Marsh Tit make their homes. Once the woodpeckers fledge, Noctule bats quickly move into the abandoned cavity. Cracks, crevices and splits in the trunk and branches, together with loose bark and dense ivy on the outside, make ideal roosts for other bats such as Pipistrelle and Natterer's. These management techniques help to create a mixed-aged woodland full of wildlife for you to discover.


Hazel Coppice

partners...

Forestry Commission England · Natural England · Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Biodiversity Partnership · Butterfly Conservation

Keep Hill Wood
is managed by
WDC Woodland Service
with funding from the Forestry Commission's Woodland Improvement Grant to ensure it is protected and its biodiversity enhanced for the benefit of wildlife and the local community.

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