



Hazel Coppicing (*Corylus avellana*)

Areas of hazel coppicing can be found along the edge of the historic park and also in some parts of the Nature Reserve. Much of this hazel was planted in around 1997 and this traditional skill has recently been re-introduced into the park today. It is envisaged that coppicing will continue until all areas have been incorporated into a rotational coppice programme.

Coppicing is a traditional form of woodland management where all stems are cut to approximately 150mm above the ground, which stimulates new shoots. These stems are left to grow to produce small poles or a larger piece of timber depending on what it will be used for. Split stems of the hazel are interwoven to produce wattle fences and whole stems of hazel are used to make walking sticks, hoops for barrels and firewood.

The hazel tree is a habitat and source of food for the many animals found in the park. Its leaves are used as a food source for beetle and moth larvae and also deer. Hazelnuts (its fruit) are eaten by humans, large birds such as jackdaws, squirrels and mice who store the fruit especially over the winter.



Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

The blue tit is a common bird found in both parks and gardens. It has bright blue wings, tail and crown, yellow under parts, a greenish back, white cheeks and black eye stripe, bib and collar. They also have a black streak down the middle of their belly. Their beaks are black and they have blue-grey legs.

Blue tits feed mostly on insects such as caterpillars, aphids, beetles, spiders and seeds. In the spring they feed on nectar, pollen and sap and in the autumn on berries. Blue tits will nest in any hole in a tree or in a nesting box. They can also be found nesting in some unusual places such as letter boxes or in pipes. The nest is a cup shaped and made by the female from moss, wool, dead leaves, spiders' webs, and lined with down. They lay a large number of eggs ranging from 10 to 12 eggs. The egg laying period corresponds to when caterpillars are abundant and can be fed to their chicks.



Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

The grey squirrel originally came from North America. It was first released in the United Kingdom in 1876 in Henbury Park in Cheshire and was later released in other parts of the country. These squirrels replaced the native red squirrel which became extinct over large areas of the British Isles.

The grey squirrel has mostly grey fur but it can also be brownish in colour and have a large bushy tail and a white underside. They live in nests called dreys which are constructed in forks in trees.

They do not hibernate but hide their food in small batches for recovery during the winter months. It is estimated that a squirrel can make several thousand batches of hoarded food during the spring and summer months. The squirrel returns to its food sources by using landmarks to find where it hid them. Once it is near the food it uses smell to finally locate it. It is one of a few mammals that can go down a tree head first using its claws to dig into the tree as it goes down. They are very agile and have extremely good balance.

Ox Eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)

The Oxeye Daisy (also known as Moon Daisy or Dog Daisy) can be identified by its large, white round flower heads with yellow centre that appear on single, tall stems. The daisy-like flower head is actually not just one flower, but a composite of a number of tiny flowers which make up the yellow disc in the middle and the surrounding white 'ray florets' (petals). It has spoon-shaped leaves at its base and thin, jagged leaves along the stem. Butterflies especially the Meadow Brown like this flower along with bees who visit it for its nectar and pollen.



Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

The Kestrel is a member of the falcon family and is distinguished by the distinctive way it hunts for food. They hover over open countryside and swoop down on their prey, which normally consist of small mammals, lizards or large insects. Kestrels do not always build their own nests, but reuse nests built by other species. These birds are bold and have adapted well to the human environment. Their nests are often found in buildings and adjacent to motorways. They are frequently seen hovering beside the motorway or perched on a high tree branch looking out for prey.



Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*)

Slow Worms are often mistaken for snakes but they are actually legless lizards. They can be distinguished from snakes by their eyelids, which snakes do not have. They are not poisonous and are very shy creatures. Slow Worms can live up to thirty years in the wild. They are carnivorous and feed on slugs and worms. They can be found in long damp grass, in the wild flower meadow and lying in the sun in sheltered parts of the wildlife area.



Meadow Grasshopper (*Chorthippus parallelus*)

The Meadow Grasshopper favours damp areas of grassland and can often be seen and heard in the wildflower meadow. Grasshoppers go through a process of transformation from wingless nymphs to winged adults and feed on grass. They are known for their characteristic chirping 'song' (heard throughout the summer months) made by rubbing their hind legs against their forewings. An adult grasshopper can jump up to ten times its body length.



