

Blakehill Farm

Including
Stoke Common
Meadows



Location

Cricklade
SN6 6RA Grid Ref - SU073923

Access - Dogs are not allowed on Blakehill Farm. Suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

If driving – Blakehill Farm is signposted off B4040, Malmesbury Road, between Minety and Cricklade, adjacent to village of Leigh. From Cricklade drive about 1.3 miles from edge of town. The reserve entrance is on the left about 100 yards after entering Leigh. From Minety drive about 3.2 miles. Reserve entrance and car park is on the right.

If using bus – Service 50 travels from Cricklade to Cirencester via Leigh and Ashton Keynes. Service 52 travels from Swindon through to Royal Wootton Bassett via Minety. Visit www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets

If cycling - There is no general access from Chelworth as we do not own all of the land and cyclists are faced with a locked gate.

Nearby reserves – Brockhurst Meadow, Upper Waterhay

Stoke Common Meadows
SN5 4LL Grid Ref – SU065903

Access – Not suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs. Dogs on leads are welcome.

From Blakehill Farm a footpath to Stoke Common Meadows leads across the fields south west from the perimeter track opposite the Whitworth Building.

About Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Our vision is to create a county rich in wildlife and help people live sustainable lifestyles that protect the environment for the benefit of everyone.

We have about 18,500 members, look after almost 40 nature reserves, are supported by hundreds of volunteers, and work with local communities, schools, businesses and public bodies to achieve our aims. To do all this we rely on the support of our members.

If you would like to join us, or to find out about how you can help the environment, please visit www.wiltshirewildlife.org
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Registered charity no. 266202



Front cover: Brown hare, David Kjaer WWT



Blakehill Farm including Stoke Common Meadows

Total complex 263.69 hectares

Blakehill is the farm base for our northern reserves. We cut the hay in July after the **skylarks** have nested, then graze with cattle and sheep to control vigorous grasses. In some areas we are reseedling with local wildflower seed. The reserve is very flat and easy to navigate on the tarmac tracks.

We are turning this former military airfield back into wildlife-rich hay meadow and pasture, habitats which have steeply declined in Wiltshire and the UK. On this one reserve we are meeting more than 45% of the government's 10-year target for restoring **hay meadow** in England! In World War II Dakotas took off from here carrying troops and equipment to the battlefields of Europe. The old runways are long gone but they can still be traced by the changes in vegetation. Now the grassland is home to brown hare, roe deer, kestrel and skylarks.

Wildlife

Living in the margins, hedgerows, ponds and damp ground are many wildlife species, including bullfinch, lapwing, **grass snake** and 14 species of dragonfly. Through the summer adder's-tongue fern, great burnet, **oxeye daisies**, ladies bedstraw and bird's-foot-trefoil flower in the grasses.

Spiny restharrow and **dyer's greenweed**

are rare but survive here. Above the flowers fly small copper, brown hairstreak, **common blue** and marbled white butterflies.

Birds include wheatears, whinchats, stonechats, **partridge**, barn owls and tawny owls.

Stoke Common Meadows

These five meadows northwest of Purton are a mass of wild flowers in spring and summer. The finest, Jordans and Upper Field, are a designated **Site of Special Scientific Interest**.

