













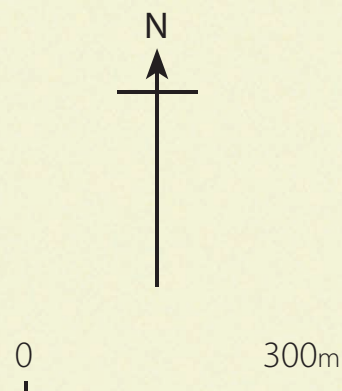


## Key

-  Long Route Red (2km+)
-  Short Route Green (Under 2km)
-  Roadside Verge Parking
-  Public Footpath
-  Deer Fencing
-  Permissive Path
-  Information Board
-  Grass
-  Woodland
-  Rock Faces
-  Stream
-  Glade
-  Steep Drop
-  Keepers Cottage



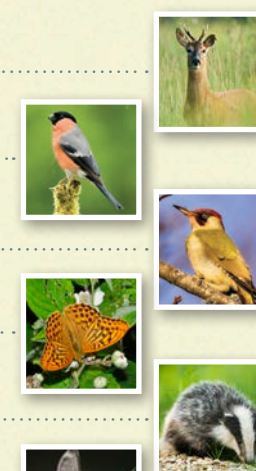
## Trees and fungi

- Pedunculate Oak** *Quercus robur*  
All year
- Hazel** *Corylus avellana*  
All year
- Norway Spruce** *Picea abies*  
All year
- Stoggle - various species**  
All year
- Silver Birch** *Betula pendula*  
All year
- Ash** *Fraxinus excelsior*  
All year
- Wych Elm** *Ulmus glabra*  
All year
- Spindle** *Euonymus europaea*  
All year (Berries September to January)
- Fly Agaric** *Amanita muscaria*  
August to November
- Scarlet Elf Cup** *Sarcoscypha coccinea*  
November to March
- King Alfred's Cakes** *Daldinia concentrica*  
All year



**Roe Deer** *Capreolus capreolus*  
All year

- Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*  
All year
- Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*  
April to May
- Silver-washed Fritillary** *Argynnis paphia*  
June to August
- Badger** *Meles meles*  
All year



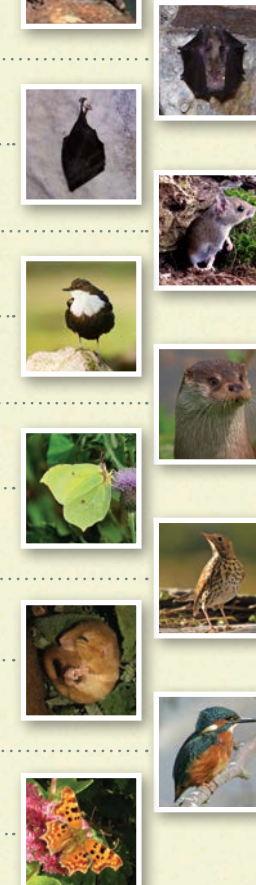
## Plants

- Bluebell** *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*  
April to June
- Wild Garlic** *Allium ursinum*  
April to June
- Wood Anemone** *Anemone nemorosa*  
March to May
- Toothwort** *Lathraea squamaria*  
March to May
- Yellow Archangel** *Lamiasstrum galeobdolon*  
May to June
- Meadow Saffron** *Colchicum autumnale*  
August to October
- Nettle-leaved bellflower** *Campanula trachelium*  
July to September
- Lesser Celandine** *Ranunculus ficaria*  
February to May
- Solomon's-seal** *Polygonatum multiflorum*  
April to August
- Enchanter's Nightshade** *Circaea lutetiana*  
June to August
- Hart's Tongue Fern** *Asplenium scolopendrium*  
All year



**Brown Long Eared Bat** *Plecotus auritus*  
All year

- Greater Horseshoe Bat** *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*  
All year
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat** *Rhinolophus hipposideros*  
All year
- Wood Mouse** *Apodemus sylvaticus*  
All year
- Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*  
All year
- Otter** *Lutra lutra*  
All year
- Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni*  
March to September
- Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*  
All year
- Dormouse** *Muscardinus avellanarius*  
All year
- Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*  
All year
- Comma** *Polygonia cal-chal*  
March to August



### Horseshoe Bats

Wild Garlic

## Clare's Rock at Home Wood



Love Somerset, Love Nature

Discover the wonder of Harridge Woods: with its meandering streams, secret cottage, diverse woodlands and a wealth of wildlife to spot.