Meadow Brown Butterfly (*Maniola jurtina*)

The Meadow Brown is one of the commonest and widespread butterflies found in the United Kingdom. It is a familiar sight in the Nature Reserve during the summer months. The colouring on its wings vary with differing amounts of orange on its forewings and a varying number of black spots found on its hind wings. The butterfly roosts in low vegetation within tall grass clumps such as those found in the wildflower meadow. They feed on nectar from wild flowers such as knapweed, thistle and bramble all found in copious amounts in the nature reserve.



Whilst in the wildflower meadow lookout for little tunnels especially in the longer grass used by small mammals such as field voles. These tunnels are formed from loose and dying vegetation and lead to their nests and food stores.



Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg*)

Brambles cover a large area of the Nature Reserve and provide an essential habitat for birds and invertebrates. They are thorny plants which are a member of the rose family. Bramble bushes produce fruit known as blackberries. Bramble bushes have a distinctive growth form, they have long, thorny, arching shoots, which can grow up to 6-8 feet in one season. Its flowers, berries and nectar are a good food source for many bird species, butterflies and insects and also humans!



Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

Rabbits are found throughout Europe and in northwest Africa. They have also been introduced into Australia, New Zealand and North America. They live on heath land, grassland, woodland, open meadows and the edges of agricultural land. They feed on a wide range of vegetation including grass, bulbs and bark.

They live in networks of burrows known as warrens, where they remain when not feeding. During the medieval period in Britain, artificial rabbit warrens were built to farm rabbits which provided an important source of food. In the wild rabbits are food for birds of prey and foxes.

Rabbits are very timid animals and can be sometimes be seen if one walks quietly around the park. Evidence of their presence can be found in the form of distinctive droppings.

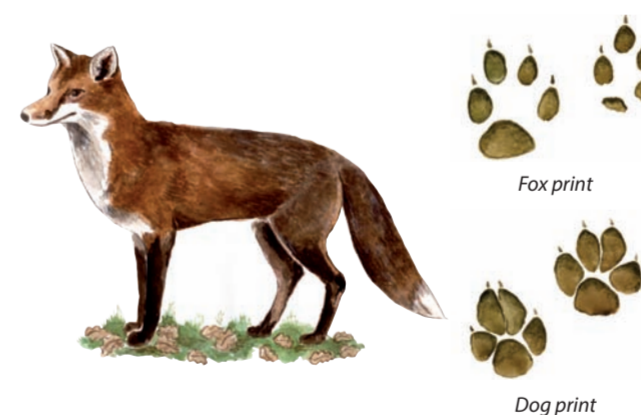
Look out for droppings the image below will help you to distinguish between rabbit and deer droppings.



Muntjac Deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*)

Muntjac Deer are the smallest deer in Britain. They are originally from southeast China and were brought to Woburn Park in Bedfordshire by John Russell Reeves in 1838. During the 1920s, some of the deer escaped and now Muntjac Deer can be found in the wild throughout most of Britain.

At Herschel Park the deer live in the dense woodland and scrub within the nature reserve. Muntjac Deer often communicate with each other by making loud barking sounds, which can often be heard in the park mostly at night. The deer eat leaves, buds, berries, acorns, chestnuts, seeds, bark and grasses, all of which can be found in Herschel Park.



Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

The fox belongs to the dog family which also includes wolves, coyotes and the domestic dog. They are known as a group as canidae which is where we get the term canine that is usually associated with the domestic dog. Foxes are carnivores (meat eaters), but they will eat whatever food is available. Since foxes are so adaptable they can be found all over Europe, Asia, North Africa, North America and Australia.

Foxes found in the British Isles have a rather slender appearance; have pointed ears and a bushy tail. Their coat is normally reddish in colour, with the back of their ears and the front of the legs black and the throat and belly varying from white to grey.

Foxes thrive in urban areas where they are known to eat left over food discarded by humans. In some cases they are deliberately encouraged by humans by feeding. In the wild, however, foxes will feed on fruit, invertebrates, and small mammals and birds

Foxes live up to two years in the wild but if they are reared in captivity they can live to about 14 years old which is similar to the domestic dog.

