

## Welcome to Purwell Meadows

Purwell Meadows is part of a chain of important wildlife areas along the Purwell Valley linked by the River Purwell. The meadows provide a “stepping stone” for the movement of wildlife along the valley like water voles and otters.

The importance of the meadows for wildlife prompted the acquisition of site in 1983 by North Herts Council with financial support from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to protect it from potential development. The site is designated a Local Wildlife Site and was declared a Local Nature Reserve in 1994.

The mosaic of dry grassland, marshy grassland, hedgerows and scrub along the river at Purwell Meadows are home to a wide variety of plants, birds, animals and insects, making it a perfect place to explore using the network of unsurfaced, grassy paths which cross the site. The map will help you find your way around. Visit the riverside panel (shown on the map) which provides more detail on the riverside wildlife you can discover at Purwell Meadows. We hope you enjoy your visit.

Springs rise out of the chalk bedrock at St. Ippolyts, flowing down Ippollitts Brook, joined by other springs to form the River Purwell. Chalk Rivers are a rare habitat globally, making the River Purwell of worldwide importance. The clear, mineral rich water of the river keeps the low lying land of Purwell Meadows damp, creating marshy wet grassland and wet hollows which support a rich and distinctive variety of wildlife. Perfect for feeding snipe, grey heron and little egret in the winter.

Wet spring fed hollows support large colonies of common frog which grass snakes prey on. Harmless to humans, they are easily identified by a yellow band at the back of the head.



Snipe



Common Bistort



Marsh Marigold

Marshy grassland provides blocks of colour throughout the year with the yellow of marsh marigold early in the spring followed by white flowers of meadow saxifrage on the drier hummocks and the pink of common bistort in abundance by the river.

On the drier grassland in mid summer look out for the pink-purple flowers of spiny restharrow and the purple flowers of black knapweed, a favourite nectar source for the butterflies and day flying moths like the small copper or the striking black and red spotted burnet moth.



Find out more about Purwell Meadows.