

Eades Meadow

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One hundred years ago England was full of meadows in which a wide range of wild flowers bloomed. However due to modern agricultural practice with ploughing, chemical fertilisers and herbicides very few remain. One of the best remaining meadows lies just outside our parish. This is Eades Meadow, a National Nature Reserve and a Sight of Special Scientific Interest, which was once part of Foster's Green Farm. It is now managed by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust who bought the site in 1981. It survives because Foster's Green Farm was conservatively managed and in the last hundred years the field was never ploughed or treated with fertilisers or herbicides.

Lying on heavy clay soils, the interest of the meadow lies in the large number of plants that grow in it. There is an average of 40 species per square metre and more than 180 species have been recorded in the whole site. These species support a huge number of insects, spiders and other invertebrates. Eades Meadow is particularly famous for its green-winged orchids in spring and meadow saffron in autumn. Meadowsweet is prominent in the lower lying areas. The colour of the meadow changes daily as different flowers come into bloom throughout spring and summer.

The meadow is still farmed and is grazed by cattle in late autumn and early winter before being left to grow hay. The hay is cut late the following summer after the flowers have seeded. Sometimes the hay is spread at other sites to encourage the regrowth of wild flowers on them. Following a period of growth, the field is grazed and the cycle begins again.

Part of the land was once a small orchard and a few apple trees remain. A number of large oak trees mark the positions of old field boundaries and young trees have been planted as future replacements. The huge elms which once grew in the hedges were killed by elm disease and their demise opened up the field to the wind and sun.

A footpath has been mowed across the meadow and because of the vulnerability of the plants visitors are requested not to stray from this.

The meadow lies on Foster's Green Road (grid reference SO978 6459) and there is space for one or two cars to park in front of the gate. If this space is taken then drivers will need to find safe places to park on the verge further along the road.