# Woods

## Harridge

Somerset Wildlife Trust's

Somerset Wildlife Trust is the county's leading environmental charity, supported by over 18,000 members we manage over 1,700 hectares of land. As a charity we rely on the generosity of our members and the general public to help us raise over £2 million every year to support our work.

We are dedicated to restoring our battered eco-systems by creating living landscapes for wildlife and people.

**Join us**  
Become a member today by visiting [www.somersetwildlife.org/membership](http://www.somersetwildlife.org/membership) or by calling 01823 652400

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34 Wellington Road,  
Taunton  
TA1 5AW  
Tel: 01823 652400  
E-mail: [enquiries@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:enquiries@somersetwildlife.org)  
Registered charity no: 238372  
Company no: 818162

Nature trail funded by Mendip Hills Fund

Love Somerset, Love Nature

## Introduction

Harridge Woods nature reserve is managed and owned by Somerset Wildlife Trust. The 55 hectares (136 acres) is made up of 5 different woodlands: Harridge Woods East and West, Limekiln Woods, Home Wood and Edford Wood South.

The short nature trail will take you through Harridge Wood West, whilst the long trail also takes in Home Wood - a great opportunity to see the difference in species and management

Mells River

Ferns and Bluebells

between the two woodlands.

Harridge Woods has an interesting history, incorporating coal mining, forestry, house grounds and is now a nature reserve rich in wildlife. As you walk through you can catch glimpses of the past and hopefully see the future, as we return the woodland to native deciduous broadleaf woodland.

## Mendip Hills Living Landscape

Somerset Wildlife Trust is aiming to create a Living Landscape for the Mendip Hills by working to restore, recreate and reconnect wildlife habitats across this beautiful landscape. We need to do this because the habitat our wildlife depends upon has become fragmented, leaving stranded pockets of wildlife which are vulnerable to changing conditions such as intensification of land management and climate change.

If we don't link up these islands of habitat by creating corridors for movement that connect wildlife populations, we risk losing some of our most vulnerable and best-loved species. We are working to create a landscape where wildlife flourishes, alongside thriving rural communities that enjoy a healthy natural environment.

We cannot create a living landscape by working with wildlife alone. To secure the future of our natural environment we must also inspire people to understand and appreciate Somerset's wonderful landscapes. In Mendip this includes helping children and their families explore, understand and get to love our Harridge Woods Wildlife.

### Creating a Living Landscape

In Mendip we are:

- Identifying the best areas of species-rich grasslands and woodlands
- Identifying land that can be restored to species-rich meadows and woodlands
- Providing advice to landowners on land management that benefits wildlife and assisting them with grant applications for agri-environment schemes
- Providing practical help to restore wildflower grasslands
- Surveying key species such as dormice and bats
- Running reserve open days, and organising walks and talks
- Organising volunteering opportunities and working with local schools on environmental education projects
- Running fun learning activities for children and their families
- Working with local quarry companies to maximise the role of industry in landscape-scale conservation

Keepers Cottage

## Woodland Nature Trails

There are two way-marked trails to help you explore the woodland.

The short nature trail is 1.3km long – follow the green way-marked posts from Harridge Wood West main entrance.

The long nature trail is 2.0km long – follow the red way-marked posts from Harridge Wood West main entrance.

Both trails have numbered stops with points of interest.

If you are visiting as a family why not try the Hedgehog Award activities listed on the leaflet with your children?

**Hedgehog Award – Take five photos of interesting, colourful or unusual things.**

From the start post at the reserve entrance follow the path until you reach stop 1.

**1 1**

There is an interesting spring here, a petrifying spring. The precise environmental conditions arise to make the calcium carbonate dissolved in the water precipitate out to create tufa. Tufa is a form of limestone which can coat objects in the water (such as sticks) in a few weeks, making them look like they are made of stone. However tufa is very soft so please don't go into the water as it will cause damage to the stream bed. Not many species thrive in this strongly alkaline environment but the rare Mountain Bulfinch Snail and the Large Chrysalis Snail thrive in the conditions found around the tufa stream, a rare habitat of European importance.

