



Chimney Meadows

Nature Reserve



10.02 Registered Charity No. 204330

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust

- carefully manages over 90 nature reserves, for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of people
- offers advice to individuals and local groups – from schools to businesses – to create a better future for wildlife
- supports hundreds of people who volunteer, helping with everything from conservation work to administration
- helps everyone to discover their local wildlife, providing expert information, activities, and guided walks and talks

Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, The Lodge, 1 Armstrong Road, Littlemore, Oxford OX4 4XT
 Tel: 01865 775476 E-mail: info@bbowt.org.uk
 Web: www.bbowt.org.uk

Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Photographs by: Jim Asher, Peter Creed, Steve Day, David Jaer, Nature Photographers, NHPA, Mike Reed



Oxeye daisies and gatekeeper butterfly

Chimney Meadows

Welcome to Chimney Meadows, the Trust's largest nature reserve, covering 250 ha of the Upper Thames floodplain. The reserve is of national importance for its species-rich wetland meadows that support large numbers of now scarce ground-nesting birds, and provides a haven for curlew, snipe and reed bunting.

The smaller south-western section of Chimney Meadows is a National Nature Reserve (NNR), owned by English Nature and managed by BBOWT since 1999. Only 1,500 ha of this type of floodplain meadow survives in the UK. Vistas of elegant plants including meadow foxtail, adder's-tongue fern and green-winged orchid, along with butterflies and birds can be enjoyed from the raised Thames National Trail path that runs alongside.

The larger section of Chimney Meadows (200 ha, with some public access), is owned by BBOWT. The area comprises old hay meadows, wet grassland, wet woodland, ancient water meadows and ex-arable land under reversion to flower-rich meadows. The fields are steeped in history, with findings of Roman pottery, an extensive Anglo-Saxon burial ground and relics of medieval 'ridge and furrow' ploughing. Threaded through with 14 km of old waterways and 17 km of hedgerows, the reserve also has a number of ponds and patches of scrub.



Yellow iris and winter flooding at Chimney Meadows

Wetland havens

Water is the life-force of this low-lying nature reserve. The River Thames on the southern boundary, the Great Brook on the northern boundary and the extensive network of old ditches, ponds and scrapes, all attract abundant wildlife. Much of the wet meadows, though farmed and drained for centuries, still flood in winter. This creates ideal habitat for curlew, snipe and other waders, and wildfowl including wigeon and teal. Mute swans, herons and kingfishers grace the waterways and in summer they are joined by a dazzling community of damselflies and dragonflies.

A number of wetland plants enjoy the damp conditions. Look out for the yellow iris and marsh-marigold, the maroon flowerheads of the great burnet and the white parasols of narrow-leaved water-dropwort.

Old hay meadows

Old hay meadows contain nationally rare dry neutral grassland communities. They include meadow barley, crested dog's-tail, lady's bedstraw, bird's-foot-trefoil, meadow buttercup and tufted vetch. In summer these attract an array of butterflies with marbled white, gatekeeper, meadow brown and common blue among them. Birds such as the meadow pipit feed on the wider insect population and nest amongst the grassy tussocks. Plant seeds sustain other small birds such as linnet, the male standing out with a russet-coloured breast in summer.



Skylark

Creating flower-rich meadows

In July 2004, 70 ha of heavily farmed fields were reseeded from the neighbouring National Nature Reserve. By summer 2005, surveys revealed a thriving population of black knapweed, oxeye daisy, ribwort plantain, bugle, selfheal, meadow barley and bird's-foot-trefoil.

These new developing meadows will provide a haven for insects, extra nesting sites for the skylark, and cover for grey partridge and brown hare. They will also bring about population rises among small mammals such as field voles and bank voles, benefiting the barn owls and short-eared owls that hunt over the reserve.

Please keep to the marked footpaths as this is a highly sensitive habitat. By keeping your dog on a short lead at all times you are helping BBOWT to protect the precious wildlife that thrives here, particularly the easily disturbed ground-nesting birds.



Pay by Direct Debit and get the latest edition of **WHERE 2 GO WILDLIFE** FREE

www.bbowt.org.uk or phone us now on Oxford (01865) 775476* (*9.00-5.00 Mon-Fri)

See overleaf to join

Help us join your local Wildlife Trust TODAY

We would like to know whether you enjoyed your visit to **Chimney Meadows** nature reserve.

Please take a moment to complete the questions below, so that we can continue to improve our reserves for people and wildlife.

- Where did you get this leaflet from?
- Are you a member of the Trust?
 Yes No
- How often have you visited this reserve?
 never 1-3 times
 4-10 times more than 10 times
- How would you rate your visit?
 very enjoyable good
 satisfactory disappointing
- How could we improve your enjoyment of this reserve?

Please post to:
 Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, Freepost OF2051,
 Oxford OX4 4BR.

Joining is easy

Just fill in this direct debit form and post it back to us (no stamp needed), making sure you've ticked the type of membership you want.

You can also join online by visiting www.bbowt.org.uk or call 01865 775476 during normal working hours.

Type of membership

- Individual
- Family
- Family & Watch Junior Club

I would like to pay BBOWT

- £5.00 per month
- or other £ per month

To join BBOWT you must pay a minimum of £2.50 per month for individuals, £3.00 per month for families and £3.50 per month for families and Watch Junior Club.

