

Gavray Meadows Local Nature Reserve

Welcome to Gavray Meadows - a precious and vital site for wildlife and people within the growing town of Bicester. Here, nestled between housing estates and the Bicester to Marylebone railway line, is a piece of ancient countryside: a landscape of small fields, green lanes and ponds with an abundance of wildlife that is now rare in the modern countryside. The site is a Local Nature Reserve, managed by [INSERT NAME] not only to preserve the wildlife but to enable people like yourself to experience and enjoy it at the same time.



Purple hairstreak



Common spotted orchid

Langford Brook

This stream is a tributary of the River Ray which flows into the Cherwell and meets the Thames in Oxford. Kingfishers and herons are regularly seen along its banks.



Barn owl

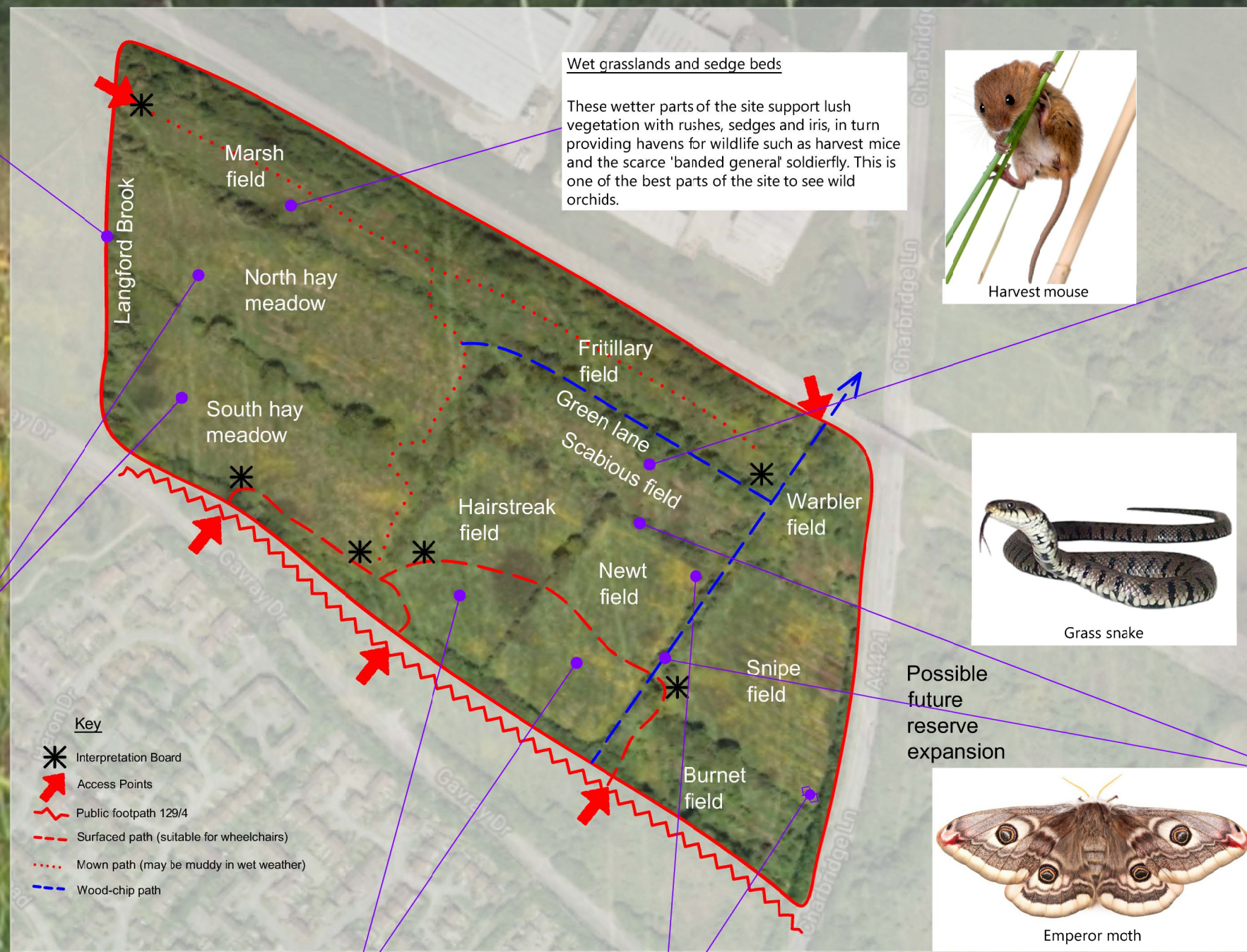
Traditional hay meadows

These areas are cut for hay in late summer and then the 'aftermath' grazed by livestock. This type of management, without modern agricultural chemicals, allows a huge number of plant species to co-exist and thrive, creating a colourful spectacle of nodding blooms alive with bees in summer. Please keep to the mown paths in spring and summer to avoid trampling the hay crop.



Great burnet

For further information on events or opportunities for volunteering, see the Friends of Gavray Meadows website [INSERT]



Wet grasslands and sedge beds

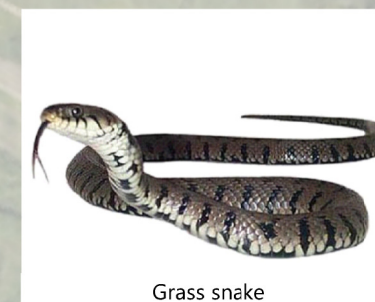
These wetter parts of the site support lush vegetation with rushes, sedges and iris, in turn providing havens for wildlife such as harvest mice and the scarce 'banded general' soldierfly. This is one of the best parts of the site to see wild orchids.



Harvest mouse

Drier pastures

The better drained parts of the site support grasslands with a slightly different set of plants to the hay meadows. Particularly characteristic of these areas is devil's-bit scabious, the beautiful mauve flowers of which can be seen in late summer. This plant is eaten by the caterpillars of the beautiful marsh fritillary and Gavray Meadows was the last site where it was found in the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire region. It is hoped that by restoring ideal conditions for it, it can be returned to grace these meadows again some day.

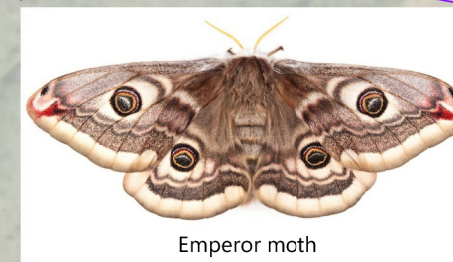


Grass snake



Marsh fritillary

Possible future reserve expansion



Emperor moth

Hedgerows and green lanes

The network of fields, hedges and green lanes visible today is exactly the same as that shown on the oldest maps of the area and studies have shown that some of the hedgerows date back to Saxon times. As well as their historical interest, the hedgerows support many different species, including rare butterflies. Gavray Meadows is one of very few sites in the whole country where all five hairstreak butterflies have been recently recorded.

Ridge and furrow

The lines of parallel lumps forming 'ridge and furrow' in many of the fields are a relic of Mediaeval agriculture. Although created by ploughing in the Middle Ages, the fact that they have not been smoothed out since shows that the site has remained unploughed for a long time, perhaps centuries. It is this rare combination of factors that allows much of the rare wildlife here to thrive.

Ponds and wet furrows

The ancient field ponds on the site and the furrows in the wetter ridge and furrow fields support amphibians, including frogs and all three British species of newt. These in turn attract species that prey on them, such as the impressive grass snake.



Great crested newt