

hiya bucks

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Meet Hector
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The Wooburns, Bourne End, Flackwell Heath & Loudwater

April 2014

free

Holtspur Bottom

Butterfly Reserve

Riding Lane, Holtspur, HP9 1BT

Holtspur Bottom Butterfly Reserve is on the south facing hillside at the end of the Holtspur Valley, opposite the Holtspur Bank Local Nature Reserve. The land is owned by Beaconsfield Town Council, and has been managed by the Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation since 1998. It is shown on Ordnance Survey maps as the site of an old sewage works, and part of the land was once used as a landfill site, as some of you may remember. Much of the land now occupied by the Reserve was used as low-intensity grazing for many years. Shortly before Butterfly Conservation's involvement, the flower-rich fields were ploughed and sowed with ryegrass, leaving little trace of the wild flowers that had once been there and very many fewer butterflies...



Six-spot Burnet moths © Wendy Wilson

How times have changed! When Butterfly Conservation took over management of the site, we took stock of the situation and then reseeded parts of the Reserve with a mix of native wild flowers. It is now a peaceful

and uplifting haven for butterflies and moths, with its meadows full of flowers from Spring through till Autumn. Twenty-seven species of butterfly are regularly seen on the reserve, and over 220 species of moths have been recorded. There are other rarities too; such as species of 'red data book' mining bees among orchids and fragrant flowers.

The meadows themselves are chalk grassland, a special kind of habitat that is rapidly being lost from the U.K. In order to conserve it and ensure that the delicate and beautiful wild flowers that are so attractive to the butterflies and other insects are not overwhelmed by more vigorous, coarser grasses we need to manage the reserve. This means keeping the nutrient levels in the soil low, which discourages these more vigorous plants. To do this, we have adopted a traditional management plan of cutting and grazing. We allow the plants to flower and set seed in the summer, then cut the meadows, and remove the hay (so that it doesn't rot down and increase the nutrient levels). Finally, we graze with sheep over the winter, to further reduce any coarser grasses that are left.

You are welcome to visit the reserve at any time, but you are mostly likely to see clouds of butterflies on sunny days between April and September. Directions of how to get to the Reserve are on our website www.holtspurbottom.info together with details of what you can expect to see there month by month.

If you would like to help us care for Holtspur Bottom, please see the noticeboards on the Reserve itself, or our website for details of work parties. Tools and full instructions are provided, and new volunteers are always given a warm welcome!



Male Chalkhill Blue butterfly ©Jim Asher