Look out for tracks as you go around the park – the images below will help you spot the difference between a dog and a fox footprint.



Mallard Duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

The Mallard is one of the commonest ducks in Britain. The male is brightly coloured and has a yellow bill, an iridescent green head, a white collar and a chestnut brown breast. The female is completely coloured in feathers of various shades of brown and provides camouflage while raising its young. There is also a blue patch on each wing bordered by two white stripes. The bill is an orange-brown colour. The chicks are usually born in April and May and are yellow and brown in colour. They forage on aquatic plants and insects found in shallow water.



Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*)

The common frog can be found in meadows, damp wooded areas and shrubberies within Herschel Park as well as in the wetland areas. They breed in the shallows of the ponds and boggy areas of the park. After mating a female lays between 1000 to 4000 eggs which are fertilised by the male as they are released in to shallow still water. After 2-3 weeks, tadpoles start to emerge from their jelly-like spawn. They feed on the spawn for the first few days and then begin to eat small plants and algae. Tadpoles change into frogs through a process known as metamorphosis which takes between 12-14 weeks. Tadpoles and frogspawn are very vulnerable and may get eaten by fish, birds and grass snakes – only 5 out of 2000 eggs will survive to become adult frogs. Common frogs are more active at night. During the winter they hibernate in compost heaps, under stones and logs or beneath piles of mud and decaying leaf litter.



Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*)

The Marsh Marigold or 'Mayflower' has large buttercup-like golden flowers resembling cups. Its Latin name is derived from the Greek for 'Goblet' and is sometimes known as 'Kingcup'. It is found growing around ponds, marshes and damp woodland. This plant provides shelter for frogs, early nectar for bees and a food source for other insects. It is found in the wetland areas of the park between spring and autumn and then dies down after the first frosts. In Medieval times an infusion of these flowers was used to treat fits and a tincture of the whole plant was used to cure insomnia.

