

A circular walk around Catherton Common

The route is 5 1/2 miles long and mostly follows footpaths and tracks. Follow the signs from the road just below Cleeton St Mary village hall. Some of the walking is over russocky, boggy ground and some parts can be very muddy, so wear sturdy footwear.

Allow 4 hours to complete the walk.

A shorter route can be chosen from the network of paths and lanes if desired.

Please keep dogs under control at all times.

For grand views across the whole of Catherton Common and to see the remains of the old mine works, walk a little further up Magpie Hill then join the track towards Lubberland.

Directions
Follow the A417 (Ludlow to Cleobury Mortimer) over Cle Hill. At Doddington take the road north towards Farlow and Oron. After 1 mile go over a cattle grid and you are on the common.

SO 622 778
DY14 0HP



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright and database right 2010. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100005951.

Yes I'd like to join

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

I/we wish to support Shropshire Wildlife Trust as
 Individual; Joint: or Family member(s)

I/we wish give a monthly sum of:
 £3; £5; £10; or other amount
(Minimum rates: £2.50 Individual/Joint or £3.50 Family)

I/we prefer to pay Monthly or Annually

Please complete in block capitals

Title	Initials	Surname
Address		
		Postcode
Telephone	Email Address	

GIFT AID: Increase your subscriptions by almost a third more at no extra cost to you!

I wish Shropshire Wildlife Trust to treat all donations I have made for the six years prior to this year (but not earlier than 6th April 2000) and all donations I make from the date of this declaration, as gift aid donations, so enabling the Trust to reclaim the tax until I notify you otherwise. I understand that the tax reclaimed by the Trust must not exceed the total amount of income or capital gains tax which I pay in the tax year.

Sorry, I am not a taxpayer

Full name of taxpayer

Signature _____ Date _____

Paying by Direct Debit cuts administration costs and you receive a free Reserves Guide. Please complete the form opposite.

FOR SHROPSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST OFFICIAL USE ONLY
 This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society.

Recruiter	Location	
Welcome Pack	Reserves Guide	DD Collection

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT

Please fill in the form using a ball point pen and send it to:
 Shropshire Wildlife Trust, FREEPOST ANG60017,
 SHREWSBURY, SY2 6ZD.

Originator's Identification Number **948037**

Name and address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
Postcode	

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Branch Sort Code

--	--	--	--	--	--

Bank/Building Society account number

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Reference number

--	--	--	--	--	--

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society
 Please pay Shropshire Wildlife Trust Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with Shropshire Wildlife Trust and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s) _____

Date _____

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions from some types of accounts.

I/we enclose a cheque for the sum of £

Shropshire Wildlife Trust



Catherton Common

Catherton Common, Clee Hills



Bog bush cricket

Leave the spectacular heights of Clee Hill, head north-east and you come to Catherton Common, a sweeping open landscape with big skies. This heathland, with its subtle shades of tawny, gold and russet browns, reveals a marvellous diversity of life quite absent from the bright green intensively managed grassland of most contemporary agriculture.

Catherton is an ancient landscape, uncultivated heathland where plants, insects and many other kinds of wildlife have grown into dynamic communities over hundreds of years. The medieval system of commoners' rights has protected it from the plough and hundreds of generations of grazing animals have kept the heath from turning into woodland. The Clee Hills are networked with commons which once provided the livelihoods for householders. Today, while some 50 commoners still have the right to graze animals here, few actually do so. Keeping sheep and other livestock on the common is vital if the diversity and character of the common are to be maintained.

Mining

There have been other human influences too. Coal has been dug from the common since at least the early 15th century. Look for hollows in the landscape, many of them now pools; these bellpits were often excavated by the commoners; people were lowered in wicker baskets into the chambers below to hack out fuel. Larger scale mining took place on the common too until about 1830, though it carried on at Magpie Hill until 1929. The Clee Hills were treasured for their coal, limestone and ironstone; their value earning them inclusion on the medieval Hereford *Mappa Mundi*. Look out for the concrete bases that once supported pylons that carried an aerial ropeway, transporting dhustone quarried from Magpie Hill to Ditton Priors.

A heathland mosaic

The common is covered in several different kinds of vegetation, which in turn provide for a variety of wildlife. Bracken grows densely over the higher parts of the common and is a favoured place of grass snakes and adders. The heath itself divides into distinct areas of plants. The dry heath on the higher ground has big patches of gorse, perfect nesting places for stonechats in summer; strung with spiders' webs in autumn.

In late summer a spectacular blaze of purple glows across the heath as the heather flowers. But there is more to heathland than heather and a diversity of heathland types too, varying according to climate and geography.

Catherton, with its distinctive coincidence of bell heather, cross-leaved heath, purple moor grass and western gorse, has a kind of humid heath more often found along the south coast of England. Curiously, buckshorn plantain, a plant generally found on sea cliffs and sea mouse-ear, have been found growing on mine spoil and along tracks.

