

Legbourne Wood



Location & Access

OS: 122 • **GR:** TF 369 832 • 34.8ha (86.03 acres) • Freehold 2004
Habitat type: Woodland

The wood is situated south of Legbourne and is reached by travelling west along Mill Lane then taking a sharp left hand turn onto Wood Lane, a no through road. At the end of the road, there is a small car park. Visitors are requested to keep to the rides and to go quietly.

Description & Management

Legbourne Wood is one of the few remaining ancient woodlands in eastern Lincolnshire and the largest of the Trust's woodland nature reserves.

Today only three percent of Lincolnshire is wooded, and barely a third of that is ancient woodland. It is these old surviving woods, which have had continuous woodland cover since at least 1500, that are the richest in wildlife. One of these survivors is Legbourne Wood.

Ancient woodlands contain more biodiversity than recently planted woods. The canopy at Legbourne is ash and oak. Beneath the trees, over 60 species of wildflowers have been recorded including primrose, early purple orchid, bluebell, wood anemone, sweet woodruff, wood sorrel and lesser celandine. There is also a varied bird population.

In times past, the woods in this area were managed on the traditional, centuries-old system of coppice-with-standards. Oak and ash grew tall: known as standards, eventually they would provide timber. Beneath the fairly open canopy, the understorey of hazel was cut or coppiced at regular

intervals to provide a sustainable crop of small wood. This system wasn't only beneficial to people, it also helped wildlife which flourished in the open conditions.

This form of management fell into disuse in the first half of the twentieth century and the character of the woods changed. Most of them lost their shrub layer and suffered from neglect. The richness and diversity of wildlife declined. At Legbourne Wood the spindly growth of ash indicates a lack of management and re-growth of coppice following wartime felling.

Within Legbourne Wood, small areas are now being sensitively managed by selective thinning and the restoration of the traditional coppice-with-standards system. This is re-creating the open areas and woodland edge habitat which

is so good for wildlife. The system of rides has been opened up and will be maintained. A large part of the wood will be kept free from disturbance and access. In these damp, shading areas mosses, fungi and specialist invertebrates that live and feed on decaying wood and leaf litter will thrive.

The Trust purchased Legbourne Wood in 2004, after a public appeal was launched. A grant for management work was received from WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd). Legbourne Wood is in an area known as the Lindsey Middle Marsh, below the edge of the Wolds. Its purchase brings the total of ancient Middle Marsh woodlands managed by the Trust to four: Rigsby, Muckton, Hoplands and Legbourne. Legbourne Wood is the largest of the four.

