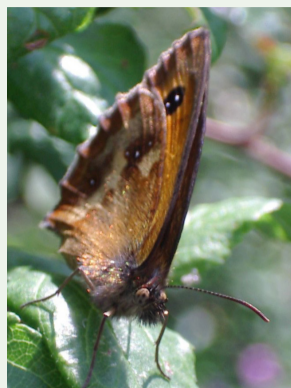


Wapley Bushes



meadow brown



bracket fungus



apple tree



3 Following the edge of this field is a mature hedgerow, probably several hundred years old. **A rough estimate of the age of a hedgerow can be arrived at by counting the number of species in a 30 metre length. 1 additional species = 1 century of growth**

The hedgerow is like a very narrow woodland, which provides a corridor for wildlife between the woodland and surrounding area.

Hedgerows are a particularly important habitat, as they mimic the woodland edge, so reflect all the stages in the development of a mature woodland. The hedgerows are managed so that they do not invade the open grassland and reduce the wildflower interest.

Hedgerow trees are also important as they provide a perch for songbirds, where they can be seen and heard easily by potential mates.



4 There is evidence of the woodland being ancient, this means the land has been wooded for at least 400 years. This is indicated by a number of flower species which are often found growing in woodland of this age. Among these are *bluebells*, *dog's mercury*, *wood anemone* and *yellow archangel*.

The woodland had been left unmanaged for quite a long time, so the woodland canopy is made up of fairly even-aged ash trees. The instability of this was seen during the storms of 1990 when areas in the middle of the wood were blown flat.

To encourage a diverse woodland structure, and age range of trees, different species are being planted in the woods. This will also increase the variety of habitat for animals and plants. *Ash*, *oak*, *field maple* and a single *crab apple* are found in the wood.

The tall trees make a good nesting site for rooks, which can usually be seen or heard around.

To diversify the woodland habitat still further, an open area called a ride has been created along the south-east edge of the wood between Wapley Bushes and the Western Wood. Butterflies and other insects are attracted to these open, sunny areas.

To the north an area of new woodland is being created along the existing woodland edge. This planting was undertaken as a community planting scheme on Mothers Day 1994, and it is now known as the Centenary Wood. The scrub layer consists of dense thickets of *bramble*. This is being managed by cutting to prevent the planted trees from being swamped and out-shaded. Other areas of scrub will be allowed to grow to provide cover for wildlife and nesting birds.

5 Wandering through the wood notice how the ground flora changes. This may indicate changes in light intensity, soil type or moisture levels. In some areas you will see plants which prefer damper conditions, including the rather rare loose-spiked *wood sedge* (*Carex strigosa*).



sloe (blackthorn)

This plant occurs within the corridor of a ditch that drains the new plantation and runs through the woodland.

6 At the lower end of the woodland, there is an area of *English elm* (*Ulmus procera*), a species that was almost wiped out by Dutch elm disease in the 1970's. Here it is regenerating, though when the trees reach a certain height the disease strikes again, which is why elm is still common in hedgerows, but mature trees are rare. To increase the diversity of habitat more species are being planted in this area.



Wapley Bushes Local Nature Reserve

The warmth and exhilaration of flower rich meadows, secretive ancient woodlands and wooded grassland plateaus are all found on a visit to Wapley Bushes Local Nature Reserve.

This leaflet is your guide around the reserve and explains the relationship between the different habitats and the processes of natural succession.



Particular species of interest include *dyer's greenweed* and *saw-wort*, both unusual in the area, and both indicate an unploughed, chemically unimproved, neutral grassland. *Cowslips* are also abundant in the spring.

The field is managed by hay cutting in late July or early August. This allows the spring and early summer flowers to seed themselves, and so ensures their survival in following years. This helps protect the vulnerable wild flowers, by preventing the stronger grasses and herbs from taking over. Lots of different flowers lead to many kinds of insects, which feed off and pollinate them.

1 Starting from the northern corner of the wood near the railway bridge, head east across the meadow towards the far corner. This is a neutral grassland which is seen as a flower-rich hay meadow, over 90 species having been recorded altogether.

This diversity is maintained by the traditional management of a hay meadow and the absence of chemical use unlike in a modern, intensively farmed field where the nutrient level is kept artificially high by the application of fertilisers leading to the over-dominance of one or two favoured grass species.



meadow cranesbill



cowslips



small tortoiseshell



guelder rose

2 Crossing the bridge into the upper 2 meadow you find yourself surrounded by a completely different plant community. This is because of the underlying clay soil, which restricts drainage. In the lower part of the field, this can be seen by the growth of various sedges and rushes, plants which prefer damp conditions. The poor drainage makes it difficult for hay cutting to take place, which is a reason why fewer species grow here than in the lower meadow.

If you are lucky you may be able to find some *common spotted orchids* growing along the top hedge. The seasonal pond in the corner of the field adds to the diversity of habitat.

A footpath leads from the site across the fields to Chipping Sodbury.

Management Objectives

- Management of woodland to ensure a better age range, structural diversity and improved habitat for wildlife and nesting birds.
- To manage the hay meadows for botanical interest.
- To protect important habitats for the benefit of particular species eg. thin spiked wood sedge, rook.
- To encourage the growth of woodland wild flowers by controlling scrub encroachment.
- To improve the condition of the hedgerows, ditches and ponds for wildlife.
- To maintain amenity value and encourage community involvement by upgrading footpaths and access points.
- To encourage and develop the educational use of the site by providing interpretive facilities on site and in leaflet form.
- To develop the nature conservation interest of the new plantation.



Wapley Bushes Local Nature Reserve



yellow rattle

Wapley Bushes was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 1992 following several years of local interest and activity in the site. The practical management of the site is mostly carried out by volunteers. However, it's not just the physically active tasks - other less physical jobs include management planning, guided walks, community events and monitoring and recording the wildlife. If you would like to get involved, whatever your interest, please contact **Wapley Bushes Conservation Group on 01454 313055, or 01454 315851.**

Wapley Bushes LNR is owned by **Dodington Parish Council (01454 866546)** and managed in partnership with **South Gloucestershire Council (01454 863725).**

Wapley Bushes LNR forms one of the many gateways to the Forest of Avon. This initiative covers an area of over 200 square miles in and around Bristol and the aim is to increase woodland cover from 6% to 30%. **For more information on local forest initiatives contact the Forest of Avon Trust on 0117 9633383.**

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Local Nature Reserve



Help look after our local environment by following the countryside code.

Find out more information about the countryside code by visiting www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code



www.southglos.gov.uk

