

Wildlife Walk

AT THE COTSWOLD FARM PARK

The Cotswold Farm Park Wildlife Walk is about 2 miles long and can easily be completed in an hour, or a little longer if you stop to enjoy the scenery! It takes you across a farming landscape that has been shaped by people for over 6000 years. Along the way you will see beautiful wildflowers, butterflies and birds, all thriving on a twenty-first century farm.

Arrows and information boards mark the route, and for the less energetic there is a short walk of around a mile.

As the seasons change, so does the wildlife. In spring, cowslips

and early purple orchids thrive on the old grassland, and in summer kidney vetch, harebells and field scabious flower alongside many other lovely limestone species. If you walk quietly you may see roe deer, brown hares and secretive birds like the green woodpecker, and in summer you will always hear skylarks, even if you can't see them as they sing on the wing!

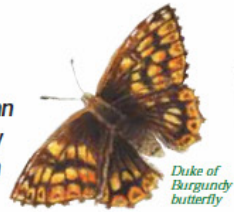
History in the landscape

The fascinating history of this Cotswolds farming landscape can be seen along the walk, with a Bronze Age burial mound, old quarry workings for Cotswold roofing slates, dry-stone walls, an old stone gatepost and a dewpond. You will see many lovely views across the rolling Cotswold Hills, but the most spectacular is the view that greets you at the halfway point, across Gorse Valley towards the village of Kineton.

For centuries, the landscape has been shaped by grazing animals, particularly sheep. In the Middle Ages, the Cotswolds were famous throughout Europe as the source of the finest quality wool. At the time, 50% of England's economy was based on wool and huge flocks of Cotswold sheep roamed the land. You can still see these native sheep grazing here at the Farm Park today.



Cotswold sheep



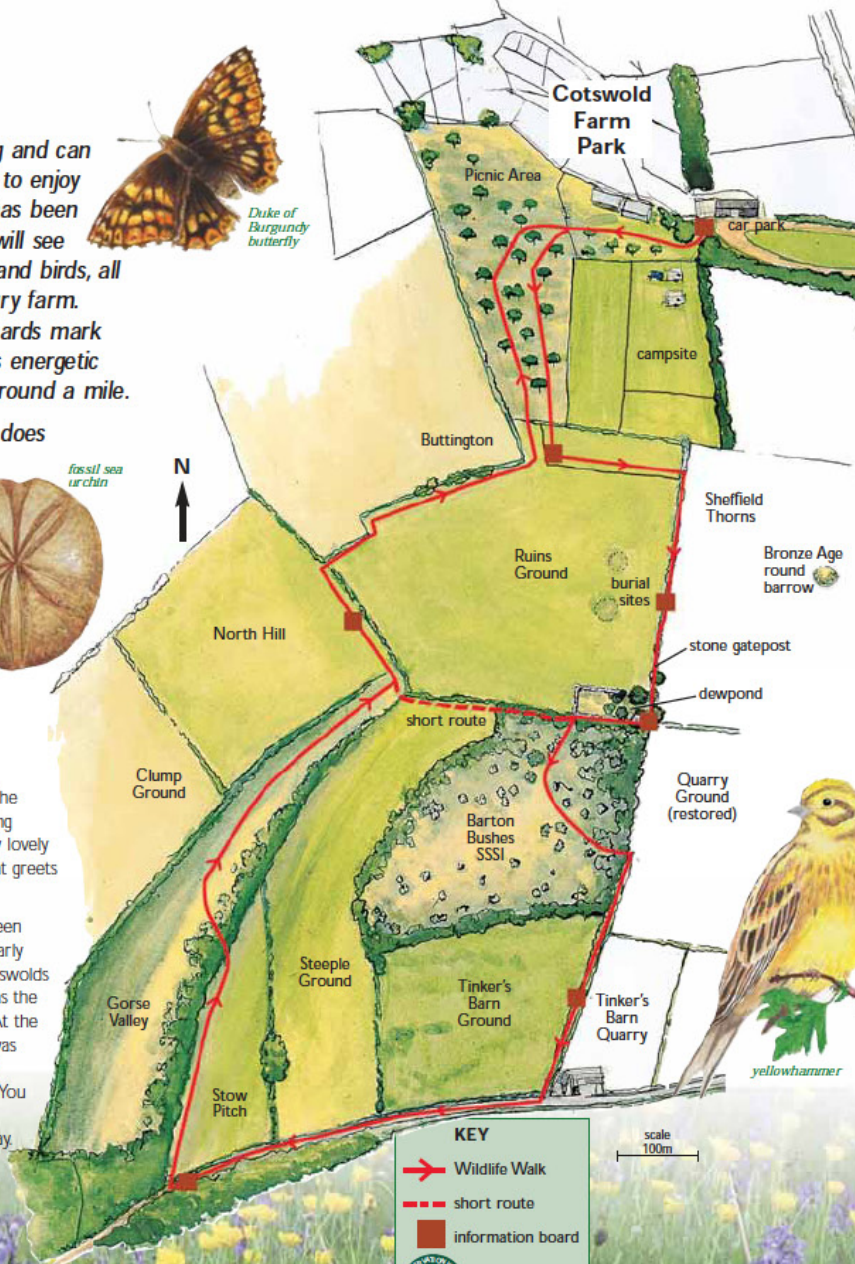
Duke of Burgundy butterfly



green woodpecker



fossil sea urchin



KEY

- Wildlife Walk
- short route
- information board
- follow the arrows



bee orchids

Quarrying for Cotswold stone

Honey-coloured Cotswold limestone has been used to build local houses, barns and field walls for hundreds of years. It has also travelled further afield, to build grand churches and mansions, including Blenheim Palace and St Paul's Cathedral. In some quarries, fossils such as sea urchins and shellfish are found buried in the limestone.

Up until the 1930s, quarries were small and the stone was worked by hand. Mechanisation arrived with steam-driven beam engines, used to pump water away from the quarry face. Nowadays a number of large-scale, highly mechanised quarries meet the demand for building and walling stone, and crushed rock.



Cotswold pennygrass

Wildflowers, butterflies and birds

The Wildlife Walk takes you through areas of beautiful limestone grassland with more than 100 species of wildflowers and grasses, as well as many species of butterflies and birds. Typical limestone flowers with old-fashioned names like lady's bedstraw, viper's bugloss and common restharrow thrive alongside more unusual species, such as green-winged orchids, bee orchids and the tiny rare Cotswold pennygrass.

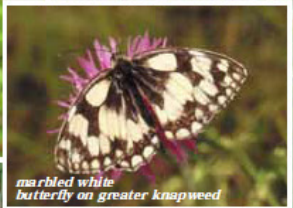
Brimstones and orange-tips are among the first butterflies to appear in spring, followed by other colourful species, including marbled white, small copper and the locally uncommon Duke of Burgundy. Yellowhammers, corn buntings, linnets, lapwings and skylarks are just a few of the birds that forage and nest on the farm.



yellowhammer



common blue butterfly



marbled white butterfly on greater knapweed



early purple orchids



viper's bugloss

green-winged orchids and bulbous buttercups