FLOWER-RICH GRASSLAND

On the slope ahead of you and in the next field is an important remnant of the flower-rich grassland once typical of the neutral soils in much of lowland Britain. It is characterised by knapweed, lady's bedstraw, meadow vetchling and the grass crested dogstail.

Typical wildflowers include cowslips in spring, birdsfoot trefoil, agrimony and yellow rattle in summer, followed by common knapweed and field scabious. Rattle is semi-parasitic and reduces the vigour of the coarser grasses allowing wildflowers to flourish. In all, around 50 species of flowering plants have been identified here, including 15 species of grasses.

Fungi found in the grassland include field mushrooms, waxcaps, puffballs, earthballs, inkcaps, blewits and fairy ring mushrooms. Autumn is the best time to see most fungi.

Marbled White butterflies

There is a small colony of marbled white butterflies associated with the grassland. These striking black and white butterflies can be seen in flight for a few weeks between late June and early August.

Altogether 25 species of butterfly have been recorded on the Millennium Green.

Since many of these flowers are yellow the grassland often has a yellow haze in the height of summer, accompanied by the sweet smell of the bedstraw.

How do we look after the grassland?

- The Millennium Green is managed to preserve and improve the flower-rich grassland.
- It is in a Higher Level Stewardship agreement with Natural England.
- A late hay crop is taken from this field after flowers have set seed.
- The upper area with its important anthills is strimmed in early September.
- All cut grass is removed which reduces fertility and encourages wildflowers.
- No artificial fertilizers are used on the site.
- Sheep graze the next field between July and March to produce short grass in spring.

Green woodpeckers and ant hills

The large anthills on the upper slopes show that the grassland has not been ploughed for a very long time. They are formed by yellow meadow ants and some could be 100 years old. Green woodpeckers feed on the ants.

Why is this grassland important?

- Around 97% of lowland flower-rich grassland has been lost since the 1940s.
- It is a priority habitat of national and local importance.
- Worcestershire is home to about 20% of the remaining wildflower grassland.
- The Millennium Green forms one of a chain of such grasslands in the east of the county.
- It is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.
- Wildlife-rich grasslands are a vital natural resource for bees and other pollinators.
- They support an abundance of invertebrates such as butterflies, beetles and spiders.
- These in turn feed small mammals and birds.

Rattle

Foxtail

Scabious and Knapweed

Meadow Vetchling

Gatekeeper

Birdsfoot Trefoil

Agrimony

Cowslip

Shaggy Inkcap

Yellow Fieldcap

Common Blue

Six-spot Burnet on Knapweed

Meadow Oat Grass

Crested Dogstail