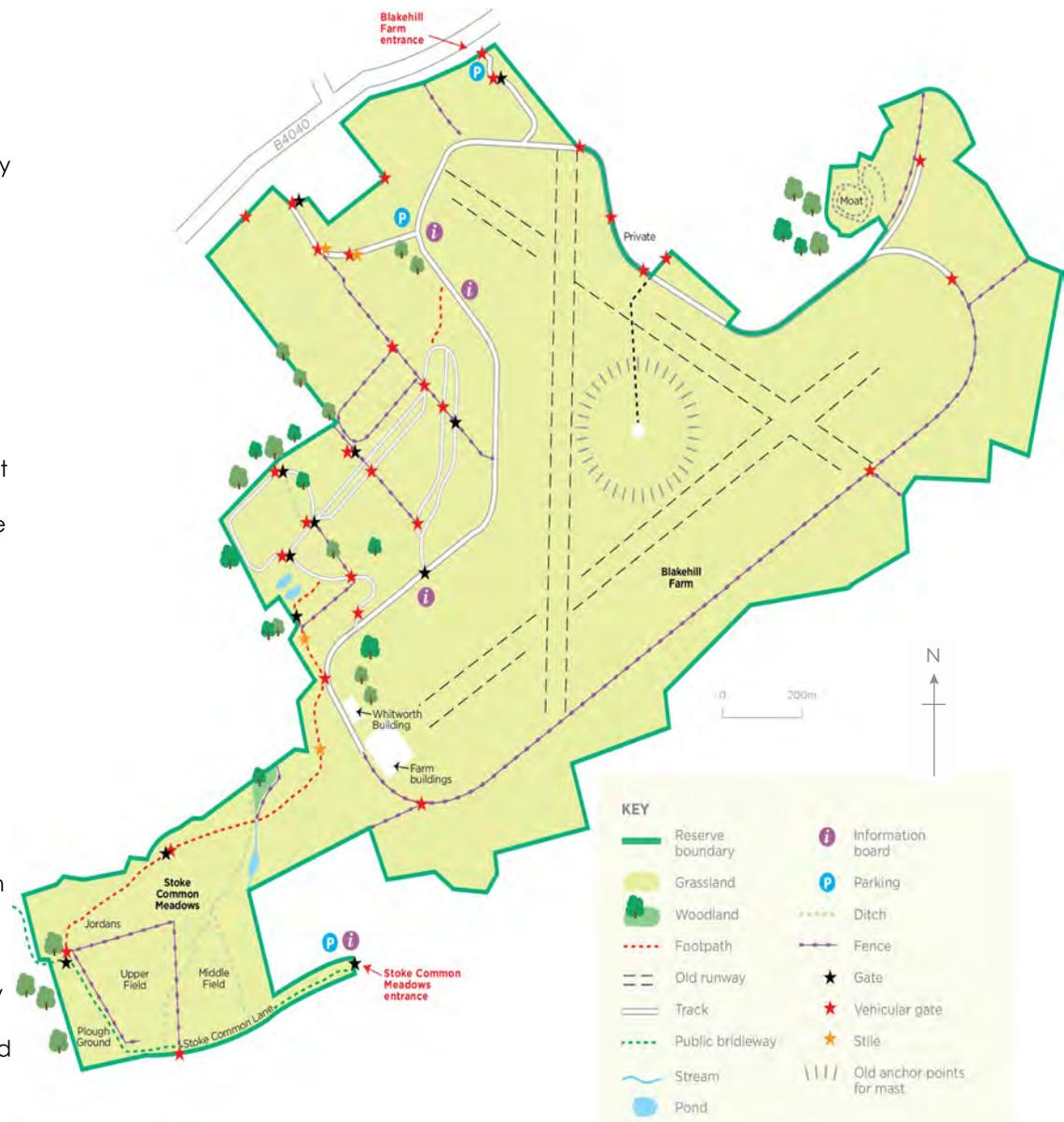
Mostly the meadows were used for hay but the long, narrow field on the southern boundary, Stoke Common Lane, was once a **cattle drovers'** route.

Come in summer to see the wildflowers - **common knapweed**, devil's-bit scabious and delicately fragrant pepper-saxifrage. Near the stream and ponds look for ragged robin, **cuckoo flower** and greater bird's-foot trefoil.

The copse is dominated by oaks 50-150 years old and there are large stumps of English elm. In May, bluebells flower beneath the trees.

We trim the hedgerows in rotation, always allowing some young blackthorn to remain as a food plant for **brown hairstreak butterfly** larvae.

The gently sloping meadows are extremely wet in the winter, but do still visit as this is the best time to see birds such as snipe and teal



Brown hairstreak, Vince Massimo. Grey partridge, Margaret Holland. Grass snake, Jamie Hall. Common knapweed, Shirley Greeman. Cuckoo flower, Philip Precey