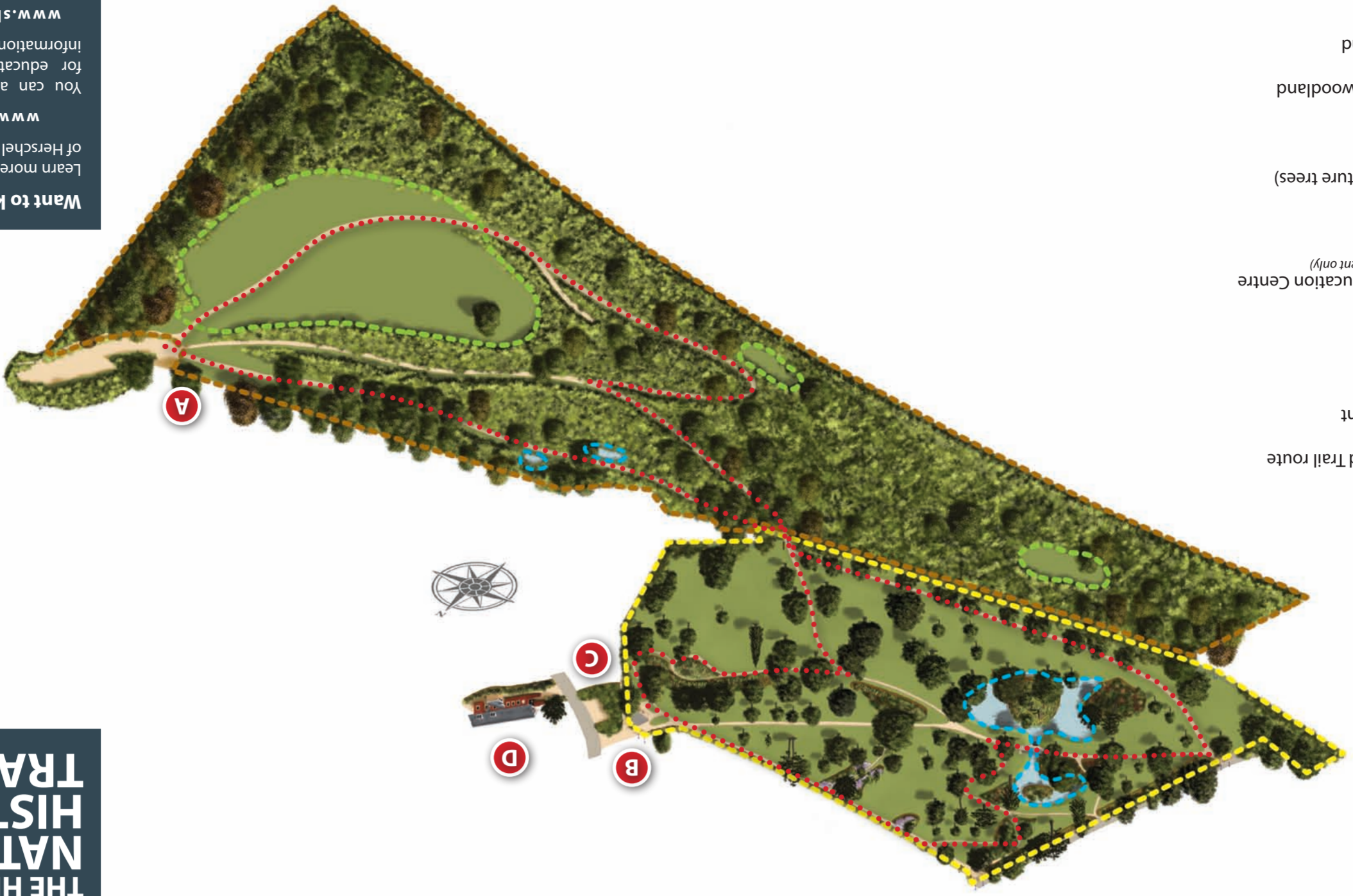


Broad-bodied Chaser Dragonfly (*Libellula depressa*)

These dragonflies have a broad flattened abdomen which is brown in females with yellow patches down the sides. The male develops a blue luminous sheen to its abdomen. They are frequently found in the small ponds within the nature reserve and can be one of the first species to colonise a new pond. During the summer months they can be seen darting and diving above the water putting on a delightful aerial display as they hunt over the meadows in the Nature Reserve. These dragonflies are very territorial and will fight with other males who enter their territory. Their breeding cycle starts when a female enters a male's territory. The male grabs her and mates with her whilst on the wing. The female deposits her eggs into open water whilst flying above the surface. The eggs hatch after about two weeks and the brown, hair-fringed nymphs (also referred to as naiads) live in the water between one and three years depending on water temperature and food availability. When fully grown, in late spring or early summer the nymphs leave the water by climbing up emergent vegetation or partly-submerged twigs, and then the lovely winged adults shed a final skin (known as the exuvia) and dry their wings before taking their maiden flights. The main diet of these adult dragonflies is small insects such as gnats, midges and mosquitoes.

THE HERSCHEL PARK NATURAL HISTORY TRAIL MAP

Want to know more about Herschel Park?
Learn more about the park and events at the Friends of Herschel Park website.
www.friendsofherschelpark.org
You can also visit the Slough Museum website for educational learning resources and further information.
www.sloughmuseum.org/play-learn/herschel-park/



- KEY**
- Recommended Trail route
 - (A) Start / End point
 - (B) Kiosk
 - (C) Disabled toilet
 - (D) The Bentley Education Centre (access by arrangement only)
- Habitats**
- (Yellow circle) Woodland (mature trees)
 - (Green circle) Meadow
 - (Orange circle) Scrub / Young woodland
 - (Blue circle) Ponds / Wetland

Written and researched by Elias Kupfermann. Design, layout and main map image by Model Creative Media (www-model.co.uk). Flora and Fauna images by Differentia Design. Photograph by Elaine Robertson

Essential information for your visit.

Opening times
Open every day 8.00am to 8.00pm or dusk, whichever is earlier.

Parking
A visitors car park can be accessed from the Datchet Road along the entrance road to the NFER. The park can be reached by a short walk through the Nature Reserve. NO visitors parking is available within the Upton Park Estate (risk of parking ticket).