Watery hollows

The common is dotted with tiny pools and has several flushes where water bubbles up straight from the ground. Dragonflies, including the rare keeled skimmer and gold ringed dragonfly, emerge from the watery hollows for their few brief weeks of flight.

Common butterwort

Marsh violets provide food for small pearl-bordered fritillary, while common butterwort, marsh valerian and numerous kinds of sedges thrive among the sphagnum mosses. All three British species of cotton grass grow on Catherton, including broad-leaved cotton grass, a rarity in Shropshire.

From late summer into autumn, listen for the chirping of bog bush crickets, beautiful creatures with antennae longer than their bodies.

Mosses and liverworts

These grow all around, in pools and ditches; on stones and boulders and old concrete and masonry. But it takes a botanical specialist to discern the often minute differences between the different kinds of moss and their close relatives, the liverworts. Fortunately, someone gave these tiny over-looked plants wonderful names. Here is a selection of those found on Catherton Common: *Ghostwort*, *greasewort*, *weedy frillwort*, *bristly fingerwort*, *dark-green flapwort* (liverworts).

Yellow starry feather moss, *common pincushion*, *glittering moss*, *swan's neck thyme moss*, *thickpoint grimmia*, *frizzled crisp moss*, *lesser bird's claw beard moss* and *heart-leaved spear-moss* (just a few of the 115 species of moss so far identified).



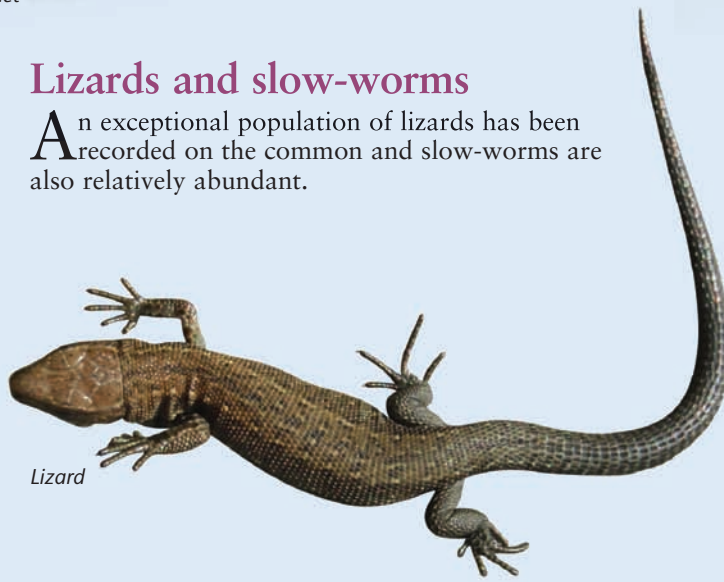
Linnet

Birds

Skylarks, linnets, meadow pipits and yellowhammers – birds that were once common everywhere but have vanished from many of their old haunts – can still be found at Catherton. Green woodpeckers lick out ants from anthills; cuckoos call and the rippling cry of the curlew is heard. Redstart and wheatear breed here and snipe are seen in winter. This vast pesticide-free area provides rich pickings of insects for birds and other wildlife.

Lizards and slow-worms

An exceptional population of lizards has been recorded on the common and slow-worms are also relatively abundant.



Lizard

Nine bats

Common and soprano pipistrelles, noctule, lesser horseshoe, Daubenton's, Brandt's, whiskered, long-eared and Natterer's bat have been identified on the

common. The stream along the eastern boundary and fringes of woodland provide good foraging grounds for them.

Hares can often be seen; otters are more elusive but sightings of their tarry sprints (said to smell of fish, jasmine tea and new mown hay), show that they are present.

Looking after the common

Sheep and other livestock do a wonderful job of conserving the landscape and Shropshire Wildlife Trust works closely with the Clee Hill Commoners to maintain appropriate grazing. The commoners also help with bracken and gorse control; young trees are removed from the heath to stop it turning into a wood. The Trust's dedicated volunteers put in many hours here too; among their tasks is the removal of saplings from the heath to prevent it turning into a wood.

Cramer Gutter

The common adjoins, Cramer Gutter, another Shropshire Wildlife Trust nature reserve, on its eastern boundary. This flower-rich meadow is highly valued for its marsh gentians, the only known colony of this plant in the West Midlands.



Marsh gentians

Catherton Common was purchased by Shropshire Wildlife Trust in 2009 with help from hundreds of individual people, Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund and Biffaward.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is the county's leading environmental charity, currently supported by 10,000 members. It has 36 flourishing nature reserves, freely enjoyed by thousands of people every year. The Trust also works with landowners beyond its reserves to give wild places and the wildlife that lives in them a future in town and country.

Shropshire Aggregates Levy
Sustainability Fund

