



Kirkby Moor

Location and Access

OS: 122 • **GR:** TF 225629 •
75.00 hectares (185.20 acres) • Freehold
1969

Habitat type: Heathland

Situated in the parish of Kirkby-on-Bain, the reserve lies on both sides of Kirkby Lane, which runs from Kirkby-on-Bain to Woodhall Spa. The entrance gate to the main part of the reserve is opposite Wellsyke Lane, about 1.5 km (0.9 miles) from Kirkby-on-Bain village. Cars can be parked either on the road verge outside the reserve or in the car park at the end of the private road through the reserve, but the road is unsurfaced and needs care. Visitors are requested to keep the gate closed at all times and to keep to the waymarked route or other defined footpaths. Adders occur on the reserve.

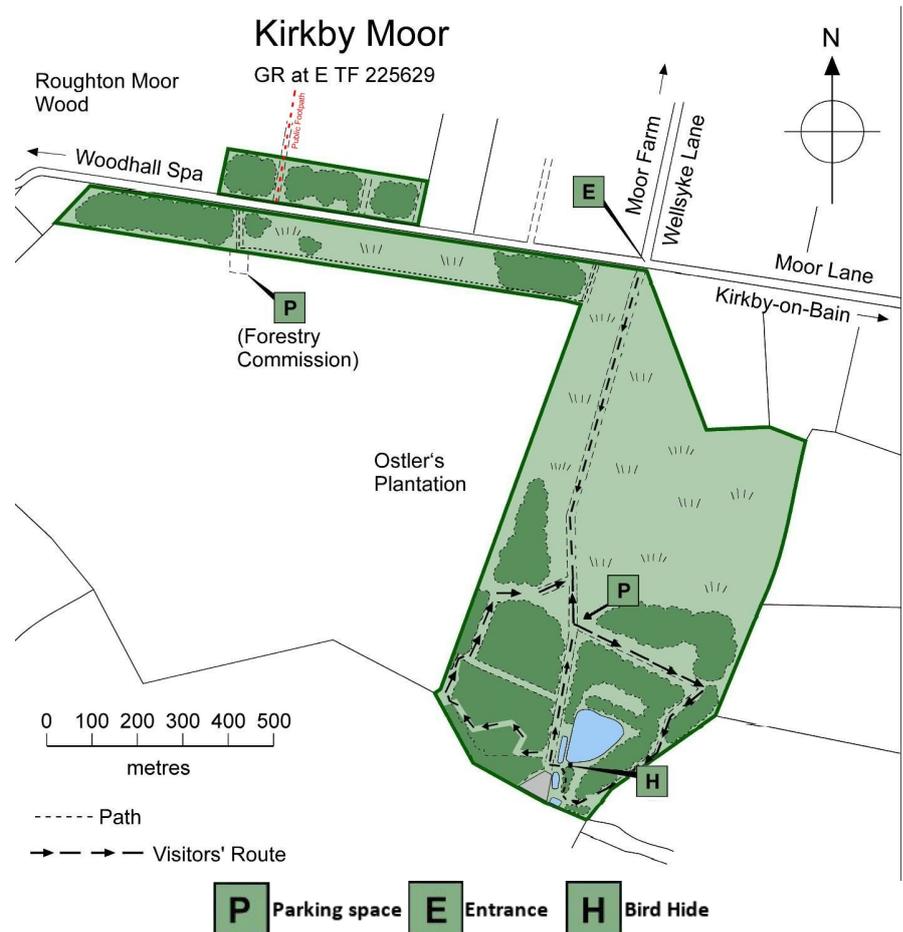
Description and Management

The reserve is the largest remnant of the once extensive heathlands of the Woodhall district. The sands and gravels here were deposited in delta conditions on the edge of the great Fenland Lake during the last Ice Age. As a result of leaching of mineral nutrients podsol soils have developed.

A large part of the reserve is dominated by heather, bracken and wavy hair-grass, together with moss and lichen communities. The southern part of the reserve is low lying and contains a lake originally made as a reservoir. There is oak, birch and pine woodland, and developing birch, hawthorn and willow scrub with rowan and alder buckthorn. This diversity of habitat produces a wide range of plants and animals: 250 plant species have so far been recorded, together with 275 moths, 20 butterflies and 11 dragonflies. About 60 species of birds breed on the reserve in most years and over 100 species have so far been recorded.

The main aims of management are to:
maintain the heathland and encourage

more heather and wet heath conditions; reduce the area of bracken; control the spread of scrub onto the heath, while maintaining some developing scrub; and sustain the floristic diversity of some areas by regular mowing and by grazing with sheep.





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Waymarked Route - Short route: 1.2 Km (0.7 miles), Long route: 2 Km (1.2 miles)

The waymarked route starts from the car park, which is situated at the end of the trackway through the reserve, close to Foxhill Cottage. Cross over the ditch via a concrete footbridge. The ditch is well worth a closer look: a haunt of dragonflies and damselflies, it is covered in spring and summer by the floating leaves of the broad-leaved pondweed. Whirligig beetles and pond skaters swarm on the surface, and aquatic life abounds beneath.

Follow the waymarked route until you come to a diversion on the left, which leads to a hide overlooking the mere. Little grebe, coot, moorhen, mallard, and sedge and reed warblers regularly breed on and around the mere, and numerous other birds can be seen, including kingfisher.

On leaving the hide retrace your steps to the ride through the wood. In spring or summer nightingale, chiffchaff, willow warbler and blackcap in the woodland behind the hide can be heard, if not seen. Jay, and blue and great tits can be seen in this area throughout the year. The route then follows the reserve boundary for some way alongside mature pines frequented by grey squirrels and goldcrests. It then turns left through an area of heather and winds through birch and willow scrub, where nightingales sometimes nest. The birch and willow give way to hawthorn, where common and lesser whitethroats, yellowhammer and turtle dove can be seen and heard.

The route then turns left through a marshy area, which is often waterlogged in winter. This area is at its best in summer when marsh-orchid, cross-leaved heath, marsh thistle, marsh valerian and devil's-bit scabious are in bloom, and it is probably the best place on the reserve for butterflies and damselflies, which are always to be found here on sunny days in their seasons. The rare bog bush-cricket can

often be seen sitting on the seed heads of the common rush, and five species of grasshopper occur in this area.

The path then meets the road. For the short route, turn left along the road to return to the car park. For the long route, turn right, crossing a stile beside the cattle grid. This northern heathland area of the reserve is enclosed by fencing and is grazed by the Trust's flock of Hebridean sheep. After a short distance turn left along a track through another area of heather, with common centaury and stork's-bill. On the left are the shallow wells that once produced the district's water supply. Kestrels can often be seen hovering over the open heath. This is a good place to see woodcock roding in the spring and green woodpeckers at any time of the year. Wood sage occurs quite commonly; its greenish-yellow flowers are attractive to bumble-bees: seven species seen feeding on these flowers have been recorded.

On reaching the reserve boundary the route turns left along a woodland ride. The birch woodland is rich in fungi, and in some years there are magnificent specimens of the attractive but poisonous fly agaric. Willow tits frequent the birches, and in the winter redpolls and siskins can sometimes be seen. This path can be very wet in the winter months and therefore appropriate footwear is advisable. The route then skirts a new plantation, where great spotted woodpecker, treecreeper, wood lark, tree pipit, warblers and spotted flycatcher are often to be seen in the fringing trees. Adders like to sun themselves by this path but in order to see them it is necessary to walk very quietly and carefully. The path then crosses the stream and returns to the car park.