

Map of Carr House Meadows Nature Reserve



Credit: Keith Parkin



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Credit: Peter Wolstenholme

Green corridors and stepping stones

Mature trees, hedgerows and drystone walls divide the patchwork of fields. The hedges are rich in berry-bearing shrubs so are consequently excellent for wildlife. The dense populations of a whole variety of songbirds that breed in the summer and roost through the winter here reflect this. Bullfinch, chiffchaff, willow warbler, pied flycatcher, jay, bullfinch and goldfinch are just some of the birds that breed on the nature reserve.

During the summer months, bats will feed along the lengths of hedgerows around the meadows. By replanting hedges and using traditional management techniques, Sheffield Wildlife Trust are working to improve the value of these wildlife corridors. These 'corridors' can form effective links for wildlife to access the various habitats at the site, and avoid the gaze of predator species.

Drystone walls form a distinctive part of this landscape as well as being particularly good sanctuaries for wildlife, so these are rebuilt and maintained. During the winter the butterflies join the spiders and harvestmen, which hibernate in their drystone lairs, and nesting wrens use the small gaps between the stones in the spring.



Credit: Peter Wolstenholme



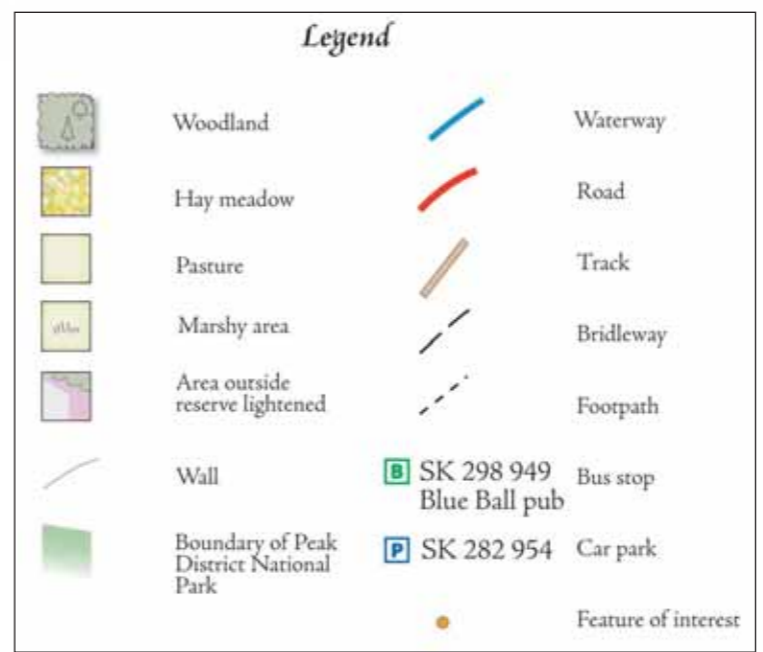
Bovine and equine managers

Cattle are sometimes the best conservation managers as they graze on the aggressive (but presumably tasty) grasses, and prevent the more delicate wildflowers from being choked by these grasses. They also 'poach' or churn up the ground, creating niches for wet-loving plants to seed and grow. Cattle grazing results in tussocky areas next to bare open patches. Many insects need this mixture of open and dense grassy areas for different parts of their lifecycles. A local farmer owns the cattle that graze the pastures, so the land is utilised for farming without compromising the wildlife.

Traditionally hay was cut for winter fodder for working horses. Horses played an important part in agriculture but

since they were replaced with tractors and other farm machinery, the demand for hay has reduced significantly. This, added to changes in farming practices, has led to hay meadows no longer being a common sight. These meadows have never been intensively managed, so they are valuable for wildlife as well as for fodder.

The hay is cut after mid July, when the flowers have set seed. Allowing the development of seed heads ensures a continuous supply of flowers in the meadows for the future. Cutting the hay late also allows opportunities for insects and small mammals to enjoy the food and shelter, and complete their lifecycles.





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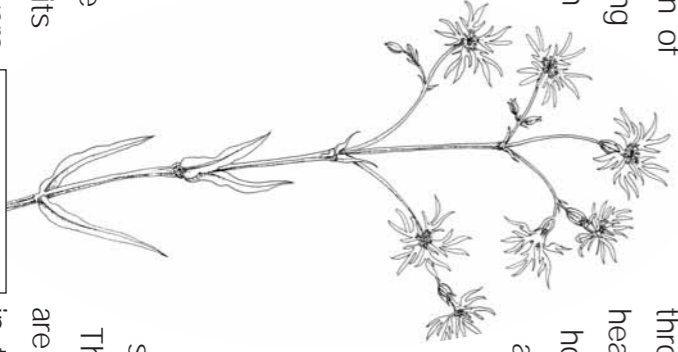
Perched on a hillside above Wharnclyffe Side in the Ewden Valley, Carr House Meadows Nature Reserve provides a reminder of how the farmed landscape used to be. Excessive use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides has depleted the countryside of its flower-rich fields. Hay meadows are becoming increasingly rare; Sheffield Wildlife Trust is proud to be managing this gem of a nature reserve.

