



Messingham Sand Quarry

Waymarked Route - 1.2 km (0.75 miles)

From the car park follow the waymarked route through the meadow. During the summer this area is covered with orchids, vetches and bird's-foot trefoil. Brown hawkers can often be seen on the wing here together with common blue and meadow brown butterflies. Look out for day-flying moths, cinnabar and burnet.

As you reach the turn, you might want to take a detour right, to the headland. Great crested grebe can usually be seen on this lake and across the water is a sand bank where sand martins can be seen entering and leaving their holes.

Returning to the main path, the route follows the edge of the lake where damselflies can be seen flitting over the vegetation together with ringlet butterflies. Warblers can often be heard singing.

The route now runs alongside another meadow where ox-eye daisy, yellow rattle and field scabious can be found. The meadow is surrounded by gorse, hawthorn, willow, wild rose and bramble. Watch out for the black and yellow striped caterpillars of the cinnabar moth on ragwort.

The route continues between the lakes and is flanked by alders which in winter attract parties of siskin. The route then passes through an area of scrub and small woodland before emerging into the last remnant of what was Manton heath. The scrub attracts many small birds including chaffinch, bullfinch and great tit and both dog and marsh violets can be found in this area. After the scrub come typical heathland plants such as heather, heath bedstraw, tormentil, sheep's sorrel, broom and gorse. Southern hawkers dragonflies, small copper butterflies and small birds abound here. Keep an ear pricked for the 'chirrup' of grasshoppers.

The route continues between lakes flanked by gorse, willow, birch and alder. Wall and peacock butterflies may be seen basking on the warm sand, while the gorse attracts dragonflies and damselflies. At the end of this stretch, turn right to visit the Duck Hide, which gives good views over the lake. These waters are a haven for many wintering wildfowl, including teal, wigeon, mallard, pochard and, occasionally, Bewick's swan. Kingfishers, linnets and terns are often seen from here.

Returning back to the main path, the route once again leads you between gorse and willows. If you turn right across the wooden bridge, a half-mile detour will bring you to the Wader Hide, where wading birds that may be seen include curlew, redshank, lapwing, ringed plovers and snipe. Return to the main route taking the opportunity during the summer to view orchids,

fleabane and cotton grass throughout the marsh and if possible catch views of four-spotted chaser and black darter dragonflies.

The route circumvents an area of newly felled conifers and warren before making its way through the pines. This area will be grazed and eventually returned to acid grassland/heathland. Lizards, beetles and plenty of rabbits already occupy this area but anything could crop up.

The route now meanders through the pines back to the car park. Brimstone, speckled wood and painted lady butterflies glide through while newts can often be seen in the small pond. Goldcrest, wren and sparrowhawk frequent the pines while flora includes purple loosestrife, hemp agrimony and devil's-bit scabious.

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