Accessibility

- Limited disabled parking bays are located in Upton Close nr Kiosk.
- The park is crossed by surfaced paths suitable for wheelchairs.
- A disabled toilet is available at the Kiosk at certain times (Radar key).

More to Enjoy
Activities and Events are held all year round - check park notice boards or logon to www.slough.gov.uk/herschelpark for more details.



Herschel Park Natural History Trail

Find out more about Herschel Park's natural history



The Herschel Park Natural History Trail.

Herschel Park provides a home for a diverse number of fauna and flora. It is divided into two contrasting parts; a Victorian formal pleasure ground planted with ornamental trees and shrubs and a wild area which has recently been designated and now managed as a Local Nature Reserve.

The Victorian Park and the Nature Reserve provide a number of very distinct habitats for a variety of animals ranging from ducks, squirrels and foxes to dragonflies, butterflies and frogs and also wildflowers, trees and water based plants. The vegetation and flowers found in the park provide the necessary food sources for these animals to survive.

The habitats for these plants and animals fall into four main categories - Woodland which has been present in the park for many years; Young Woodland Scrub, Meadows and Ponds and Wetland Areas made up of both formal and informal ponds and boggy areas. It is possible in a number of cases that some animals can be found in more than one of these habitats.

On this trail you will discover the great variety of wild animals, plants and trees which the park has to offer.

There are a great variety of plants which grow within the pond and wetland areas. These include Water Mint, Ragged Robin and Marsh Marigold, water lilies and algae. The ponds and boggy areas are teeming with wildlife some visible to the naked eye and others microscopic. Those that can easily be seen include fish midge larvae, water beetles, Pond Skaters, Water Boatmen, May Flies Pond Snails, Dragonflies and Damselflies at all stages in their life cycle.

Herschel Park's formal lakes have always been part of the original gardens since their inception in 1842. However two additional ponds and an area of bog land have been created since the parks restoration in the Nature reserve. These areas of wetland provide both a haven and habitat for the many species of plants and animals who either like to live within the ponds or among their margins. The disappearance of the water from the ponds in 2000 and the subsequent restoration has meant that the present day species have only recently been established and the new ecology will continue to evolve...

Species that can often be found include a number of water birds such as Mandarin and Mallard Ducks as well as Canada Geese. The presence of these water birds create their own problems. Over feeding by humans can lead to pollution of the pond due to excess uneaten food rotting in the water which can also attract rats. Populations of Canada Geese sometimes need to be controlled or in a relatively short time they can over-populate an area.

The Herschel Park Nature Reserve is an area which has been allowed to grow naturally. In its early stages it became an area of 'urban wasteland' used to dump large quantities of rubbish shortly after the construction of the adjacent M4 Motorway. The land has been allowed to regenerate and has become covered with a mosaic of grassland and scrub which is dense in places, intermixed with a variety of young trees including a number planted in the late 1990s by local volunteers.

This area of young woodland and scrub forms an important habitat, breeding, and nesting site for a number of animals and birds. These include birds such as the song thrush and warblers. Mammals which are found within this habitat include rabbits and foxes and deer. It is also an ideal habitat for butterflies and moths which can often be seen fluttering across the nature reserve.

Make sure you note down what you saw today...

Herschel Park has a number of mature specimen and ornamental trees together with an area of quite dense woodland on the margins between the historic park and the nature reserve. Some of this woodland contains hazel which has been coppiced. These trees form habitats for a great variety of mammals, small birds and insects.

The north western part of the Herschel Park Nature Reserve consists primarily of a wildflower meadow which is a rich and colourful habitat full of flowers and grasses. These flowers include Ox Eye Daisy, bird's foot trefoil, thistles and lesser knapweed.

The open nature of the meadow attracts an abundance of wildlife ranging from grassland birds, small mammals and insects. This habitat provides an important food source and areas for nesting for a diverse community of animals which include kestrels, woodpeckers, animal tracks, fircones and habitat piles.

Why not use the space below to sketch or make notes of the plants and wildlife you see on your visit.

WOODLAND

MEADOWS

YOUNG WOODLAND & SCRUB

PONDS / WETLANDS