

Location

Near Cricklade Grid ref SU068936

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

If driving – Reserve is best approached from B4040 between Malmesbury and Cricklade. At Chelworth Upper Green crossroads, about one mile from edge of Cricklade, turn right up minor road towards Ashton Keynes. Follow this for about one mile. The access track to reserve is on right immediately after Manor Farm (there is no sign for reserve here).

Park at Waterhay car park. Turn left out of the car park along the road over the Thames towards Cricklade. Just before Manor Farm turn left and climb over stile next to locked double gates and proceed north along farm track for about 400 metres skirting the edge of the lake. Entrance to reserve is in front of you.

If using bus – Bus 52 Swindon to Minety via Cricklade. Get off at Chelworth Upper Green crossroads and walk about 20 minutes westwards (towards Ashton Keynes) to reserve. Visit www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets

If cycling – For more information visit www.sustrans.org.uk

Other reserves nearby – Blakehill Farm, Sandpool

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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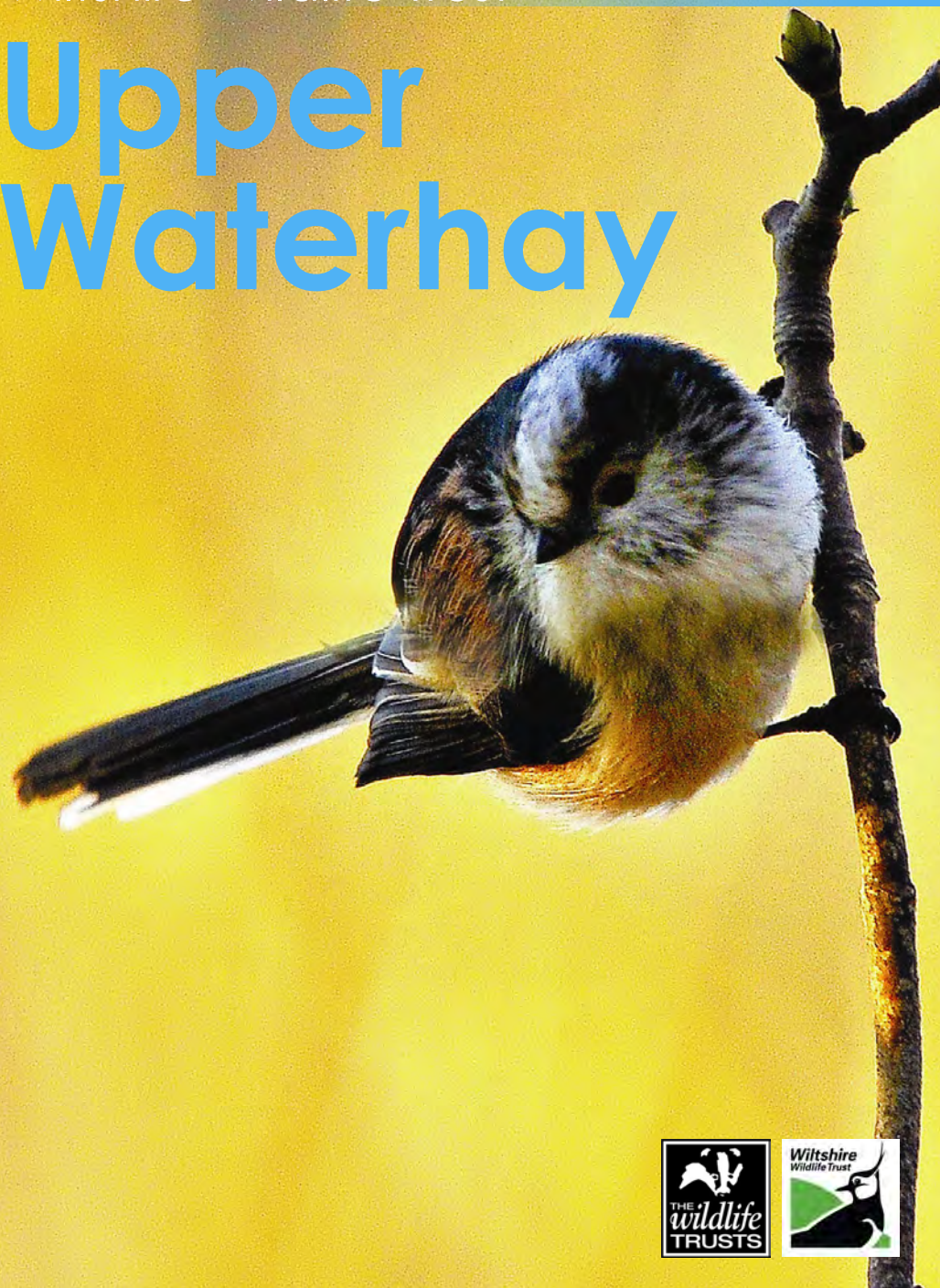
Front cover: Long-tailed tit, Steve Waterhouse

A sustainable future for wildlife and people

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Nature reserves

Upper Waterhay



Upper Waterhay

2.82 hectares

This stunning wildflower meadow is a stronghold of **snakeshead fritillaries**, which in the 1950s were so common along the Thames Valley that they were picked and gathered by the armload. Sadly, they now survive only in a few protected places.

Uniquely most of them here are creamy white, rather than the more common dark purple. You can see the bell-shaped flowers from mid-April.