Title, initials, and surname	
Address	
Postcode	Phone no.
E-mail	

 **Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit** 

Please fill in the form and send it to Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, Freepost OF2051, Oxford, OX4 4BR. Originator Identification Number **9 4 2 8 6 2**

To the Manager (Bank or Building Society)

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Branch Sort Code

Account Number

Ref Number (office use only)

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society
Please pay the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account

giftaid it **Please make your gift worth more!**

- Please reclaim the tax paid on all the donations I have made to BBOWT in the last six years and will make in the future.

In each year you need to pay enough Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax to cover the amount we reclaim from the Inland Revenue (currently 28p for every £1 donated). Please let us know if you cease to pay enough tax, if your name changes or if you wish to cancel this declaration.

Registered charity no 204330 VAT no 195 3305 56
May 2006 / Chimney Meadows

Please send this form to:
Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust,
Freepost OF2051, Oxford OX4 4BR.

Thank you.



Hares amongst the grasses

Brown hares are born above ground fully furred and with their eyes open. The young leverets wait all day in small depressions known as 'forms', hidden in long grass. In recent decades there has been a massive decline in these handsome, high-speed animals.



Yellow rattle

Flowering phenomenon

The yellow rattle is partly parasitic on plants, its roots drawing food from other roots. This weakens strong grasses, allowing a greater range of meadow plants to get a foothold in the turf. Each yellow, hooded flower develops into a capsule with large seeds rattling around inside.



Yellowhammer

Blithe bunting

A splash of yellow streaked with brown amongst the hedgerows and a distinctive 'chiz-iz-iz-iz-iz-zeee' or 'little bit of bread and no cheese' song reveal the presence of yellowhammers, once extremely familiar farmland birds. Unflailed hedges and a good supply of seeds, fruits and insects contribute to their continued survival at Chimney Meadows.



Dogs must be kept on short leads at all times due to easily disturbed ground-nesting birds and grazing livestock.
Owing to the sensitive nature of this site please keep to the public rights of way.

GETTING AROUND

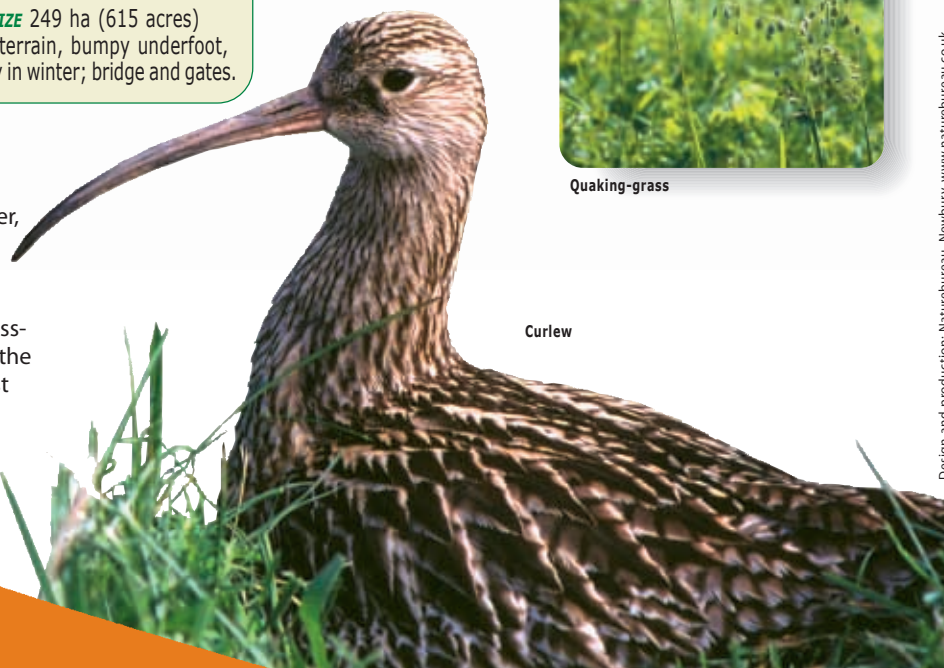
SIZE 249 ha (615 acres)
Flat terrain, bumpy underfoot, boggy in winter; bridge and gates.

Heads a-quiver

The delicate heads of quaking-grass, sometimes known as 'totter grass', tremble and quiver in the slightest breeze.



Quaking-grass



Curlew

Call of the curlew

The curlew is our largest wader, known for its evocative, haunting call and long, downward-curving bill. It lays its brown or olive eggs in grass-lined hollows on the ground, the young leaving the nest almost immediately after hatching.

Best time to visit

SUMMER

PLANTS Common meadow-rue, great burnet, pepper-saxifrage, fairy flax, lady's bedstraw, common marsh-bedstraw, yellow rattle, yellow iris, quaking-grass, meadow barley
INSECTS Club-tailed dragonfly, white-legged damselfly, butterflies
BIRDS Curlew, snipe, mute swan, meadow pipit, chiffchaff, willow warbler, whitethroat, reed bunting, yellowhammer, barn owl, yellowhammer

SPRING

PLANTS Adder's-tongue fern, cowslip, marsh-marigold, narrow-leaved water-dropwort, green-winged orchid
INSECTS Orange-tip butterfly
BIRDS Curlew, snipe, mute swan, meadow pipit, chiffchaff, willow warbler, whitethroat, reed bunting, yellowhammer, barn owl

WINTER

BIRDS Curlew, snipe, green sandpiper, lapwing, mute swan, wigeon, short-eared owl, redwing, fieldfare
MAMMALS Stoat

AUTUMN

BIRDS Greenfinch, goldfinch, linnet, reed bunting, mute swan, kestrel, buzzard