

Turbary Common

Local Nature Reserve

Introduction

Turbary 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 5,000 years ago. Tree felling and grazing by these farmers created extensive areas of open heathland which supports a range of wildlife, some of which cannot survive anywhere else. For this reason, Turbary Common has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



Shetland cattle

Conservation

Left to nature, the heathland would revert to woodland. Therefore, it is necessary to control invasive scrub (birch, gorse and bramble). In 2005 grazing was introduced to maintain, in a sensitive way, the open areas of heath and grass. Shetland and British white cattle are hardy breeds that thrive on heathland. The cattle use their tongues to pull tufts of vegetation into their mouths and they trample areas of dense bramble. Grazing and trampling opens up gaps in the vegetation, providing opportunities for the germination of wildflowers, which attract a wide range of insects and other small creatures. These are, in turn, food for predators such as birds and small mammals.

British white cattle



Plants

The dry heathland is dominated by ling (common heather), bell heather, western gorse and the grass, bristle bent. The plants which grow on such poor gravelly soils include heath milkwort, heath dog violet and the parasitic common dodder. The wet heath is markedly different, look out for the tussocky purple moor grass, cross-leaved heath and deergrass.



Heath-spotted orchid



Round-leaved sundew

In the valley mire there is a rich bog flora which includes the insect eating round-leaved sundew and pale butterwort, early marsh orchid, heath spotted orchid and bog asphodel.



Bog asphodel



Shaggy ink-cap

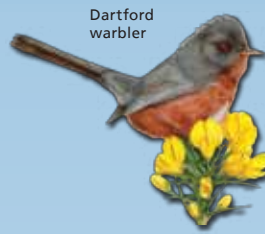
Birds

The most notable bird to be found on Turbary Common is the Dartford warbler, a classic species of the heathlands of southern England. Unlike most other warblers it is resident here throughout the year. It feeds on insects and spiders.



Stonechat

Also look out for the stonechat which perches on top of gorse bushes and the meadow pipit, which prefers open grassland where it feeds on flies, beetles, spiders and moths. In the spring flocks of linnets appear, attracted by the gorse where they make their nests.



Dartford warbler

Two recent additions to the nature reserve are the buzzard which soars above the reserve and now nests here and the nightingale with its exquisite and unmistakable song.



Grass snake

Insects

On a hot summer's day the heath is alive with insects. Look out for dragonflies and damselflies such as the keeled skimmer and our largest dragonfly, the emperor.

Two scarce species of damselfly can be found here, the scarce blue-tailed and small red. Both prefer shallow bog pools or slow flowing water. These are good places too for the bog bush cricket and the raft spider.



Bog bush cricket



Key

- Woodland
- Wet Heath
- Dry Heath
- Scrub / Grass
- Cycle Route

Reptiles

Five of the six species of British reptile live on Turbary Common. These are the adder, grass snake, common lizard, slow worm and the nationally rare sand lizard.



Adder

They are shy and difficult to spot and are most likely to be seen on a warm spring morning when they are basking in the spring sunshine after emerging

Twenty-four species of butterfly are found here including the green hairstreak, grayling and the beautiful silver-studded blue.

The spectacular male emperor moth flies here during the daytime in May. The fully grown emperor caterpillar is green, black and warty and is perfectly camouflaged when feeding on heather.



Keeled skimmer



Green hairstreak



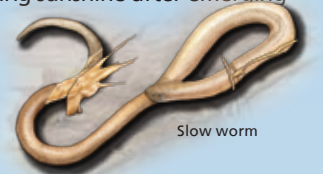
Grayling



Raft spider



Sand lizard



Slow worm



Local Nature Reserve Byelaws apply



Keep dogs under control



Clean up after your dog

Kingfisher Barn
Tel: 01202 451548
Out of hours
Tel: 01202 451145
Email: parks@bournemouth.gov.uk
www.bournemouth.gov.uk/parks