

Friends of Norton Common

Established in 2006, the Friends of Norton Common help to look after the common by working in partnership with North Herts Council and the Countryside Management Service.

We are mainly local people who discuss, plan and carry out improvements at the common. We have an active committee and hold an annual open forum to which the public are welcome. We organise weekly work parties. Activities have included: path improvements, installing benches, cleaning out the brook and managing areas of grassland to conserve wildflowers.

Anyone interested in joining the group should contact the Countryside Management Service for details.

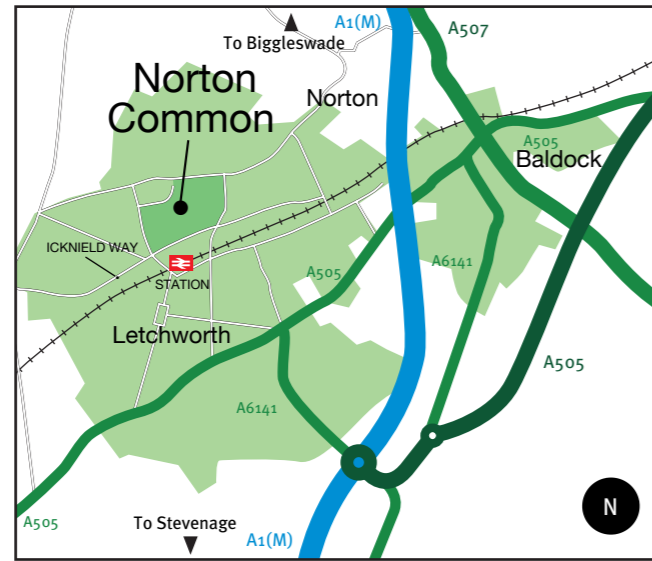
For further details visit <http://www.facebook.com/friendsofnortoncommon> www.facebook.com/friendsofnortoncommon

Facilities at Norton Common:

In addition to the Local Nature Reserve there are many other facilities:

Facilities	Opening times / cost
Car parks	Two car parks open every day, one by the outdoor pool and one adjacent to the bowling greens. First 2 hours free.
Play areas - for young and older children	Free
Skateboard park	Free
Outdoor swimming pool with cafeteria	Open May – September. Please check the council's website for further information.
Picnic Area	Free
2 Bowling Greens and Bowls pavilion	Open to members April to Sept. Spectators welcome
Floodlit Multi Use Games Area	To check availability and book courts (essential for floodlights) email green.space@north-herts.gov.uk or call 01462 474273
Tennis courts - senior and junior	No booking required
Norton Common Nature Trail	Free, 45 minutes

How to get there



By Road: Norton Common is located on Icknield Way, Letchworth. Parking is available next to the swimming pool and the bowls pavilion.

By Public Transport: The site is a short walk from Letchworth railway station. For travel details contact IntalinkTraveline on 0871 200 2233 or www.intalink.org.uk

Norton Common Local Nature Reserve is owned and managed by North Herts Council. The Council seeks to balance the need for sustainable development with the protection of the environment. Contact us at:

www.north-herts.gov.uk
Tel: 01462 474000

The Countryside Management Service (CMS) works with communities in Hertfordshire to help them care for and enjoy the environment.

For more information contact us at:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cms Tel: 01992 588433



Norton Common

Discover the countryside in the heart of Letchworth



Welcome to Norton Common Local Nature Reserve

Norton Common is a haven for wildlife in the heart of Letchworth. Here you can explore woodland alive with birds, roam through grassland full of wildflowers, find mineral-rich springs feeding the Pix Brook and see races of ancient farming.

Many paths cross the Common, some of them surfaced. The map will help you find your way around. We hope you enjoy your visit.

What can you see?

Look out for muntjac, a small deer introduced to this country from China. You can sometimes hear their loud bark. They are usually seen in ones or twos, never in herds. You can tell the males from their short antlers.

Amongst the many grey squirrels you will notice some that are black. They are not a different species – they just have high levels of the black pigment 'melanin' in their fur. Although rare across Britain, black squirrels are increasingly common in this area and, like their grey relations, do considerable damage to the trees.



The springs feeding the Pix Brook are formed as water seeps over an impermeable layer of boulder clay. Look for the orangey-brown staining in the water, caused by natural iron and calcium salts dissolved as it filters through the ground.

The springs have created an area of marshy grassland, a rare and valuable habitat for plants and animals. In summer, look for the pink spikes of southern marsh orchid, the blue of meadow cranes bill and darting dragonflies. Smell the wild mint along the path.

Cowslips adorn the old meadow north of the swimming pool in spring. Later on, look for the yellow tufts of sweet-scented lady's bedstraw the dainty blue harebell and wild carrot whose leaves really do smell of carrot.



Many insects and butterflies, including orange tip and skippers, thrive amongst the wild flowers.



The grassland is mown annually, preventing the spread of bushes and helping promote the wide range of species. One day soon we hope to see cattle return to do this job the traditional way.

The majority of the woodland has grown up in the last 100 years. Thorn and elder bushes are slowly giving way to trees – ash, oak and the invasive sycamore have seeded themselves whilst several other species have been planted.

The woods provide many places for birds to roost, feed and nest. Residents include tawny owl, woodpeckers, bullfinch and song thrush.



In spring and summer the woods come alive with bird song as our summer visitors reach us after their long migration. Listen for the chiff chaff and the alarm call of the blackcap which sounds like two marbles knocking together.

Coppicing along the woodland edges creates low bushes favoured by many birds and insects.

