

Sloping gently down to the River Evenlode, Foxholes is a peaceful woodland haven and a bluebell wood par excellence, once part of the ancient Wychwood Forest

GETTING THERE

OS SHEET 163; SP 252 205
LOCATION 5 1/2 miles south-west of Chipping Norton. From A424 take road to Bruern Abbey, 1/4 mile past turn to Milton under Wychwood, take rough track to left following edge of wood for 1/2 mile.
 P Surfaced car park.
 Kingham + 2 miles (via Foscot).

Photographs by: Jim Asher, Peter Creed, David Kiaer, Andy Rouse/NHPA, Alan Williams/NHPA

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust

- carefully manages over 90 nature reserves, for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of people
 - offers advice to individuals and local groups – from schools to businesses – to create a better future for wildlife
- supports hundreds of people who volunteer, helping with everything from conservation work to administration
- helps everyone to discover their local wildlife, providing expert information, activities, and guided walks and talks

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Foxholes

Nature Reserve



Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future



Primrose

Spring colour

In spring Foxholes is awash with fresh, vibrant colour. The pink of campions, sunny yellow of primroses and purple of violets, bugle and early-purple orchid create a colourful tapestry wherever sunlight reaches the ground. There is a spectacular display of bluebells in May, the sea of rich blue complementing the bright, fresh greens of spring leaves.

The first brood of speckled wood butterflies emerge from their chrysalises in March and April. They thrive in the dampness and shade of the woodland, but the males choose favourite sunspots in the glades where shafts of sunlight beam through holes in the canopy. Here they have a base for courting passing females and for fighting trespassing rivals in upwards spiralling combat. The first of the adult holly blue butterflies also emerge in April. This brood will lay their eggs on holly whereas the later, summer brood prefer to lay on ivy.

In spring the male woodcock guards its territory with a 'roding' flight, circling the area with its bill pointing downwards and calling with a thin and croaky voice.

Sights and sounds of summer

In June, as spring turns to summer, the display of tall, majestic foxgloves is stunning. Climbing corydalis straggles towards the light and the strange, yellowish green flowers of herb-Paris are replaced by black, poisonous berries. There are five species of orchid, including the heath spotted-orchid, whose pale flowers – flouncy pink with purple dots – are shaped rather like winged angels or fairies in wide, frilly dresses.

In the pasture, meadow brown butterflies, which prefer long grass, and ringlets, which favour woodland rides, glades and hedgerows, will fly even on overcast days. On sunny days look out for the distinctive, raggedy shaped comma butterfly, large, small and green-veined whites and the white admiral. When the sunshine is warm, grass snakes, adders and lizards find secluded spots where they can bask and absorb the heat.

You may notice the nuthatch (see front cover), a small slate blue and reddish-buff bird, creeping up and down the tree trunks, or the treecreeper moving up a trunk before flying to another and starting again.

Tawny owls' haunting voices hoot from somewhere amongst the trees. Barn owls screech on the woodland edges and little owls might be seen on the ground in the river meadow during the daytime.

Tawny owl



Oyster mushroom

Autumn and winter tableaux

Foxholes is a wonderful place to visit in autumn, for in addition to a show of multicoloured autumn leaves, there are well over 200 different species of fungi. Under the silver birch from late summer to autumn is fly agaric, the classic toadstool of fairy tales, bright red with small, white patches. Under beech look out for the small, pinkish-red beechwood sickener and its more dowdy relative the geranium-scented rusulla (yes, it really does smell of geranium leaves!). On the beeches look for the beautiful oyster mushroom, a bracket fungus. It is bluish grey when young, fading to brown later. Around tree stumps are large groups of sulphur tuft, with bright sulphur-yellow caps tinged with brown. This fungus is not choosy about its host tree. Not to be forgotten are the rich and luscious mosses and liverworts of Foxholes, several of which are uncommon elsewhere.

In winter you may see muntjac, roe and fallow deer. Look around for tracks and signs of deer, badger, fox and rabbit as well as bird prints criss-crossing the soft ground. On clear mornings the frost on the trees gives a sparkling, magical feel to this tranquil wildlife paradise.



Red is for danger

The blushing red of the beechwood sickener warns that it has a hot taste and that it would be unwise to attempt to eat it.

Blue streak

What can compare to the thrill of seeing that flash of turquoise blue along a stream as a kingfisher speeds by? Other feathered hunters seen at Foxholes include sparrowhawks, buzzards and owls.



Kingfisher

Admiral of the skies

The white admiral lays its eggs on honeysuckle but spends much of its adult life soaring high among the treetops, where it dines on honeydew from aphids.



White admiral

KEY

- Bridleway
- Public footpath
- Permissive path
- Wildlife Walk
- Main entrance
- Information

Imagery courtesy of UK Perspectives
www.ukperspectives.com

GETTING AROUND

SIZE 66.5 ha (165 acres)
Gentle sloping; mainly grassy, soft when wet, some roots; gaps (0.5 m wide), kissing gate.
Wildlife Walk 1¼ miles.

Caution: livestock grazing
Keep dogs on short leads

0 100 200
metres



Sweet but not scented

As you walk along the peaceful woodland rides you will find them edged with purple bugle and dog-violets, beautiful but unscented.



Common dog-violet

A creeper that flies

Look hard at the tree trunks at Foxholes and you may notice a small, brown bird, the treecreeper, scurrying upwards in search of insects and their larvae. Having reached the top, it flies down to the bottom of the next tree, sometimes amongst flocks of tits. Nuthatches, easier to spot with their attractive slate blue and reddish-buff plumage, are at home creeping both up and down trees.



Treecreeper

Best time to visit

SPRING ✓

PLANTS Primrose, red campion, sanicle, violets, bugle, bluebell, herb-Paris, early-purple orchid
BIRDS Woodcock, warblers, woodpeckers, tawny owl, nuthatch, treecreeper
INSECTS Holly blue and speckled wood butterflies
MAMMALS Badger

SUMMER ✓

PLANTS Great burnet, climbing corydalis, foxglove, devil's-bit scabious, heath spotted-orchid
BIRDS Sparrowhawk, kingfisher, little owl
INSECTS White admiral, comma, speckled wood and ringlet butterflies
REPTILES Grass snake, adder, common lizard

AUTUMN ✓

FUNGI Woodland fungi including fly agaric, tawny grisette, false death cap, oyster mushroom, boletes, russulas and milkcaps

WINTER ✓

MAMMALS Fox, muntjac, fallow and roe deer