

## Norwich City's Local Nature Reserves

### **Bowthorpe Marsh**

A low-lying, undulating area of tall-herb fen and unimproved grassland adjacent to the River Yare (5.7ha). The site is crossed by a network of drainage ditches and forms part of a more extensive area of grazing marshes extending south and east of the river. The drainage ditches support reed sweet-grass along with other aquatic species. There is a small seasonal pond.

The higher ground to the west supports the unimproved neutral grassland. At the north west edge of the site there is a small fenced area of semi-improved grassland which is species-poor. There are also patches of blackthorn scrub. The site is grazed throughout the year by horses.

Species: general marsh flora

Access: The site is well used and is part of the Yare Valley Walk. The site is linked to Earlham Marsh and Bowthorpe Southern Park. In wet weather the site can be inaccessible. There are a number of wooden bridges over dykes.

### **Danby Wood**

A small (3.4ha) broadleaved semi-natural woodland on the site of an old chalk mine with many banks, hills and hollows. Oak, ash, lime and sycamore trees are present. There are two walnut trees. The under-storey is composed of young sycamore, elm and ash. Arum lily (Lords and Ladies) and bluebells are present. In early spring snow drops can be seen in scattered patches

Species of interest: Variety of woodland birds including jays.

Access: One way-marked track and other informal tracks. As site is close to Marston Marshes many walkers use both sites to make a longer walk.

### **Eaton Common**

Lying adjacent to the River Yare this site (6.2ha) largely comprises neutral grassland, which is marshy in places. Many of the former ditches are now just shallow depressions. There are smaller areas of tall herb and some broad-leaved woodland. The area is grazed in the summer and when cattle are not available it is mown. The woodland is generally left unmanaged.

Species of interest: General marsh flora, otters (probable)

Access: Grass mown path around site, kissing gate

(Marston Marsh and Eaton Common are linked with the Marston-Eaton link path along the edge of Eaton Golf Course).

### **Earlham Woods**

This site is also known as Violet Grove and the Heronry (7.8ha). It is situated on the edge of Earlham Park and includes a diverse range of habitat types including dense tall marsh, unimproved neutral grassland and woodland. There is also a pond which had silted up but some of which has been dredged creating open water.

Species of interest: Regenerating elm trees in woodland, range of woodland flora

Access: Tracks through woodland, one wooden bridge over dyke.

### **Lion Wood**

The wood (9.2ha) contains many large mature trees, especially of sycamore and oak. The canopy also includes other species (chestnut, beech, hornbeam and birch) and has a varied age structure. The shrub layer contains holly and elder and in one area cherry laurel. The ground flora is not diverse but includes localised bluebells. Some parts of Lion Wood are reputed to be ancient woodland.

Species of interest: range of woodland birds including jays and green woodpeckers. Bats (probable), grey squirrel.

Access: path, informal tracks, steps

Main path is used as short cut but is also generally well used

### **Marston Marshes**

This site (26 ha) comprises floodplain grazing marsh on the northern side of the River Yare. There are numerous dykes throughout the site, which are managed on a rotational basis. The grass is managed through summer grazing by cattle and mowing. Also included in the site are some small areas of damp woodland. Willows on site are managed through pollarding. There are five wildlife ponds.

Species of interest include: water voles, otters (probable), orchids, as well as general good marsh flora, dragonflies. Geese use site in winter and a snipe was also recorded this winter.

Access: Kissing gates, tracks, limited boardwalk

(Marston and Eaton are linked with the Marston-Eaton link path along the edge of Eaton Golf Course).

### **Mile Cross Marsh & Sycamore Crescent Wood**

Mile Cross Marsh is adjacent to Sweet Briar marsh, which is a SSSI. The marsh consists of an area of fen and an area of damp grassland. A number of years ago a local resident dug a pond and this is used in spring by breeding frogs. There are a number of dykes dissecting the site, one of which is a storm drain which often contains foul water.

Species of interest: Toads and water voles were recorded in the past, orchids

Access: The site is used mainly as a short cut between Marriots Way and the River Walk (Wensum)

Sycamore Crescent is a long narrow plantation of mature woodland adjacent to the River Wensum. The canopy is predominantly beech and oak. The under-storey contains elm and sycamore.

The ground flora is composed of typical woodland plants red campion and some bluebell.

Species: Woodland flora

Access: Wooden bridge over River Wensum, informal paths

### **Mousehold Heath**

This is the largest local nature reserve in Norwich (92.2 ha). Formerly heathland the site is now mostly covered by broad-leaved semi-natural woodland. Trees include oak, birch, beech and lime. The ground flora and shrub layer are generally both poorly developed and much bare ground is present.

Some patches of acid grassland remain. Gorse often dominates in these areas. Where heath remains, the heather struggles to survive invading gorse and bracken. The boundary of the site also includes a number of sports pitches where the grass has been improved.

There is a clay-lined pond, which sometimes dries up in the summer. It is used heavily by breeding frogs in early spring.

Species of interest include: Heather (mainly *Calluna* and some *Erica*), lizards, woodland birds.

Access: This is probably the most heavily used local nature reserve in the city. It is popular with dog walkers and local residents. A large number of informal paths intersect the site. It is the only site with a full time ranger.