**Hedgehog Award – Collect a cone on your walk to create a bird feeder at home. Tie a string around the top of the cone and squish in a mixture of fat and seeds and hang from a tree or bird table.**

Carry straight on to stop 2 ignoring the right turning.

**2 2**

If you look at the large oak behind you there is a black box on the tree. This is a hibernation box for bats. Harridge Woods is a very special place for bats with 11 species recorded here including the rare Greater Horseshoe, Brown Long-eared and Natterer's Bat. This box is in a good position for bats as they like to fly along the open paths called rides, and feed on insects whilst still in flight. Within these woods we have bat boxes to provide habitat where the trees do not have natural niches for roosting, such as amongst the conifers and young trees. There is also a large bat roost in Keepers Cottage which you pass on the long trail. For more information on bats see the separate section.

English or Pedunculate Oak supports more species than any other tree and this beautiful old oak with its gnarled branches, fissured bark and bits of deadwood provide habitat for many species of insect which in turn will feed numerous different species of birds and bats.

**Take the path to the right of the sign and keep going until you reach stop 3.**

**Hedgehog Award – Go on a minibeast hunt, turn over a small branch or stone and see what you can find. Remember to replace the branch or stone carefully once you have finished.**

**3 3**

Open spaces in woodlands are very important, the sunlight and warmth reaching the ground allows different species of flowers to grow here. This provides nectar, fruit and seed for many different species to feed on and a wide range of wildlife will thrive here. The edges of the woodland along the rides and glades also provide valuable habitat for other plants, insects, birds and mammals such as Bullfinch and Speckled Wood Butterflies, whilst providing good hawking habitat for damselflies and dragonflies. In spring look out for Comma Butterflies feeding on woodland plants or in summer search for the Silver-washed Fritillary Butterflies often busy feeding on bramble flowers.

**From this point you can choose to complete the short trail (green markers) or the long trail (red markers). For the long trail see point 6.**

The short trail follows the path to the right of the post. Do not turn down the steps to the left or up the hill on the muddy track but stay on the hard topped path, on a circular route. Walk until you reach stop 4. In spring this area is carpeted in Wild Garlic or Ramsons.

**Hedgehog Award – Look for different shaped leaves, how many can you find?**

**4**

Here, and as you continue to walk, you will see some unusual looking trees called staggles (photo in 'What to see' section) which are a remnant of ancient woodland management. These are not cut low down like coppice, nor are they cut high up as pollarded trees are; the reason is unknown. It is thought that a higher cut protected the re-growth from deer browsing. However whatever the reason the result is a fantastic and rare habitat, if you look closely at one, you should see lots of mosses, lichens, ferns and insects. The fenced off area you can see has a high number of staggles within it. The other trees in here are coppiced on an 18 year rotation to ensure the staggles have enough light to grow whilst fencing keeps the deer out to protect the regrowth, keeping the ancient trees alive.

**Hedgehog Award – Have a look at a staggole, what do you think might live here?**

Carry on to stop 5. Look out for Roe Deer as you go.

**5**

This part of the wood was largely cleared and planted with conifers in the 1950/60s. Somerset Wildlife Trust are returning the woodland back to native broadleaf which is far better for wildlife. We are achieving this through a long term programme of thinning the conifers and letting natural regeneration of species like Ash, Oak and Hazel take place. As you walk back to the start of the trail, take in your surroundings and compare how much light there is in the woodland on both sides relative to the broadleaf / conifer tree composition. The stand of western red cedar to your right as you go down the hill is so dark that there is little ground flora or associated insects to be found, whereas to your left there is a mixture of species with only a few European Larch and Norway Spruce trees and there is plenty of light and flora and fauna in this part of the wood.

