

Habitat restoration gathers pace

Volunteers and staff strive to bring back traditional landscape



Restoration of [Shapwick Moor](#), the Trust's new reserve on the Somerset Levels, has just moved several steps forward, with the southern side now re-seeded to restore flower-rich grassland and thousands of hedging plants growing strongly. The plan is to re-seed the northern side in the autumn.

Enthusiastic volunteers, drawn mainly from the Trust's South-west local groups, are turning out regularly to help the Trust return Shapwick Moor to traditional Somerset Levels landscape.

They first met in February when 30 of them planted 2,500 young trees to create a hedge beside the new permissive path along the south border of the reserve. This inaugural day was followed by two outings in March as volunteers rose to the challenge of planting a total of 6,000 hedging plants.

Subsequent work, so that spraying-off in preparation for the contractor to re-seed the southern side of the reserve could begin, involved the volunteers in moving hundreds of cowslips which had come up in the field. They replanted them along the new drove and hedge, which contractors have finished off with a stockproof fence, complete with gates. Signboards are also now up.

The Trust is restoring the arable farmland of Shapwick Moor to flower-rich grassland through Natural England's Environmental Stewardship Scheme. One field is being restored to fen, and rough grass margins are being created along the southern boundary as feeding habitat for owls and other birds of prey.

As well as resident barn owl, kestrel, sparrowhawk and buzzard, there are hobby in the summer, peregrine, hen and marsh harrier in the winter, and osprey and red kite on passage. A wide range of other wildlife is also using the reserve - including kingfisher, otter and water vole along the open ditches, known locally as 'rhynes', and badger and roe deer.

The Trust acquired the land in 2007, thanks to generous grants from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Tubney Charitable Trust, Viridor Credits Environmental Company, Natural England and Bristol Port Company, and a highly successful appeal to all the Trust's supporters

Shapwick Moor

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