



George's Hayes near Longdon

Reserves assistant Lucy O'Toole takes you on a guided walk around George's Hayes, an ancient woodland that bursts into life in springtime.

1 Listen up

Before you set off from the car park listen out for the drumming of the great spotted woodpecker. You may also hear the familiar 'yaffle' call of the green woodpecker, which often feeds in the surrounding farm land. From here follow the footpath into the wood.

2 Floral carpet

During a spring visit you will soon see the cheery sight of the lesser celandine with its yellow flowers and heart shaped leaves, along with wild garlic with its delicate white flowers and heady aroma.

3 Woodland management

Here you'll begin to see how the Trust has been managing the woodland. Around the pond we have coppiced the alder to encourage the trees to produce new growth and allow light onto the woodland floor and the pond area. This helps plants grow, tree seedlings develop, insects thrive and birds feed. As you continue along the footpath, see if you can spot a colourful grey wagtail at the sides of the stream.

4 Bluebells and wild daffs

Continue to follow the footpath up the incline. In spring you will walk through carpets of bluebells, and as you progress round you will see the native wild daffodils. Continue around this section of path then rejoin the main footpath and head back to the car park.

5 Volunteer work

As part of a longer walk or a second visit, walk from the car park down the lane past the Grand Lodge and into George's Hayes Wood. Follow this path on to the main track (in the direction of Upper Longdon). Here, with the help of volunteers, the Trust has been removing rhododendron. One rhododendron can have multiple stems and spread over a large area, preventing other plants from growing. By removing it, native woodland species such as wild garlic, primrose, daffodils and wood anemone are now able to thrive.

6 Conservation in action

Follow the main track up. When you reach the top continue

straight on and follow the footpath round. Listen and look out for woodland birds including woodpeckers, nuthatches and tree creepers. Here, with the help of volunteers, the Trust has been thinning out the trees and widening the 'rides', the long grassy areas which run between the trees. This work encourages plants that need more light than the dappled shade of the woodland to flourish, such as common spotted orchids, and also benefits butterflies and bats.

7 Red deer roaming

Follow the ride down the hill and round to the right. At the end of this section veer left then right back into the woodland. As you walk back through the wood you may be lucky enough to see red deer or see signs of their presence such as prints in the mud. As you follow this path down you can take either the first or second right which leads you back onto the main track. Once you become more familiar with this wood, you will find other footpaths and a series of bridges which weave you through the wood.

Six to spot



Tom Marshall

Grey wagtail

With its long black and white wagging tail and bright yellow chest, the grey wagtail can be seen near rivers and streams, where they feed on invertebrates.



Amy Lewis

Bluebells

An indicator species of ancient woodland, bluebells like undisturbed soil and need light in early spring to flower before the tree canopy closes over.



Gillian Day

Red deer

Our largest deer species. Has a red brown coat, a short tail and cream rump. If you are quiet these beautiful animals can be observed but should not be approached.



Paul Lane

Wild garlic

Another indicator of an ancient woodland, wild garlic flowers in the spring and has broad and long green leaves. You may smell its strong perfume before you see it!



Bob Coyle

Great spotted woodpecker

With a bouncing flight, often heard drumming before being seen. Clings to trunks and branches searching for food. Look for on mature trees and standing dead wood, where you will see nest holes.



D Wright

Daffodils

Drifts of delicate native wild daffodils, found at the top end of Square Covert and in areas of George's Hayes, complement the bluebells with their stunning yellow flowers.

George's Hayes



Getting there

From the A51 down Borough Lane at Longdon. Turn left at the T-junction onto Horsey Lake and the car park is on the right. Nearest postcode: WS15 4LW

Useful information

The short walk will take around 1 - 1½ hours. There are some inclines, and the paths are sometimes muddy after wet weather.

So that we can protect the wildlife of this special place, we ask that you keep your dog close to you, preferably on a lead, especially between April 1 and June 30, when many birds are nesting.