**This is the last post for the trail, when you reach a T junction with the main hard topped ride go left to return to the entrance of the woods.**

**6**

**For the long trail (red route), turn left at stop 3 and head down the steps, over the bridge and up the other side to stop 6 by the cottage. Be sure to check for Otters playing or Dippers feeding in the stream.**

This beautiful location by the Mells River is the setting for our bat roost, Keepers Cottage. It was the estate workers' house but now it provides roosting habitat for 7 species of bat including the rare Greater Horseshoe and Lesser Horseshoe Bat and occasionally the very rare Barbastelle. See the section on bats for more information.

The leats by the cottage were the innovation of John Billingsley in the 18th century. They were used to flood the meadows next to the cottage in order to encourage early grass growth for feeding his stock. Remnants of the underground culverts can still be seen in the meadows though they are no longer fed with water through this system.

You will see some garden species here which are remnants from the cottage garden of the house. Further on the flora is at its best in springtime with the stunning sight of Lesser Celandine, and Solomon's Seal drooping over Alternate Leaved Golden Saxifrage. In the summer look out for Yellow Archangel or Enchanters Nightshade.

**Hedgehog Award – See how many different coloured flowers you can spot.**

When facing the sign turn right to head towards stop 7 walking along the path, with leat and stream to the right.

**7**

This part of Harridge Woods is called Home Wood and it was once part of an estate for the nearby Ashwick Grove where the aforementioned John Billingsley lived. You can see weirs in the stream that were constructed to create trout pools for fishing. The pond you have walked past was believed to be a watercress bed. Look out for the remnants of Laurel, Rhododendron and Box which would have been part of the landscape gardens but have now been largely removed from the woods due to their invasive and undesirable effects on biodiversity.

The Hazel Coppice to the left of the path is good habitat for the scarce Hazel Dormouse. They make a summer nest of woven Honeysuckle bark in the trees eating a variety of foods including nuts, fruit, buds, flowers and small insects in order to fatten up ready to hibernate. They hibernate through the winter at ground level.

**Hedgehog Award – Look along the edges of the path for some chewed hazel nut shells, what animal do you think ate them?**

Keep walking along the track to stop 8.

The Woods

Dormouse

Kingfisher

Fly Agaric

**8**

Deadwood is important to support a wide range of species that depend on it for food, shelter or anchorage, particularly fungi, lichens, mosses, ferns, wood utilising invertebrates and cavity nesting birds and bats. As you carry on with the walk look for deadwood on the ground and see if there is any fungi on it. Look into the wood for standing deadwood and see if there are any holes for bats or large round holes made by Woodpeckers.

Fungi play a very important part in nature, breaking down matter and releasing nutrients into the soil for living things to feed off. Autumn is a good time to look for fungi - just remember some are poisonous so don't touch them.

**Hedgehog Award – Listen carefully, what can you hear? Would you hear these sounds in a town?**

Take the right turn uphill alongside the wall to carry on with the long trail.

**9**

Roe Deer and Badgers are often seen in the woods here. They use the same routes to get around the woods and if you look carefully as you continue your walk you may see paths going off in different directions made by animals.

**Don't go over the stile, stay in the woods and take the path to the right at the top of the hill. Keep going to stop 10 but beware that there is a steep drop next to the path on this stretch of footpath.**

**Hedgehog Award – Find a muddy spot and look at the tracks to see who or what has passed this way before you.**

**10**

In spring the Wild Garlic and Bluebells create a beautiful and fragrant display with smaller patches of Wood Anemone, Wood Sorrel and occasionally the strange looking flower of Toothwort. Toothwort is a parasitic plant with no leaves and odd looking flowers that push through the dead leaves in late March and display tiers of flowers that look like dirty stained molars. It grows on the roots of trees, especially Hazel, Alder, Elm and Willow. A good place to find Toothwort is towards the end of this trail when you head down hill on the steps.

**Hedgehog Award – Using twigs and leaves build a little shelter for small animals like beetles and spiders.**

When you descend down to a T junction turn left and rejoin the short trail just past where you left it.

Go to **4** to continue on the trail.

