

Why is the Local Nature Reserve so important?

Throughout the 20th century wetlands have greatly declined within the district, as well as on a national scale. A drier county, changes in land use and urban development have all contributed to this. As such The Withey Beds Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is one of the few remaining wetlands in Hertfordshire.

The LNR also offers a variety of habitats and supports some fascinating plants and animals, particularly birds and insects which are characteristic of swamp and fen. For example, four invertebrates which are of a high national importance have all been found at The Withey Beds LNR. These are the oak jewel beetle, a soldier fly, a solitary bee and Roesel's bush cricket.

The diversity of habitats include wet woodland, mature standard trees, swamp, marsh, drier grassland, standing and fallen dead wood, open ditches and the River Colne. It is this diversity which provides an ideal habitat for many species.

The River Colne and its floodplain provide resources which have attracted people for thousands of years. Situated within a designated Area of Archaeological Significance The Withey Beds LNR is adjacent to a string of major sites of prehistoric, Roman and Medieval date; including the nationally important 'Manor of the Moor'.

Why is The Withey Beds called The Withey Beds?

'Withey bed' is an old English term used to describe the growing of different species of willow for coppicing. They once formed an important part of the local village economy, supplying poles for basketwork, thatching, firewood and many other uses. The withey beds in Rickmansworth were traditionally coppiced to provide such products and this form of management resulted in the varied habitats becoming established.

Today, The Withey Beds LNR is still managed using traditional techniques. The rotational coppicing of willow helps preserve the character of the site and grazing with cattle, or cutting and removing the vegetation within the field, will help halt

encroaching scrub as well as preserve the character of this special site and allow wildlife to continue to flourish.

The wet grasslands at The Withey Beds LNR have long been part of a traditional livestock farming system, with grazing by cattle creating and maintaining a habitat rich in plants and invertebrates. Wet grasslands have the potential to provide habitat for wading birds such as Snipe and Sandpipers while winter floods can attract large numbers of wildfowl.



Rivers and the corridors of land through which they flow are a major wildlife resource of crucial importance. The Withey Beds LNR is an important component in a network of nearby wildlife sites like Croxley Common Moor, Hampton Hall Meadows and Hampermill Lake; all connected by the River Colne.

The River Colne's water originates from a natural reservoir called an aquifer in the underlying chalk. When you turn on your tap at home the water comes from the same source. Please try to conserve water, keep the River Colne flowing and help the wildlife that depends upon it.

The Withey Beds LNR is owned and managed by Three Rivers District Council. They are assisted by the Countryside Management Service and a group of local volunteers. If you would like to join the Friends and help promote The Withey Beds LNR, please contact the Friends of The Withey Beds via www.thewitheybeds.org.uk