

## Welcome to Edford Meadows Nature Reserve

### What to look out for:

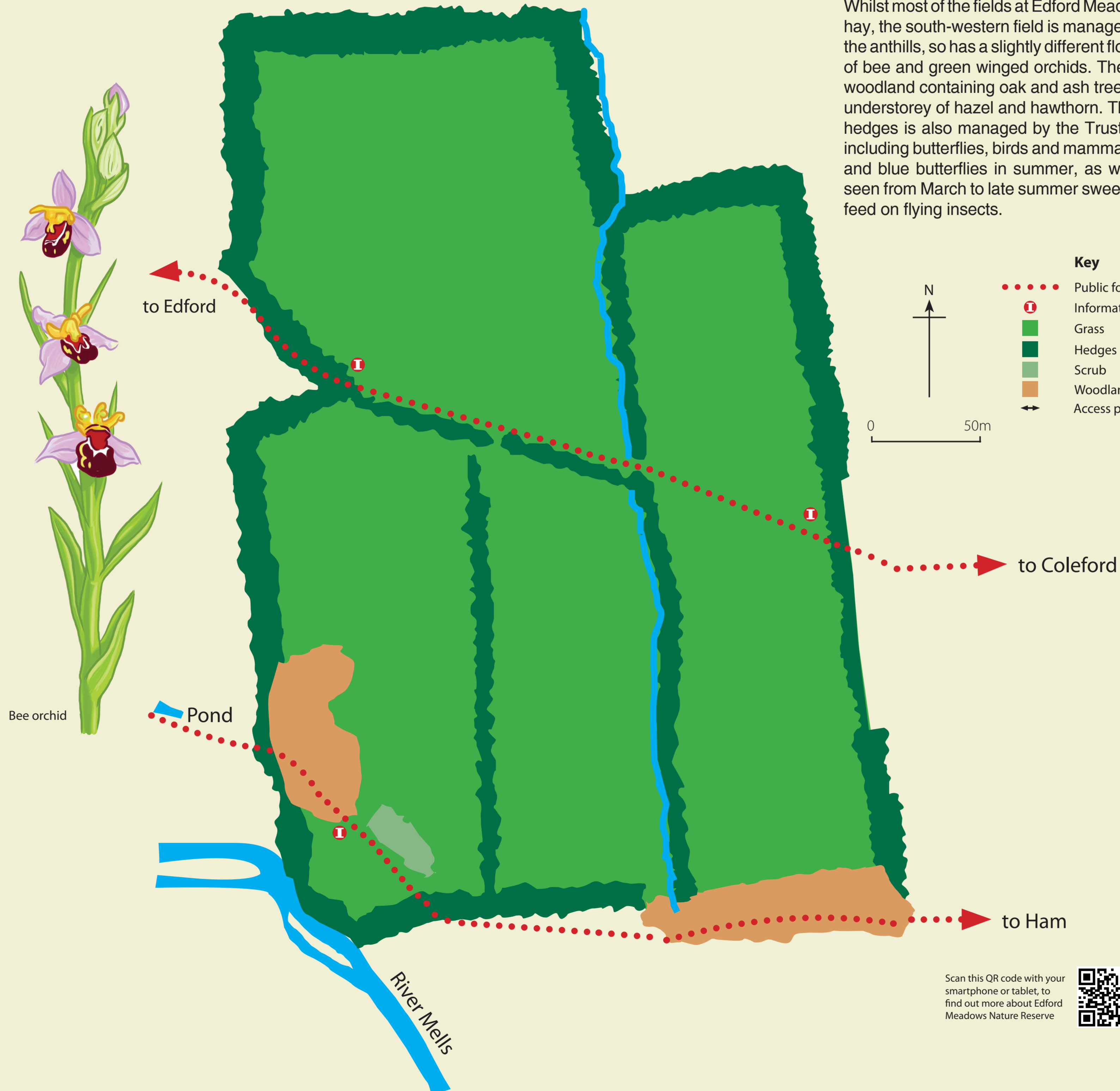
- In spring and summer be sure to get down close to the meadow flowers and grasses to see how many you can spot – there are over 90 flowering plants on the reserve
- The anthills in the south-western field are home to yellow meadow ants, which build the soil dome over their nest to help regulate temperature and humidity
- In one of the fields small-scale coal extractions were carried out in the last 1800s, probably producing the hummocks seen today; there's also the remains of part of Somerset Coal Canal to the south of the reserve
- The meadows are renowned for the diversity of orchids that they support; common spotted, green winged, heath spotted, bee and southern marsh orchid can all be found here

Edford Meadows Nature Reserve is owned and managed by Somerset Wildlife Trust. In late spring and summer the fields become a colourful display of beautiful flowers including common knapweed, pignut, corky-fruited water dropwort, yellow rattle, betony, oxeye daisy, cowslip, common milkwort and saw-wort, alongside 18 species of grass.



This extraordinary diversity is recognised by the reserve being designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is due to the way the fields have been managed for many years, with an annual hay cut in July on most fields followed by grazing. This allows the flowers and grasses to grow tall over the summer, and set seed before they are cut, with the vegetation kept low to assist germination in autumn and spring. Without this programme of grazing and hay cutting, the meadows would be taken over by scrub and eventually develop into woodland.

The fantastic variety of flowers and grasses is also due to the low nutrient soil conditions that result from chemical fertilisers not being used on the reserve. This allows lots of different, slower-growing flowers and grasses to grow together. By contrast, sites that have received chemical fertilisers are generally species-poor, as the high-nutrient levels favour a few species that can establish and grow quickly at the expense of other plants.



### Variety of wildlife

Whilst most of the fields at Edford Meadows Nature Reserve are cut for hay, the south-western field is managed only with grazing to conserve the anthills, so has a slightly different flora, with impressive populations of bee and green winged orchids. The reserve also includes a small woodland containing oak and ash trees, some 100 years old, with an understorey of hazel and hawthorn. This woodland, together with the hedges is also managed by the Trust to provide habitats for wildlife including butterflies, birds and mammals. Watch out for marbled white and blue butterflies in summer, as well as swallows, which can be seen from March to late summer sweeping over the meadows as they feed on flying insects.



### Key

- Public footpath
- ⓘ Information board
- Grass
- Hedges
- Scrub
- Woodland
- ↔ Access points

### A Living Landscape

Somerset Wildlife Trust purchased the site in 1997 using a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. Somerset Wildlife Trust rely on your support to manage such outstanding places for wildlife and people. In the Mendip Hills we are aiming to create a Living Landscape by working with farmers to connect up vital nature reserves with other areas of wildlife habitat, helping the landscape to function for wildlife, agriculture and people. To find out ways to support our work, including becoming a member and volunteering, please go to [somersetwildlife.org](http://somersetwildlife.org). Contact Somerset Wildlife Trust at [enquiries@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:enquiries@somersetwildlife.org)

### ⚠ Access and safety

- Visitors are welcome on foot but please use the two public footpaths that cross the reserve to protect the hay crop
- Some areas are prone to flooding and the reserve can be slippery underfoot
- Beware of falling branches and deadwood
- Please pay attention to all safety signs
- Animals may be grazing so please keep dogs under close control
- No camping, fires, organised games or recreational activities permitted

### Save Our Magnificent Meadows

This interpretation panel has been produced as part of Save Our Magnificent Meadows, a UK-wide partnership project to transform the fortunes of our vanishing wildflower meadows, grasslands and wildlife, primarily funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. [magnificentmeadows.org.uk](http://magnificentmeadows.org.uk)

Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet, to find out more about Edford Meadows Nature Reserve