## Bats in Harridge Woods

There are 17 breeding species of bats in the UK which include the endangered Greater and Lesser Horseshoe Bats. In recent years their range has contracted and the summer maternity roosts now number around 20 for Greater Horseshoe Bats and 230 for Lesser Horseshoe Bats. The Mendip Hills and the Mells Valley are a very important area for the Horseshoe Bats, with one of the protected Greater Horseshoe Bat roosts being very close to Harridge Woods. It has 12% of the national population of Greater Horseshoe Bats and is that significant that it is designated as a Special Area of Conservation. Improving habitat and roosts for these species in this area is very important for conservation of horseshoe species.

In 2006 funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund allowed us to purchase Keepers Cottage, the old estate workers' dwelling. It was already a bat roost, and desperately needed protection. The building was secured and works to prevent further dilapidation were carried out, including a new loft and roof works to protect the cellars with nearby larch being felled and used in the construction. Volunteers had a large input into creating the loft space and the bat roosts and still maintain and monitor it now.

Due to the early success of the project, Biffa awarded a grant enabling a second loft room to be created above the remaining cellar area. This smaller loft is favoured by Lesser Horseshoe Bats for roosting, as they don't require as much space to fly as the greater Horseshoe Bat.

Overall the cottage supports the roosting of at least seven species of bats throughout the year; Greater Horseshoe, Lesser Horseshoe, Brown Long Eared, Natterer's, Daubenton, Pipistrelle, and the very rare Barbastelle, when we have had extremely cold winters.

The cellars provide damp, stable temperatures for hibernation in winter, and the lofts, warm, dry roosting places for bats to use from spring through to autumn. It is also an important resting place for bats to use at night in between feeding sessions, where they can groom their fur and digest their insect prey before going out again to feed. During the autumn months, male Horseshoe Bats will call female partners here for mating, and again in early spring. A colony of Natterer's Bats also hibernate in the damp cave like cellar in the winter.

The most common bats using the roost during the summer are the Lesser and Greater Horseshoe, as the surrounding woodland and cattle grazed pasture provide ideal insect rich feeding habitat.

The preferred diet of the Lesser Horseshoe is small moths and craneflies, whilst the larger Greater Horseshoe Bat specialises in eating Cockchafers and Dung Beetles, which it forages for nearby.

Other species which you commonly find in the roosts are Cave Spiders and their distinctive egg sacs and hibernating Peacock Butterflies over winter, braving the bats territory.

# Wildlife Watch

Wildlife Watch is a junior branch of the Wildlife Trusts where children and their families can explore, discover, learn and be inspired by taking part in events and activities with Somerset Wildlife Trust. Visit [www.somersetwildlife.org/education](http://www.somersetwildlife.org/education) to find your nearest watch group, events and activity ideas.

The Wildlife Watch Hedgehog Award is a simple and fun way to earn an award while exploring nature in different ways. See if you can complete the eight wildlife activities whilst walking the nature trails; when you have completed them all fill out the form below and send it to Somerset Wildlife Trust and you'll get a Hedgehog Award certificate.

If you are happy for us to contact you by e-mail please add your e-mail address below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: Somerset Wildlife Trust,  
34 Wellington Road  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA1 5AW

**Your next challenge**  
If you are aged eight and above and a member of Somerset Wildlife Trust try our Kestrel award. Just tick the boxes below to find out more.

☐ I am over the age of eight and a member of Somerset Wildlife Trust. Please send me information about the Kestrel Award

☐ I am not a member. Please send me information about how to join Somerset Wildlife Trust.

When you are out exploring nature please make sure you always follow the countryside code.

**Respect, Protect & Enjoy**

## Health & Safety Information

- There are areas of natural rock face alongside and above the paths. Please keep to the footpaths and be aware of the potential for falling rocks.
- Please be aware of the potential for falling deadwood or trees and stay on the paths.
- Take care near to any unprotected drops, especially of importance on the long route.
- Please keep dogs under close control at all times and pick up after them.
- The nature trails and paths have uneven surfaces and can be slippery. Please take care especially when on slopes, steps and where there are drops at the side of the path.
- Please pay attention to all safety signs.
- Harridge Woods is a managed woodland. Tractors, flails and other machinery may be being used on site, trees are felled and vehicles are driven on the reserve.
- Visitors on foot are welcome year round but please do not ride or cycle.
- No camping, fires, organised games or other recreational activities permitted.

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