

Description:

Bentley Wood, together with the adjacent Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Reserve Blackmoor Copse, form one of the largest contiguous areas of woodland in Wiltshire. The area is particularly noted for woodland butterflies, and the area is now one of the top sites in the country for this group.

Best time to visit: July for purple emperors; spring and summer for butterflies.

Grid ref: SU250295

Area: 655 hectares

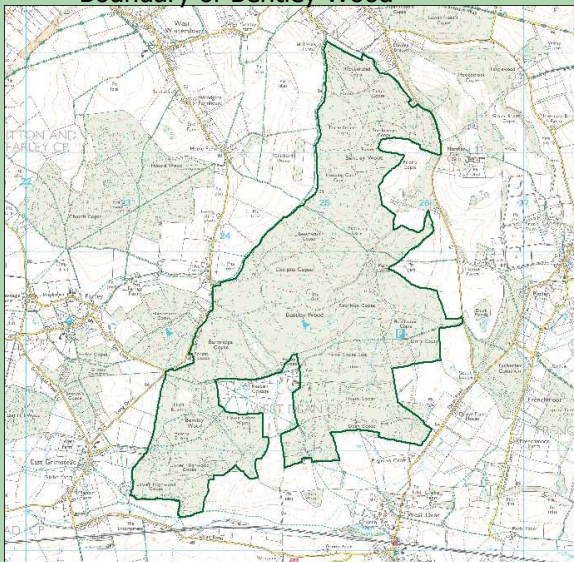
International Year of Forests

The United Nations has proclaimed 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness on sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

At the WSBRC we are pleased to play our part by running a series of surveys to record the wildlife of Wiltshire's forests.

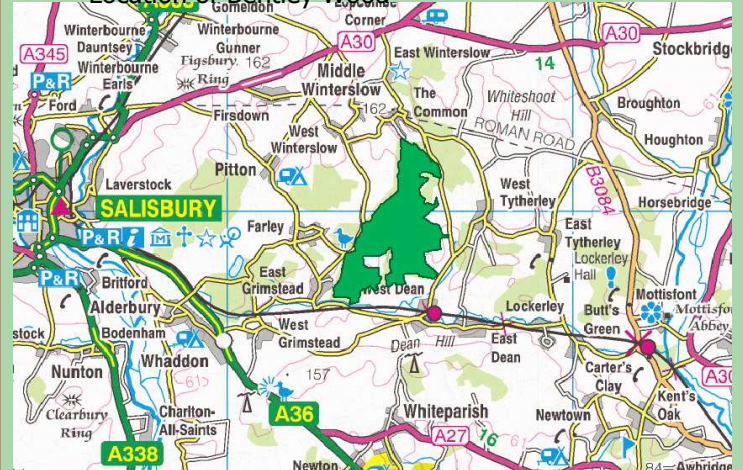
Let us know what you see! Look for specific species from our field guides and send us in your records either on-line, or download our recording sheet to take with you. Our ID guides, recording forms and other resources can be downloaded from our website www.wsbrc.org.uk/GetInvolved/IYF/EmailForm.aspx Or contact us using the details on the reverse of this sheet.

Boundary of Bentley Wood



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Location of Bentley Wood



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Early purple orchid, Bentley Wood © Steve Day/ WWT

Important species:

Purple emperor - it is considered one of the best sites in the country to observe this species.

Fritillaries including pearl-bordered, small pearl-bordered, silver-washed, high brown, marsh and dark green.

There are also large populations of white admiral and purple hairstreak.

Bentley Wood is large mixed woodland and its importance as a butterfly site is nationally recognised, and reinforced through its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Even if your visit is not to watch butterflies, Bentley Wood is still a special place to visit with different areas of the wood with their own unique characteristics.

Wildlife

July in Bentley Wood belongs to the purple emperor. Hundreds of visitors from all over the country come to pay court and he - because it is the male that they see - does not disappoint them. This handsome creature plays to his audience and is probably the only insect to interact so fully with man. Certainly, a number of human activities appear to attract the males down from their master oaks in different parts of the wood.



A member of Friends of Bentley Wood has noted "Cars have a special attraction. On many occasions I have seen purple emperors float down into the east car park and land on the tyres or windscreen wipers of vehicles. Rubber seems to be the source of interest here and the thick yellow tongue comes out to probe the favoured substance. But I have also seen one sit on the bonnet of a car with its tongue out, clearly enjoying the taste. Enquiries of the owner as to what he cleaned his car with elicited the information that he had driven over from Essex, where he lived by the sea. So salt is also an attraction."



The area is also extremely important for moths, with over three hundred species recorded in 1983. Notable species include the rosy footman, phoenix, leopard, scallop shell, lunar spotted pinion, white satin, festoon, scarce burnished brass, olive, maple mocha, beautiful carpet and several species of hawkmoth.

Dragonflies can be spotted in the warmer months including emperor dragonflies, southern hawkers and broad-bodied chasers. The pools where large red and azure damselflies can be spotted in small numbers is also home to frogs and toad, and masses of frogspawn in spring.

Location

Bentley Wood is situated on the eastern edge of Wiltshire but its south eastern corner is just within Hampshire. There are a number of entrance ways to Bentley Wood that can be accessed, depending on where you are travelling from; the car park mentioned above, where purple emperors are often seen, is reached from the Tytherley road (SU263292), follow the track in for 1/4 mile until you reach the small car park on the right. Here there is a notice board including a notebook during peak butterfly periods.

Photo Credits: Purple emperor and silver-washed fritillary at Bentley Wood © John Notman/ WWT

For more information about the International Year of Forests, to take part in the surveys or if you would like a copy of the pack, contact us at:

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All resources are available on our website **www.wsbrc.org.uk**