June and July are the best months to see the meadows, as swathes of brilliantly coloured wildflowers adorn the slopes, complemented by the cacophony of birdsong in the hedges and trees. The position of the reserve provides stunning views across the Ewden Valley towards More Hall and Broomhead Reservoirs.

A good way to visit the site is part of a wider walk in the Ewden Valley.

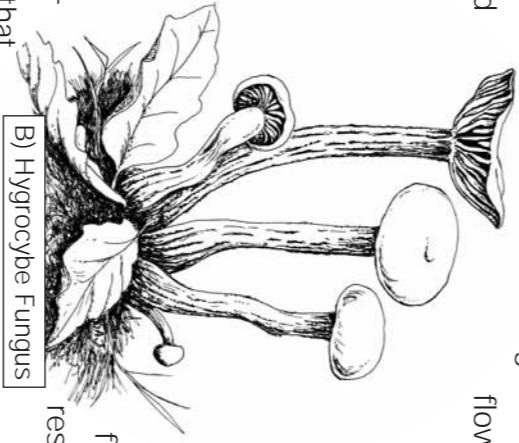
An artist's palette

When was the last time you walked through a sea of colour? This nature reserve offers that opportunity, with its spectacular display of wildflowers,



A) Ragged Robin

some of which are seldom seen in the locality. In the late spring the fringes of the vividly coloured bluebells along the old hedgerows hint at the ancient woods that perhaps once stood here. Yellow rattle dominates some of the fields, and during June or July you'll notice the shape of the seed heads and hear the rattling of the seeds that gives the flower its name as you pass through. Though sometimes cursed by walkers heading uphill, the marshy patches in the fields are home to the bright pink ragged robin, a wet-loving relative of the red campion. Red clover and white clover blanket some fields, and coupled with the deep purple of knapweed, the fields attract a plethora of flying insects. Throughout the growing season you can also see ox-eye daisy, scabious, orchids (southern marsh and common spotted) and foxglove - this riot of colour lifts the spirits even on the greyest of summer days. The colours provided by the wildflowers are equalled by the butterflies, which are abundant in the meadows. Lurking above and within the



B) Hygrocybe Fungus

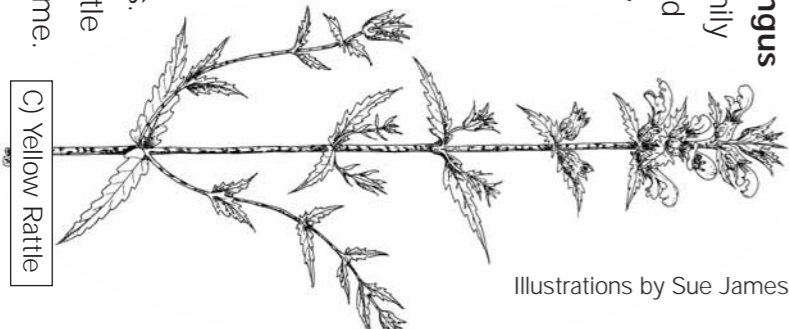
foliage is a multitude of beetles, spiders and grasshoppers that enjoy these undisturbed, flower-rich meadows and pastures.

Look out for:

A) Ragged Robin - related to the more common Red Campion, the Ragged Robin has deep indented petals giving it a ragged appearance. It can be found in moist areas of the meadows and wet flushes on the North West parts of the reserve.

B) Hygrocybe Fungus (Waxcaps) - this large family of fungi can be found in grassland and meadow habitats around the country. They are waxy in texture and their colour varies from dull browns to bright reds and yellows.

C) Yellow Rattle - found in species rich grasslands throughout the British Isles. The seeds of this flower rattle in their cases hence the name.



Illustrations by Sue James

Carr House Meadows Nature Reserve is owned by Sheffield City Council and leased & managed by Sheffield Wildlife Trust.

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Sheffield Wildlife Trust is part of a national association of 47 local Wildlife Trusts, which work to protect wildlife in town and country.

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How to get there: Carr House Meadows is just outside the village of Wharnclyffe Side, next to Bightholmlee. Carr House Lane runs through the middle of the site, and is a narrow winding lane with limited parking. Parking on the lane is inadvisable. The nearest bus stop is on the Stocksbridge Road (A6102) at Wharnclyffe Side. You'll need to alight at the pub (named the Blue Ball at the time of printing) and walk up Bightholmlee Lane, which turns into Carr House Lane.

Access on the reserve: Please note that the car park is only open for events and workdays. The site is steep throughout, and can get very wet in the winter months over large areas. Therefore the site may not be suitable for those with walking difficulties - walks around the nearby reservoirs may be more suitable.

See the main map for locations, names of bus stops and footpaths. For up-to-date bus times please phone Traveline: 01709 51 51 51

