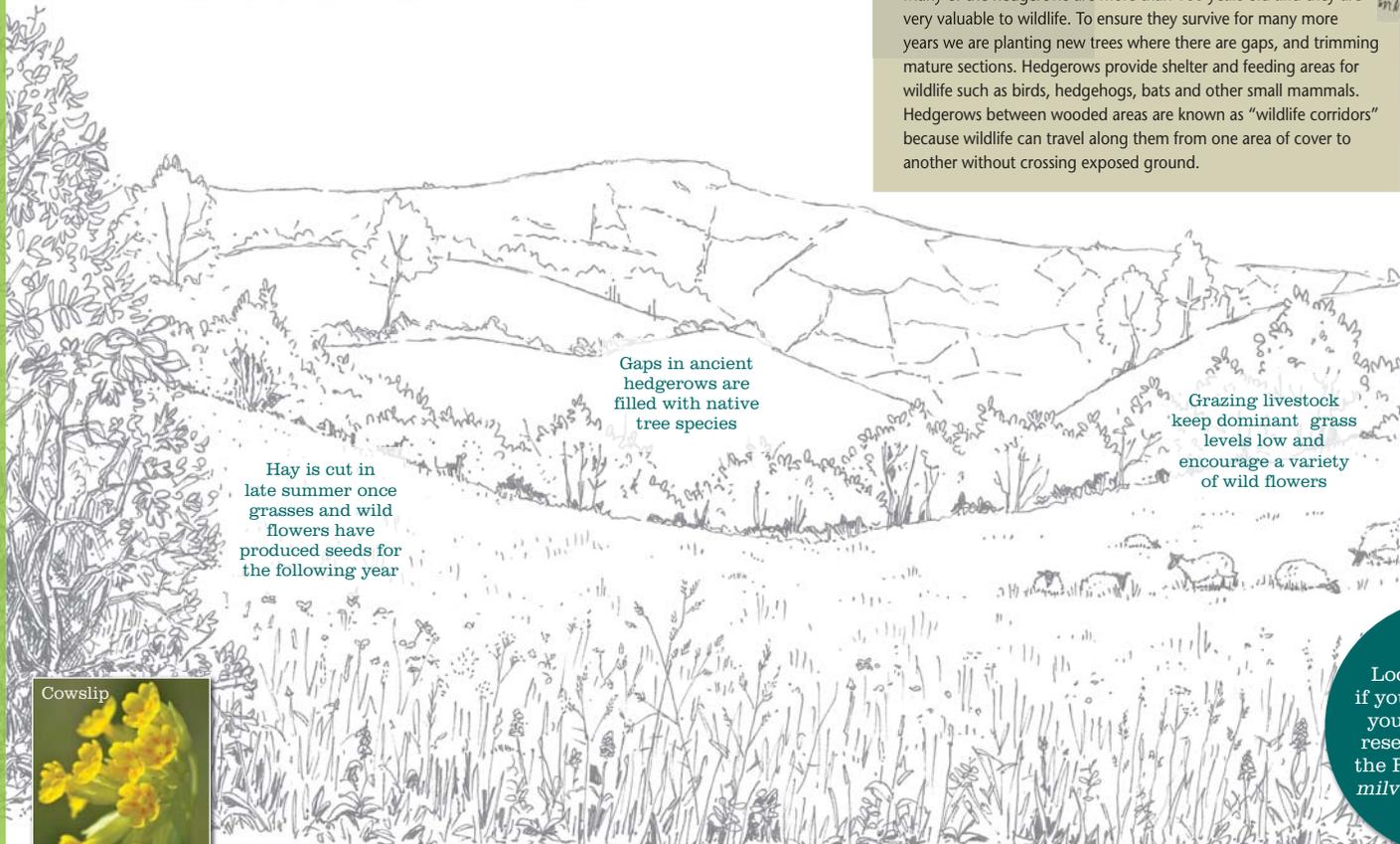


welcome to Kites Hill

Look out over the rolling hills of the Cotswolds. You are standing within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designated for protection due to the beauty of its landscape. Unimproved grassland such as this at Kites Hill is rich in wildflowers, and no fertilisers or pesticides are applied. Much of this type of grassland was lost during the intensification of farming methods and the pasture you see here is managed to organic standards to encourage the greatest diversity of plants and invertebrates.



Meadows



Attracting wildlife

Surrounding our permanent pasture you will see mature hedgerows of native species such as Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Dog Wood (*Cornus sanguinea*) and an old Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice. Many of the hedgerows are more than 100 years old and they are very valuable to wildlife. To ensure they survive for many more years we are planting new trees where there are gaps, and trimming mature sections. Hedgerows provide shelter and feeding areas for wildlife such as birds, hedgehogs, bats and other small mammals. Hedgerows between wooded areas are known as "wildlife corridors" because wildlife can travel along them from one area of cover to another without crossing exposed ground.

Section of hedge showing gaps filled with newly planted trees



Hedgehog



Song Thrush



Dunnock



Gaps in ancient hedgerows are filled with native tree species

Grazing livestock keep dominant grass levels low and encourage a variety of wild flowers

Hay is cut in late summer once grasses and wild flowers have produced seeds for the following year



Cowslip



Yellow Rattle



Pyramidal Orchid

Plants

Spring and summer are the best times to appreciate wildflowers at Kites Hill. Cowslips (*Primula veris*), an iconic but now rare meadow species, put on a great show at the reserve from April to May. Their name hints at their historic association with cattle pasture. Look out for Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), an interesting species whose roots attack those of other plants to steal nutrients. Yellow Rattle is a friend to wildflower meadows, weakening grass species and allowing a greater variety of plants to survive. And keep an eye out for the stunning Pyramidal Orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) in flower from July. These favour limestone soils, a characteristic feature of the Cotswold landscape.

Butterflies

Wildflower meadows are the perfect habitat for many invertebrates. On a sunny summer day see how many butterflies you can spot flying between the grasses. The largest populations of one of the county's most distinctive species, the Marbled White (*Melanargia galathea*), are found on limestone grasslands such as this, and Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*), another species favouring grassland, can also be seen here. Look out for the Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*) – but remember it is only the males that are this striking colour, females are a more subdued brown.

Common Blue



Marbled White



Meadow Brown



Ringlet



To do:

Look to the sky – if you are very lucky you might see the reserve's namesake the Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) fly overhead



www.worldlandtrust.org

Credits: Cowslip, Yellow Rattle, Song Thrush & Dunnock, John Bridges/www.northeastwildlife.co.uk; Pyramidal Orchid, Mary McEvoy/WLT; Common Blue, Graham Carey/www.wildlife-galleries.co.uk; Marbled White & Ringlet, Shere New/www.seeing.org.uk; Meadow Brown & Hedgehog, Mike Taylor/www.seeing.co.uk; Design and illustration, www.wearedrab.net.