

the grassland of Quarry Moor

Bee orchid

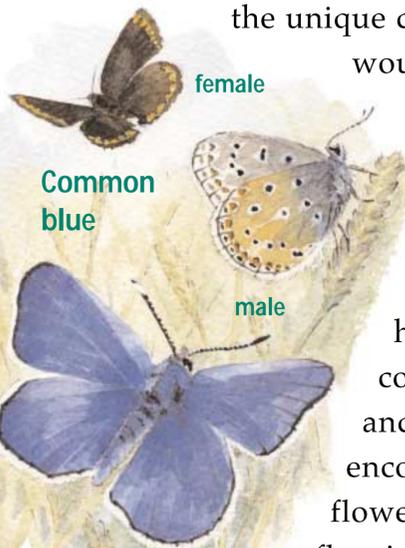


Magnesian limestone grassland is a nationally scarce resource that only exists on the narrow strip of Permian magnesian limestone that runs from the south of Nottingham to the Durham coast.

Many of the plants here only survive because the grassland has not been improved for agriculture, and Quarry Moor Nature Reserve represents an important component of unimproved limestone grassland remaining in Great Britain.

The grassland is conserved by active management of hay cutting and grazing and without this treatment the area would soon turn to scrub, and eventually woodland, and the unique diversity of wildlife would be lost.

Traditional hay cutting and grazing by native breeds of sheep, cattle and ponies helps to remove the coarser grasses, trees and shrubs, encouraging the wild flowers and herbs to flourish.



female
Common blue

male

Meadow brown



male



First introduced by Vikings to the western isles of Scotland, Hebridean sheep became popular parkland animals in country houses. They are ideal for managing Quarry Moor, happily grazing through scrub and undesirable plants other breeds would leave untouched.

From early spring through summer and into autumn a huge array of flowers of every shape, colour and form can be seen. In spring, primroses and cowslips provide a sunny splash of yellow before giving way to the whites, pinks and purples of oxeye daisies, common spotted orchids, self heal and knapweeds. In amongst the more common flowers some specialities can be found such as bee orchids (the flower really does look like a bee), yellow wort and autumn gentian.

Yellow-wort (near) can be easily identified by its blue-green leaves that encircle the stems. The tiny, fragrant flower's of Lady's bedstraw (middle) are borne on upright stems with whorls of needle-like leaves. From June to September clusters of pink flowers of common centaury (far right) rise above the grasses.



The Six-spot burnet moth is active during the day. Look out for their papery cocoons attached to their foodplant Bird's-foot trefoil.



The bright displays of primroses (below right) and cowslips (right) provide a welcome sight in early spring. The small autumn gentian (left) provide additional colour in the early autumn months.

The grassland is also an important home for insects and small mammals. On a sunny day it comes alive with bees, damselflies and butterflies flitting between the flowers.

You may catch site of a weasel running across the path or the tell tale sign of voles - tunnel-like runs, woven through the long grass.



Enjoy your visit to Quarry Moor, but allow others to enjoy it too. Please do not pick the wild flowers or leave litter. Quarry Moor is used by school groups and we ask that you keep dogs on a lead in the fenced areas, under control in other areas, and that you use the dog walking area and bins provided to prevent contamination by toxocariasis and other faeces-borne pathogens. Thank you.

