

13 LOW BARNS

One of the County's most important wildlife sites this 50-hectare wetland site located adjacent to the River Wear also contains mixed woodlands and species rich grasslands with a Visitor Centre and Coffee shop.



Marston Lake



Kingfisher (RSPB Images)

Low Barns has developed following gravel extraction along the banks of the River Wear. Previously farmland, the gravel extraction ended in 1964 and the former owners allowed the Trust to take over and manage the water-filled pools for wildlife. In the intervening time, a great diversity of habitat developed both naturally and by design. Indeed the reserve has become so important that it is designated a SSSI.

Wetland features include three lakes interconnecting streams, a number of mature ponds and a wetland pasture. The River Wear flows through the reserve. There are grassland and scrub and some extensive areas of woodland, which include mature alder wood. Bird life is varied and abundant and includes the spectacular Kingfisher. In summer the reserve is alive with birdsong as the resident bird populations are swelled by the summer migrants, including Redstart, Pied Flycatcher and several warbler species. In winter large numbers of wildfowl can be seen, including Tufted Duck, Mallard and Mute Swan. Grey heron occur in large numbers at various times of the year.



Sparrowhawk (RSPB Images)

Small Copper butterfly



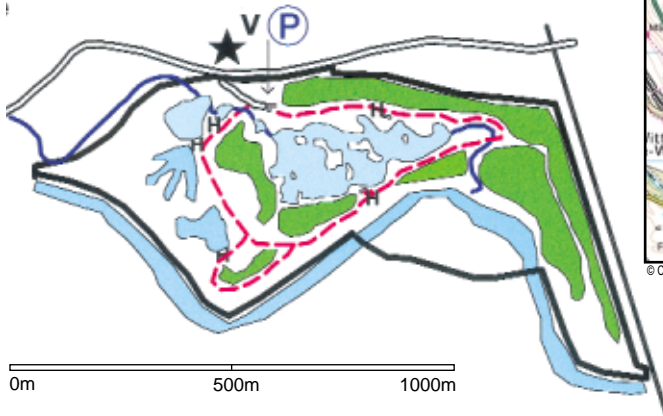
Patient visitors to the reserve may be rewarded by sightings of Otter, Red Fox, Roe Deer and Stoat. The small ponds on the reserve are excellent places to view damselflies and dragonflies, including the impressive Southern Hawker. Amphibians are also found, including the Common Frog and the Smooth Newt. Many species of butterfly occur including Dingy Skipper and Small Copper. The plant life is extremely rich and is too numerous to list but includes Burnet Rose, Centaury, Restharrow and Viper's Bugloss.



Otter

Best seen – Something to see all year round

LOW BARNES



Management





The reserve has developed following restoration of an old sand and gravel works with a large number of trees planted following restoration. Conifer plantations comprising non-native species are being progressively felled and replanted with native broadleaf species and many of the mature trees around the lake margins are being thinned out to promote growth of marginal vegetation. The grasslands and rides are cut annually to enhance species richness.

It is planned to enhance the wetland habitats by creating reedbeds and wader scrapes. The Trust also runs a sponsored nest box scheme on the reserve.

The reserve is managed in partnership with English Nature under the "Reserves Enhancement Scheme".

Common Darter



-  Reserve boundary
-  Parking
-  Reserve entrance
-  Footpaths



Redwing

The Great Flood of 1771 caused the River Wear to change its course to its present position some 400m to the south leaving an area of ancient alderwood on its old course.



Alderwood on the rivers old course

Location

The reserve is west of Bishop Auckland close to the A68. From the A68 follow the brown signposts (Low Barns Nature Reserve) through Witton-le-Wear, turning right at the Victoria public house. Once over the level crossing, the centre is 1/2 mile along the road. From the A689, the reserve is 3/4 mile west of High Grange.

While access to the reserve can be made at any time, the centre is open 10.00am - 4.00pm, 7 days a week in summer and at weekends in winter and can cater for school parties and larger groups by prior arrangement. The site is accessible for wheelchair users.



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General Information

Ownership:
Durham Wildlife Trust

Area: 50 hectares

Grid Reference:
NZ 160315

O.S. Explorer Map No: 305

Parking access to site: Parking at Rainton Meadows Visitor Centre until 4:30pm

Public transport:
Regular bus services from Durham and Bishop Auckland to Crook. Local connections available to Witton-le-Wear

Dogs: Dogs must be kept under control at all times

Accessibility: ▲▲▲▲

This card is kindly sponsored by:



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