

# Epworth Turbary



## Location & Access

**OS:** 112 • **GR:** SE 758 036 • 33.2ha (82.00 acres) • Freehold 1958

**Habitat type:** Heathland

The turbary is on the Wroot road, about 2.5km (1.5 miles) west of Epworth. The entrance is near the bridge over Skyer's Drain. Parking is available through the gate, which should be kept closed, or on the verge adjoining the reserve; it is advisable to park well away from the corner.

Visitors are requested to keep to the waymarked paths and to use the hides when viewing the open area. In order to avoid disturbing birds on the ponds please do not climb on the banks.

## Description & Management

One of the few relicts of raised bog in the whole of the Trust's area, this reserve is of considerable historic and scientific interest. The area has been extensively dug for peat in the past but areas of active Sphagnum bog still exist, with common cottongrass and cross-leaved heath.

There are also areas of reed swamp and mixed fen vegetation, where the rare fen sedge, *Cladium mariscus*, which was once widely used for ridge thatching, can be seen. Other parts of the reserve have a series of fen and wet heath conditions and a considerable area of birch woodland of varying age.

Plants in the fen areas include yellow and purple-loosestrife, meadow-rue, sneezewort and devil's-bit scabious. Among moths the wood tiger is well established. Breeding birds include tree pipit, warblers, finches, green and great spotted woodpeckers and woodcock.

The principle management problems at the reserve arise from the lowering of

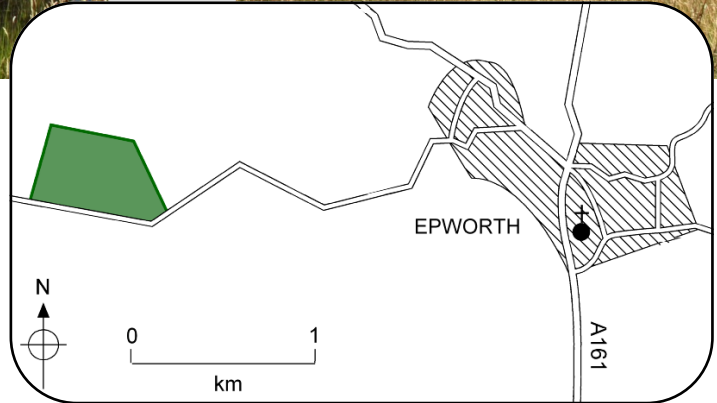
the water-table due to drainage of surrounding land and the consequent encroachment of birch scrub onto the wet heath and fen areas.

Removal of birch has been the main management activity, together with the creation of ponds and small lakes, which are linked by channels, in the wetter areas. This work has resulted in rapid colonisation by Sphagnum mosses on bare sand below water-level.

The ponds have attracted 11 species of breeding dragonflies and damselflies. Various bird species new to the reserve

have also been attracted to these areas, including greenshank, green sandpiper and little grebe.

Two areas that have been cleared of scrub are now enclosed by sheep fencing, and during the summer months (May to September) these areas are grazed by Galloway cattle and native breed sheep.



- P Parking space
- E Entrance
- H Bird Hide

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## Waymarked route

### 2km (1.2 miles)

From the car park follow the narrow path in a westerly direction and observe the many flowers along it. This corner of the reserve is one of the most sheltered and on fine days there is often an abundance of butterflies and other insects. The path continues, following the southern side of the reserve for about 700m. A variety of trees flank the path, including alder buckthorn, rowan, oak, elder, willow, aspen, hawthorn and a great deal of birch. Plants of special interest include creeping willow and fen sedge.

About half way along this side, a path leads off to the right; keep to the right and after 40m you can view the open area from Steve's Hide, which overlooks Steve's Pond, created as a memorial to Steve Clarke, a young Trust member from the Isle who was tragically killed in a road accident. The area attracts a variety of birds. Hobby and marsh harrier are among the species recorded. More regular sightings include teal, little grebe, tree pipit, sparrowhawk and buzzard.

On returning to the waymarked route you will reach the south-west corner of the reserve where the path turns right and leads north. Great spotted woodpeckers have bred in this area on several occasions. The surface becomes raised and the sandy soil contains old fox earths. The path then runs parallel to another deep drain which joins

Skyer's Drain at the south-west corner. Both these drains have been considerably deepened during the last 30 years, and this has contributed significantly to the drying out of the reserve. As you follow the path look out for birds including willow tit, long-tailed tit, reed bunting and willow warbler. Occasionally corn buntings can be heard singing on the adjoining farmland. In the autumn and winter large flocks of rooks, crows and jackdaws assemble in the fields at dusk before flying into the reserve to roost.

At the north-west corner the path turns right and leads eastwards. After about 150 m the path crosses a small ride, which has been cut to stop trees touching the overhead power lines. The path continues eastwards through birch

woodland with small clearings, where common reed still persists and crossleaved heath can also be seen. Sometimes in winter long-eared owls can be observed roosting close to the path.

As you approach the eastern end of the reserve, the path turns right and heads south, leading to the second hide overlooking Pantry's Pond. As you look out of the hide to the right the ground rises slightly, and ling and cross-leaved heath have been encouraged by baring the ground. Looking to the left the ground is lower, and cottongrass and fen-sedge flank the edge of the pond. In winter you may be lucky enough to see a hen harrier. Other birds include yellowhammer, linnet, jay and magpie.

There is a loop path off the waymarked

