Sands Bank

Local Nature Reserve...


Red Kite


Bullfinch

explore...

1 During the spring the grassland starts to burst in to life with Violets, Cowslips and Primroses and the early butterflies including the Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper. By late May, Common Spotted Orchids are at their peak with hundreds all over the grassland. If you time it right, a visit on a sunny day in early July, should be rewarded with literally hundreds of butterflies including Marbled White, Ringlet, Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown at or near their peaks. A sight not to be missed! Livestock (sheep) then carry out conservation grazing on the site during the winter months. This ensures that the sward is short and varied, helping to provide the conditions for it all to happen again in the following year.

2 Within the grassland area, and particularly along the woodland edge, are areas of mixed age scrub with a wide range of species including Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Wayfaring Tree, Guelder Rose, Spindle and Buckthorn. This provides a great varied habitat for the wildlife on the site providing cover, food, and nesting areas for birds and mammals including Bullfinch, Chaffinch and the rare Hazel Dormouse. It is well worth having a look in autumn when you will find a great mix of autumn colours.


Chalkhill Blue

3 This area of the wood would have once been dominated by Elm trees. Over the years they have slowly been killed off by Dutch Elm disease, a fungal infection that is carried by the Elm Bark Beetle *(Scolytus scolytus)*. This has left a clearing within the woodland that is slowly being colonised by other species and leaves a ready supply of rotting timber, an important habitat for many fungi and invertebrates.

4 If you walk through this area during early May you will be greeted by a carpet of Bluebells taking advantage of the sunlight before the Beech leaves block it out.

5 This more open area is dominated by bramble making it a great place for nesting birds such as the Chiffchaff. During the summer, when the bramble is flowering, it is a great place to see woodland butterflies including Speckled Wood, Comma, Red Admiral and White-Letter Hairstreak.

6 As you sit amongst the mature Beech trees, take in the view of the valley including The Golden Ball at West Wycombe Church to the left. Downley, to the right, is now an area of High Wycombe but was once a village in its own right.

7 This area has been replanted with Hazel coppice which, as well as creating a varied structure to the woodland, produces food for the animals within the wood and is a sustainable source of material for fencing, fuel and coppice crafts.

Key

- Mature woodland
- Mixed woodland
- Deciduous woodland
- Woodland ride/glade
- Scrub
- Chalk grassland
- Coppice
- Public footpath
- Permissive paths
- Steps
- Bench
- Viewpoint

When livestock grazing, please keep dogs on a short lead.

Bluebells

Sands Bank

Local Nature Reserve...

Sands Bank LNR and Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is leased by Wycombe District Council's Woodland Service from West Wycombe Estate. It lies on the western edge of High Wycombe, on a south facing slope and is a haven for wildlife and people away from The Sands Industrial Estate situated below. This 27 acre LNR & LWS is a classic Chilterns landscape mosaic of woodland, scrub and chalk grassland supporting a wide range of species. This makes it not only a great place to watch wildlife but you can incorporate it into longer walks taking in some of the beautiful surrounding countryside.

Marbled White



Dingy Skipper



Ringlet



cover images:
Carline Thistle (photo Ian Esland)
and Hazel Dormouse (photo Terry Longley www.seeing.org.uk)

enjoy...

Much of the woodland at the top of the slope has been in existence for at least 400 years and is a mixture of mature Beech woodland, mixed mid-aged woodland including Cherry, Yew, Ash and Holly, younger mixed planted woodland and Hazel coppice. This mix of age and species gives a very diverse habitat that suits many species including Hazel Dormouse, Roe Deer, Treecreeper, Wood Spurge and Goldilocks Buttercup.

Crab Spider enjoying a tasty snack!



★ This leaflet is printed on Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) accredited paper.

The grassland below had developed in to a motor cross track when Wycombe District Council took over its management in the early nineties. In spite of its use, it was still a very valuable area of chalk grassland with many of the associated species. To ensure the grassland wasn't lost, it was fenced off and grazed using sheep (and even goats for a while!). Much of the encroaching scrub was removed, a job that needs to be done every year. Now this area is one of the best examples of chalk grassland that we manage, with well over 100 plant species being recorded in one visit to the site.

While walking around the site look out for crab spiders waiting on the flower heads for a tasty meal to arrive. Listen for the melodic call of the Blackcap, which gets its name from the striking black cap of the male, as it returns from wintering in sub-Saharan Africa to breed here. During June, if you time it right, you can see the mass emergence of hundreds, if not thousands of Garden Chafer beetles. Hornets can often be seen buzzing around the site during the summer and although they are the largest wasp you will find in this country (about 35mm long) their sting is no worse than a bee's.

Common Lizards are found throughout the grassland, but you rarely see more than just glimpses of them as they disappear off the ant hill they've been basking on. During late July and August look for the Chalkhill Blue butterfly. The rare county flower of Buckinghamshire, the Chiltern Gentian, can be found during August and September if you look hard enough and if you can tell it apart from the Autumn Gentian!

During September and October look for Common Darter, a dragonfly that is often to be seen basking on the paths and plants, often well away from water.

Look amongst the leaf litter and on dead wood in the autumn to find a wide variety of fungi, including the Saffrondrop Bonnet (Mycena crocata) that exudes a blood like fluid when damaged.



Common Lizard

discover...

Get the kids involved too, help them to find some of these more common species:



Primrose
flowers in spring



Hawthorn
flowers or berries



Kestrel
look up high



Hornet
up to 3.5cm long!



Violet
on the ground



Chiltern Gentian
County plant



Bluebells
be careful not to crush underfoot



Blackberries
an autumn treat



Red Admiral
looking for nectar

While you enjoy the wood, please don't forget to follow the Country Code:

Leave gates and property as you find them

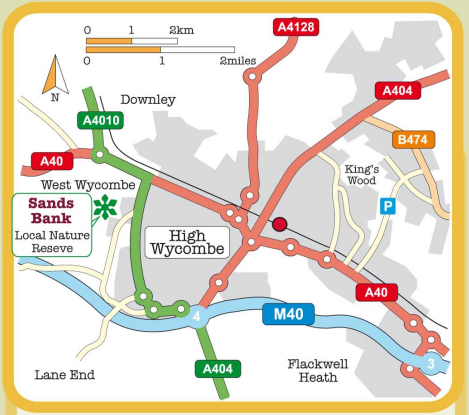
Protect plants and animals and take your litter home

Keep dogs under close control

Consider other people

www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

how to get there...



public transport...

nearest mainline station:

High Wycombe (Chiltern Line) approx. 4 miles

Bus route: Arriva Blue Route Number 32

For further information please contact us:

Wycombe District Council Woodland Service

phone: **01494 421825**

email: **woodland.service@wycombe.gov.uk**

www.**wycombe.gov.uk/woodlandservice**

Partners...

The Chilterns Conservation Board

muck in 4 life

people's trust for endangered species

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Biodiversity Partnership

NATURAL ENGLAND

Sands Bank

discover explore enjoy



Welcome

to your Local Nature Reserve...