

# Welcome to Paxton Pits Nature Reserve

75 hectares of lakes, meadow, grassland, scrub and woodland next to the River Great Ouse where you can enjoy a wealth of wildlife all year round.

Whether you are painting the scenery with watercolours, birdwatching or walking the dog, we hope you enjoy your visit.

## THE HERON TRAIL

**3.2km (2 miles) - 1 1/2 hours walk**

A circular walk past lakes, through woodland and along the riverbank with plenty of water birds to see along the way. Two bird hides are convenient stopping off places where you can see the Cormorants and Herons roosting on the islands.

**1** To start the Heron Trail, cross the footbridge at the edge of the car park and walk straight ahead. Carefully cross the road at the bend and go through the kissing gate to follow the waymarks.

**2** Heronry Lake to your left is the oldest gravel pit in the reserve and attracts lots of wildfowl. As you follow the Heron Trail you will see a track to the right. This path, signposted with black waymarks, joins the River Trail which runs alongside the River Great Ouse. Follow the blue waymarks for the River Trail. To continue on the Heron Trail, do not take the permissive path but keep walking straight ahead.

**3** This desert-like area was once a sand and gravel store. Hayden Hide is further along the trail on the left and is well worth a visit to see the wildfowl and Cormorants.

**4** The Willow covered islands are a favourite roosting place for Herons and Cormorants. Can you see any Cormorants sitting with their wings held out? They are drying their feathers out after a dive under water.

**5** This area of rough grassland interspersed with Hawthorn and Dog Rose bushes provides ideal feeding and nesting areas for Nightingales. Between the end of April and the beginning of June the male Nightingales sing to attract a mate. People travel great distances to come and hear them. From here continue straight to the Kingfisher Hide.

### KEY

- Heron Trail
- Meadow Trail
- River Trail
- Permissive Path
- Surfaced paths
- Unsurfaced paths
- Lakes/Water
- Meadow
- Woodland
- Scrub

Dog Rose

## THE MEADOW TRAIL

**2.4km (1 1/2 miles) - 1 hour walk**

A circular walk through meadows and around lakes and woodland. It is especially good for wild flowers in spring and summer, and in early summer the hedgerows and meadows are full of Wild Roses and Hawthorn blossom.

**1** To start the Meadow Trail follow the path through the kissing gate behind the Visitors' Centre. It will take you on to the meadows where you can then follow the waymarks.

**2** Beds of reeds up to 2 metres high, are especially important for birds. Reed Warblers weave intricate nests out of grasses between the reeds. Follow the path as it bends round to the right around the edge of the meadow.

**3** The meadow on your right is managed as a hay meadow. Grazing by cows and cutting for hay encourages a variety of wild flowers. Moorhens often venture away from the waterside to feed in this field, along with Magpies and Crows, but at the first sign of danger they quickly find cover.

**6** This marks the site of a Victorian house called 'Wray House'. All that remains now are some garden trees and shrubs such as Lavender, Periwinkle, Douglas Fir and Norway Spruce. Butterflies and moths like this sheltered glade and Goldcrests are often seen in the Conifer trees.

**7** Take a slight detour along a narrow path to visit the Kingfisher bird hide where you can see both Heronry North and Heronry South Lakes.

**8** Follow the path past the arable fields which are managed with wildlife in mind. Continue to the point where the Heron Trail meets the Ouse Valley Way long distance footpath.

**9** You can join the River Trail here by turning right towards the river to follow the blue waymarks. Use the map to plan your route. To continue on the Heron Trail turn left across the brook where you may find Bittersweet, a plant with purple and yellow flowers and poisonous red berries, which likes damp areas. Rosebay Willowherb and Yellow Iris also like this wet area.

**10** The Heron Trail follows the River Great Ouse through meadowland along an ancient hedgerow. During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, a ferry carried people between Great Paxton on the other side of the river and Little Paxton.

**11** The trail now goes through a thicket of Bramble, Hawthorn and Willow. The old Willow trees covered in ivy are a haven for wildlife, supporting more than 250 different types of insects.

**12** As the path turns to the left, you will have a good view of Washout Pit on your right. Look out for Common Terns along the sandy margins of this lake during the summer.

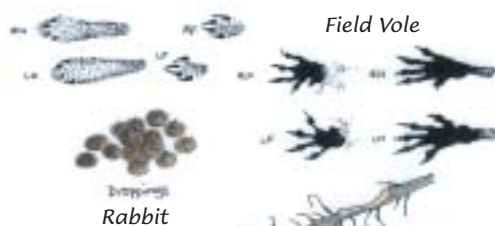
**13** Continue straight ahead past the gravel workings, taking care of moving lorries. On a weekday you can watch the grading of gravel and sand. Upon reaching a field, turn left along a grassy track beside the road.

