

Kinson Common

Local Nature Reserve

Introduction

Kinson Common is a small relic of the once extensive heathland that covered most of south east Dorset

Heathland owes its existence in large part to Neolithic farming activities some 5000 years ago. Tree felling and grazing by these farmers created extensive areas of open heathland, this habitat now supports a range of wildlife, some of which cannot survive anywhere else. For this reason, in 1988 Kinson Common was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest

The area is rich in archaeological evidence



1839 Kinson Tithe Map and may date back to the 18th century or even earlier. A good example of these can be found surrounding the lowest part of the common, separating the higher land from the central bog area.

In 1927 Palaeolithic implements were found on the Common which are now housed in the British Museum. Smaller flint implements from the Neolithic and Bronze Age have been found on the surface of the Common, as on many other local heathlands. Two Bronze Age barrows are present just to the north of the cemetery. The eastern tumulus is an example of a fairly common and widespread bowl barrow, whereas the western tumulus is a saucer barrow, a much less common type.

There are several boundary banks on the Common. These are shown on the

Conservation grazing

Left to nature, the heathland and bogs would revert to woodland. Therefore, it is necessary to control invasive scrub (birch, gorse, willow and bramble).

In 2005 British rare breed cattle were introduced to maintain, in a sensitive way, the open areas of dry heath, wet heath and grassland, these traditional hardy breeds thrive on heathland. They particularly enjoy eating the new growth on young willow trees in the spring.



Shetland cattle

The cattle use their tongues to pull tufts of vegetation into their mouths and trample dense areas of bramble opening up gaps in the vegetation, which in turn provides opportunities for wild flowers, insects and reptiles to move in.

Plants

Although Kinson Common is a small area, it has a rich variety of habitats.

The poor acid soil of the dry heathland only supports a few specially adapted species such as common and bell heather, common and dwarf gorse and the grass, bristle bent.



Heath spotted orchid

Wet heath on the other hand is rich in plant species and can be found in the low-lying bog in the centre of the Common. Look out for the tussocky purple moor grass, cross-leaved heath and deergrass.



Purple moor grass



Bell heather

Two types of fascinating insect eating plants are found here, sundew and pale butterwort along with three different kinds of orchid: southern marsh, early marsh



Round-leaved sundew



Purple hairstreak



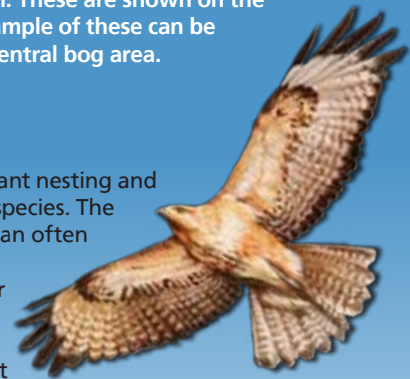
British white cattle



Treecreeper

Birds

Kinson Common is an important nesting and feeding area for several bird species. The largest is the buzzard which can often be seen soaring high above scanning the open ground for small mammals or reptiles. Look out for the tree creeper which lives up to its name as it circumnavigates tree trunks looking for hidden insects.



Buzzard

Our resident species are joined in the summer by migrants such as willow warbler, reed warbler and whitethroat. Others use the Common for overwintering such as snipe,



Snipe

Reptiles

Heathland is the perfect habitat for reptiles and two of Britain's six native species of reptile can be seen here, common lizards and slow worms. Although they are shy and difficult to spot, they can sometimes be seen basking in the early morning sun.



Common lizard



Slow worm

Insects

On a hot summers day, the Common is alive with insects. The wet areas provide the perfect breeding habitat for 12 different species of dragonfly and damselfly including the aptly named beautiful demoiselle.



Raft spider



Emperor dragonfly

The uncommon bog bush cricket lives here and the distinctive Roesel's bush cricket is a more recent arrival to the Common.

The nationally scarce and formidable raft spider can be seen here around the bog pools.