

Captain's Wood

Morning visit with Steve Aylward, Property and Projects Manager, Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

Step into Captain's Wood and you step back one hundred years or more in time into a woodland habitat of ancient trees and wild flowers where deer roam freely, barn owls hunt the clearings and 7 species of bat feed amongst the trees.

Of the 140 acres purchased by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, 90 acres is woodland and the remainder is grassland. The grassland areas that up until the 1990's were cultivated to grow cereals have since developed into acid grassland maintained largely by deer and rabbit grazing.

The woodland habitat does vary across the reserve ranging from mostly open woodland with oak and birch to a large stand of almost pure hazel, clumps of mature Scots pine and lines of planted sweet chestnut. In some areas, rhododendron that was planted for game cover many years ago has grown up into dense clumps stifling the growth of any other plants. The most spectacular and ecologically valuable woodland component is the veteran oak trees found throughout much of the woodland. These trees are many hundreds of years old and might be considered complete ecosystems in themselves. Associated with these ancient trees are species of fungi and invertebrates that are entirely dependent on the slowly rotting heartwood within the trees. One such species is oak polypore that is only known from six other sites in Britain.

For more info: <http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/nr/sites/captains.htm>

Whitehouse Farm

Afternoon visit with Andy Manning

Step into Whitehouse Farm and you step back over 50 years into a 120 acre farm for which time has stood still. The previous owner had a serious accident in 1953 and from that day on became a recluse and did nothing on the farm. Not only will we see a small but fascinating range of ancient maiden and pollard trees, some just out of rotation, but we will see how the fields have regenerated over the years from seed from neighbouring woodland. We will see hedges that are 50-60 feet wide and were teeming with nightingales in the spring surrounding fields full of very diverse grassland.

It is currently grazed by a herd of English White Cattle. Should be fascinating.

The farm is just north of Hasketon at TM 247 518. We will start the afternoon guided walk at 2pm.