**14** Geese often graze in the arable fields to your right. You may also see Lapwings and Golden Plover too.

**15** After crossing the brook there is a permissive path to the right. To deviate from the Heron Trail at this point to walk around the Sailing Lake follow the black waymarks along this path. To follow the Heron Trail, continue straight ahead on the main road past a woodland on your right. Replanting in the wood is improving its value for wildlife.

**16** The grass track to your right, signposted with black waymarks also takes you to the Sailing Lake, often a good lake for bird watching. Look out for butterflies along the track such as the bright yellow Brimstone, the Small Tortoiseshell and the Meadow Brown. To continue on the Heron Trail follow the road.

**17** To enjoy a good view of Heronry South Lake take a short walk away from the road along a narrow track to the left. You may see Great Crested Grebes at this end of the lake. They can move great distances under water, which can make watching them interesting - after a long dive they come up far from where you expect. To return to the start of the walk follow the road to the end and turn right towards Paxton Pits Visitors' Centre and car park.



Field Vole

Rabbit

**9** Walk further down the trail, with the open water of the lake to your right and the ditch to your left. Can you guess which mammals might live in the holes along this ditch?

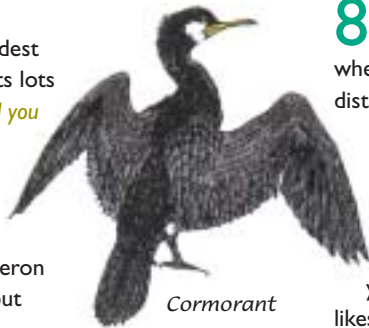
**10** At this point, the Meadow Trail meets the Ouse Valley Way. Turn left for a long circular walk back to Paxton Pits Visitors' Centre. Use the map to plan your route. Turn right to keep on the Meadow Trail.

**11** You have really good views of Hayling Lake along this section of the trail. In the lake there are Roach, Tench and some large Carp, so it is popular with anglers.

**12** The reed bed you can see is a popular nesting place for the Great Crested Grebe and Mute Swans. Look out for their large floating nests in Spring. The Meadow Trail turns right away from the Ouse Valley Way after a kissing gate.

**13** In these gravel pits archaeologists discovered evidence that people lived in this area 40,000 years ago. In Hayling Lake, flint tools from 10,000 years ago have been found and in other areas of the reserve coins, pottery and brooches as well as remains of buildings and burials were dug up.

**14** To follow the Meadow Trail, turn right through the kissing gate to pass the allotments on your left. You can return to the Visitors' Centre by following the track as it bears right along an old hedgerow. At post number 8, go across the ditch to retrace your steps through the Meadow.



Cormorant



Nightingale



Goldcrest



**Visitors' Centre and Parking**

ONLY at peak times

Public Telephone

Public Telephone

Public Telephone

Public Telephone

The Ouse Valley Way

LITTLE PAXTON

High Street

Gordon Road

To Village

Sailing Lake

Weedy Lake

Rudd Lake

Hayling Lake

Cloudy Lake

Heronry North Lake

Heronry South Lake

Kingfisher Hide

Hayden Hide

Sand

Arable Field

Farmland

The Beach

Works

Lafarge/Redland

Works

Aggregate Industries

Boat Moorings

Great Meadow

River Great Ouse

Pond dipping platforms

Pond dipping platforms

Pond dipping platforms

Pond dipping platforms

Pond dipping platforms

Pond dipping platforms

Reed Warbler



Small Tortoiseshell

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## FACILITIES

The Nature Reserve is open to visitors at all times. The Visitors' Centre is open most weekends, and at other busy times, staffed by the Voluntary Wardens and Rangers. It has toilet facilities that are suitable for people who are disabled. In the Visitors' Centre there are displays and leaflets about the reserve and surrounding countryside and light refreshments are available.

