

# Friskney Decoy Wood

## Location & Access

OS: 122 • GR: TF 464 571 • 5.90ha (14.57 acres) • Freehold 1950

Habitat type: Woodland

The Decoy Wood lies 1.5 km (0.9 miles) north of Friskney village on the north side of the Fodder Dyke Bank road from Eastville to Friskney. Access is via a footbridge some 500 m west of Marfleet's Bridge. Cars may be parked at the roadside. Cross the footbridge and follow the field edge path to the reserve entrance. The route around the wood is uneven and care should be taken to avoid exposed tree roots, rabbit holes, tree stumps and fallen branches.

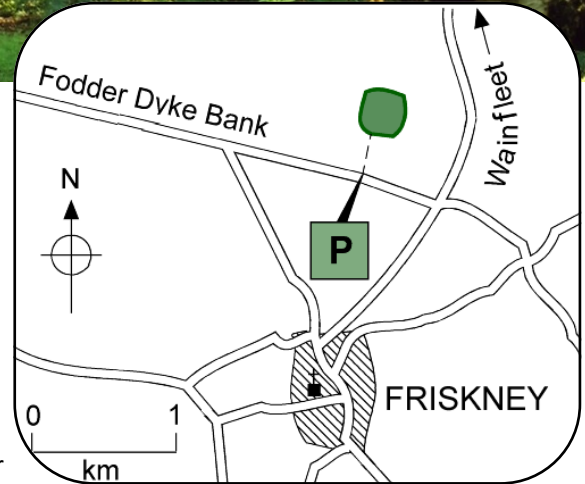
## Description & Management

Gift of Mrs DK Booth. The decoy, the most famous in the East Fen (the last great fen to be drained), survived with diminishing duck catches until 1878 when it finally went out of use. The fen had been a great reservoir for wildfowl but with the drainage begun in 1801 the decoy started to run down. Yet even in 1866 over one thousand ducks were taken, so we can only guess at the numbers caught in its heyday! The decoy was home, and worked by, George Skelton senior (1760 - 1840) until he left in 1807. Thereafter the decoy as worked by his sons' grandsons until 1866. The Skeltons were known for being skilful decoy operators and the family members were known to build decoys in many parts of the country. When the last of the Skeltons left, the decoy was worked by a Mr Crowe until 1878. The earliest record we have is that the decoy was described as "Shaws Decoy" on a map by I. Grundy dated 1774.

Surrounding the old decoy pipes is woodland, which is on a thin peat soil,

mostly consisting of birch, sycamore and Scots pine, with rowan, alder, willow and aspen. There are also larch, spruce and Corsican pine. Some woodland may have grown here before draining of the East Fen, but most of the trees have been planted.

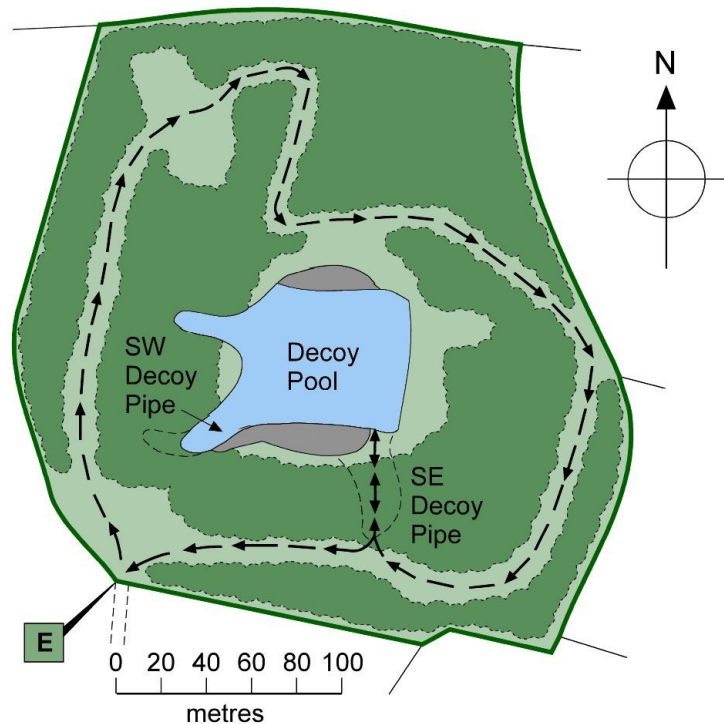
The ground flora is dominated in parts by bracken and buckler-fern. The climbing corydalis, a localised plant in eastern England, occurs throughout the wood. Over 30 species of birds have bred, and large numbers use the wood in winter for feeding and roosting.



The main objectives of management are to maintain and enhance a varied woodland of mainly native trees and to retain the relict decoy pond and pipes as a wetland area.

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GR at E TF 474571



**P** Parking space   **E** Entrance   **H** Bird Hide



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## Waymarked route

### Circular route-2km (1.2 miles)

Starting from the Fodder Dyke follow the path across the fields to the reserve entrance. The access path was made wide enough for a horse and cart to carry grain to 'feed-up' the decoy.

Just inside the reserve entrance is a small open area with a hut. Buddleia bushes grow here and in late summer their flowers attract many butterflies, mostly small tortoiseshell, peacock and red admiral. Follow the path indicated.

As you enter the wood the peaty soil is dominated by bracken, but the climbing corydalis grows beneath the fronds. Its intricate creamy flowers repay closer examination. On the right of the path there are Scots pine, which provide feeding ground for goldcrest and various tits; to the left are some sycamores of unusually great size.

A little further on and to the north you will see farmland that is at a lower level than the reserve due to shrinkage caused by drainage, oxidation of the peat and cultivation. The peat of the reserve has also shrunk somewhat, leaving the roots of many trees exposed and vulnerable to windblow. The path turns sharply south and, further along, common buckler-fern takes over from bracken as the dominant ground cover. The path weaves through a stand of Norway spruce, where tawny owls are often heard or seen.

In the south-east corner of the reserve

a small nursery plot will be found where young trees are grown for planting out on the reserve.

The route then passes through an area with ash, birch, larch and alder. Look for redpoll, treecreeper and spotted flycatcher. In winter siskins may also be seen. The path ends at the open area by the entrance.

In addition to the main waymarked route, visitors may like to explore the path in the old south-east decoy pipe.

Proceed quietly in order not to disturb

any birds by the pond: you may see a fishing heron, a kingfisher, mallard or other duck, though this will depend on the current water-level.

With more intensive drainage of the surrounding farmland and the low rainfall of recent years, the water-level in the old decoy pond has dropped drastically. However, in March 1993 the pond was partly re-dug and restored. The greater area of water has resulted in an increase in waterfowl and in the populations of dragonfly species. In August and September migrant birds

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