Wildlife

The colour palette of the meadow changes throughout the summer, taking in the shaggy purple heads of common knapweed, the vibrant yellow flowers of meadow buttercup and yellow rattle, and frothy cream-coloured meadowsweet.

Great burnet grows throughout the meadow. Reaching 1m tall in summer, its dark crimson flowers bob gently in the breeze. It gets its name from the old French word 'brunette'.

Also look for rough hawk's-beard, which has golden flowers striped on the underside with deep orange; and tufted vetch, with its ladders of brilliant purple-blue flowers.

The reserve lies on the floodplain of the River Thames and each year the winter floods enrich the meadows by depositing alluvial silt over them.

Wetland plants thrive - marsh marigold, ragged robin, **water forget-me-not** and the mauve lady's smock. This is the larval food plant of green-veined white and **orange-tip** butterflies.

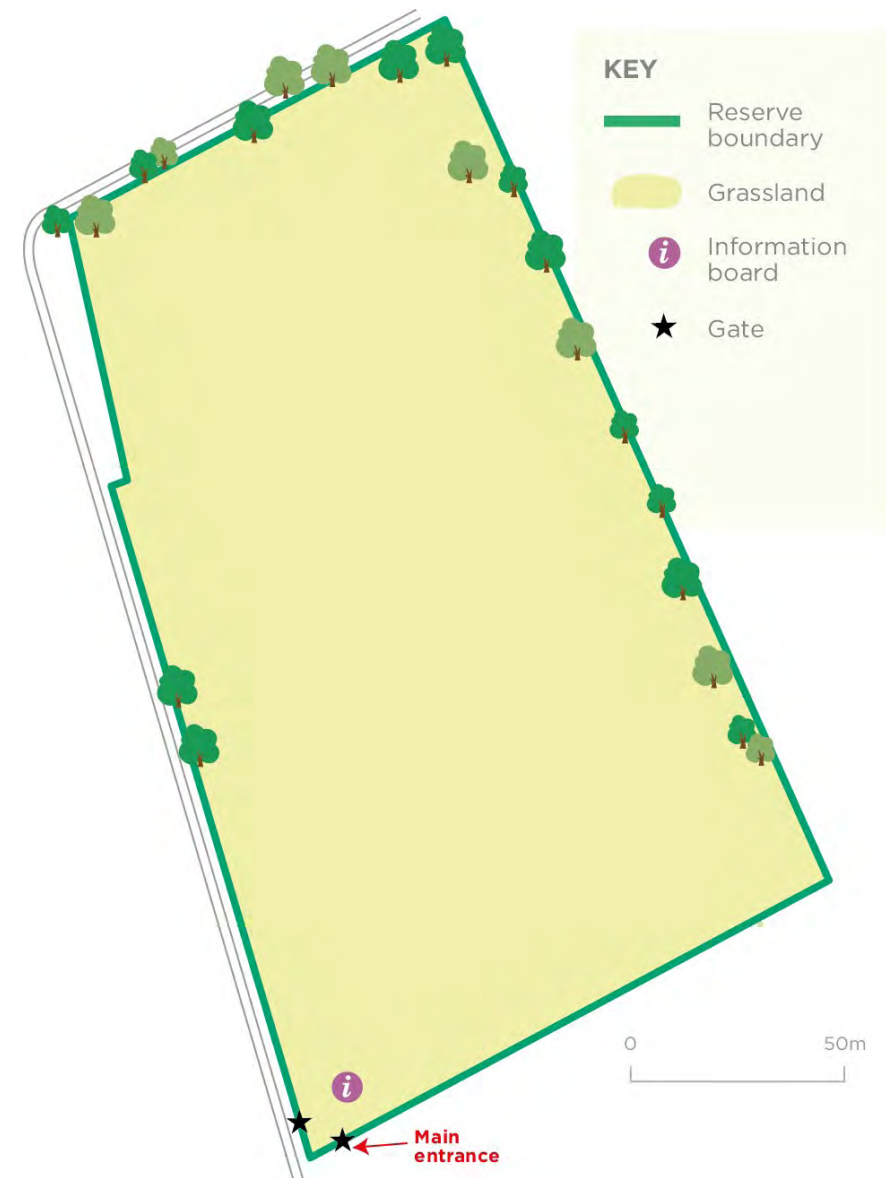
The mix of grasses, sedges, rushes and wildflowers within the meadow attracts many insects. In spring **mayflies**, with their three distinctive curving tails, dance in the air. Summer brings clouds of common blue damselflies.

In their wake come reed buntings, **long-tailed tits** and sedge warblers; while during flooding snipe, curlew and gadwall forage in the mud.

You may be lucky enough to see the rare **marsh harrier** and bittern, as well as the more common fox and roe deer.

We bought the reserve in 1970 and have carried on managing it in the traditional way. A farmer grazes it with cattle during the autumn when fritillary bulbs are dormant. The cattle are removed in winter so that hay can grow. Then we cut the hay in early July after the flower seeds have ripened and dispersed.

Fields managed in this way are referred to as 'unimproved' since their only source of enrichment is cattle manure. And this is why so many wildflowers grow here.



Snakeshead fritillary, David Hall WWT. Great burnet, Rob Large WWT. Water forget-me-not, Rob Large WWT. Orange tip, Darin Smith. Mayfly, Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hill Photography. Marsh harrier, Gary Cox