## SAFETY

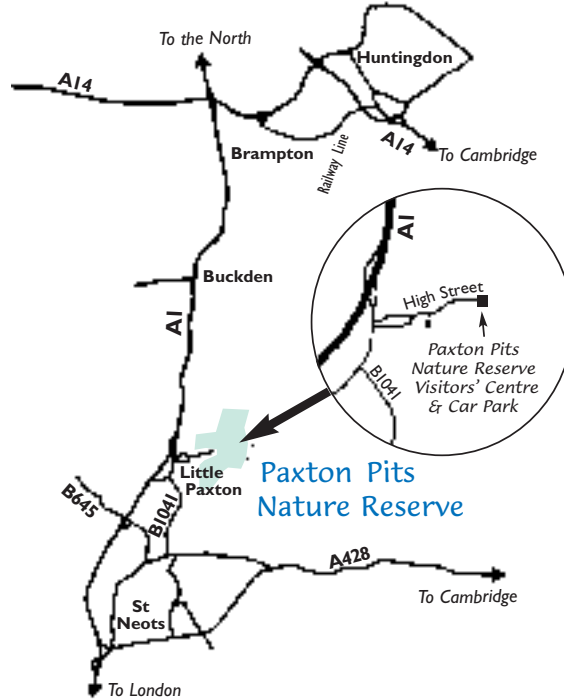
- ❖ The paths run very close to deep water in places. Please keep a close eye on children. No swimming or skating is allowed, there is a danger of drowning.
- ❖ In the event of an accident or emergency, first aid facilities and a telephone are located in the Visitors' Centre. If this is closed, the nearest telephone is next to St James church on the High Street, Little Paxton.
- ❖ Dogs are welcome but please keep them under close control. Cows graze on the meadows.

## EDUCATION

Organised group and school visits are very welcome throughout the year. Environmental activities can be planned to suit all ages and abilities. The Rangers have many ideas and resources and can help to lead topics such as minibeasts and pond dipping or biological identification.

Slide shows, walks and talks can be arranged at Paxton Pits Nature Reserve. Please contact the Rangers for booking details and further information.

Paxton Pits Nature Reserve can be found in the village of Little Paxton which lies 3km north of St Neots. Follow the signs through the village to reach the car park and Visitors' Centre. A regular bus service runs between Huntingdon and St Neots, stopping at Little Paxton. The nearest railway station is in St Neots, about 2 miles from the Nature Reserve.



**Paxton Pits Nature Reserve**  
High Street, Little Paxton, Huntingdon, Cambs PE19 6ET  
Phone: 01480 406795  
email: [paxtonpits@uklinux.net](mailto:paxtonpits@uklinux.net)  
Paxton Pits Nature Reserve is managed by:  
Countryside Services, Huntingdonshire District Council, Pathfinder House,  
St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN.  
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# Paxton Pits Nature Reserve



Countryside Services  
**Huntingdonshire**

At Paxton Pits Nature Reserve you can enjoy gentle strolls as well as longer walks through 75 hectares of lakes, meadow, grassland, scrub and woodland.

## FOLLOW WELL MARKED TRAILS...

Two circular trails are described in this leaflet. To help you follow the routes there are coloured waymarks and numbered posts which start from the Nature Reserve car park. Please respect the Nature Reserve by staying on the paths and keeping your dog under control.

### THE HERON TRAIL

3.2km (2 miles) - 1 1/2 hours

The first mile is a hard surfaced track suitable for wheelchairs, pushchairs and all season walking. Most manual wheelchairs and pushchairs can use the kissing gate, while larger wheelchairs can gain access using a RADAR key.

### THE MEADOW TRAIL

2.4km (1 1/2 miles) - 1 hour

Some of the paths become quite muddy in winter and during wet weather. The steps and squeeze gate at point 8 are due to be replaced in 2006/7 with a ramp suitable for wheelchairs.

## PLAN YOUR OWN ROUTE...

Using the map inside you can plan your own walk. As well as the Heron and Meadow Trails, the River Trail, and some of the permissive paths surrounding Paxton Pits are also waymarked. The permissive paths are not part of the reserve but the landowners have given permission for them to be used.

## THE RIVER TRAIL

This trail follows the route of the Ouse Valley Way

## PERMISSIVE PATHS

## LOOK OUT FOR THE WILDLIFE...



## VOLUNTARY WARDENS REQUIRED

If you like meeting people and enjoy Paxton Pits why not become a Voluntary Warden.

You can play a big part in making the reserve more enjoyable for other visitors by manning the Visitors' Centre or helping the Rangers on the reserve.

Interested? Then contact the Rangers at the Visitors' Centre on phone: 01480 406795.

You can find out more about the wildlife at Paxton Pits Nature Reserve, forthcoming events and lots more from the **website** at:  
[www.paxton-pits.org.uk](http://www.paxton-pits.org.uk)  
Sponsored by the  
Friends of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve

## JOIN THE FRIENDS OF PAXTON PITS NATURE RESERVE



Enjoyed your visit? Then why not help to make Paxton Pits a better place for wildlife and people.

The Friends raise funds, promote the reserve and help with valuable conservation work.

Become a member of the Friends and support your Local Nature Reserve. Ask in the Visitors' Centre for more information.