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# SEND NATURE TRAILS

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## PAPERCOURT MEADOWS (TQ 033 568)

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### WHAT IS IT?

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The nature reserve comprises 19ha (47 acres) of floodplain grazing meadow.

### WHERE IS IT?

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At the north-eastern end of Broadmead, between the River Wey and the Wey Navigation. The meadow lies immediately across the river from Woking Palace and has traditionally provided hay and grazing for parishioners' livestock. (See [www.woking-palace.org](http://www.woking-palace.org))

### WHAT'S ITS HISTORY?

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The area is managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust. (See [www.surreywildlifetrust.org](http://www.surreywildlifetrust.org)). Unimproved, wet meadows like this are becoming increasingly rare, yet they are intrinsically valuable, not only as an important feature of the landscape, but also as a component of local flood defences. Papercourt Meadows has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its unique plant community and its varied bird life, much of which is uniquely adapted to wetland conditions.

### HOW CAN I ACCESS IT?

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The most direct route is to cross the Wey Navigation and Broadmead Cut at Papercourt Lock. Alternatively:

- cross the footbridge from Tannery Lane and turn right *or*
- walk along the public footpath from Broadmead Road and head west across Broadmead.

### WHAT MIGHT I SEE THERE?

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#### **Fauna**

A family of Roe Deer are regularly found on the site and, in the evenings, Daubenton's and Pipistrelle bats feed over the reserve. Small mammals, including the tiny Pygmy Shrew and Harvest Mouse, live amongst the tall grasses; and, smaller still, are the various invertebrates which live and breed in the vegetation and open water. In summer, dragonflies and damselflies can be seen darting around the water's edge. These include the striking Banded Demoiselle and the scarce White-legged Damselfly. Other specialities to look out for are the Water Ladybird, Long-winged Conehead, The Artist (an orange-bellied whirly-gig beetle), River Pondskater, and *Macropis europaea* (a rare bee which depends on Yellow Loosestrife).

## **Flora**

A host of wetland wildflowers can be seen in spring and summer including Sneezewort, Wild Angelica, Marsh Bedstraw, Water Mint, Gipsywort, Ragged Robin, Water-cress and Meadowsweet. Amongst these, a careful search will reveal some of Surrey's scarcer plants such as Marsh Stitchwort, Brown sedge, Meadow Barley and Tubular Water-dropwort. The meadow contains over 5 ha of marsh dominated by Slender-tufted Sedge (*Carex acuta*), which is the largest single expanse in the county.

## **Birds**

Reeds, hawthorn scrub and clumps of dense bramble provide cover for a range of birds which breed on the site including Sedge Warbler, Reed Bunting, Linnet, Whitethroat and Stonechat. Other avian visitors worth watching for include Common Snipe and Barn Owl while Mute Swans and Tufted Duck can often be seen on the river.

## **FEEDBACK**

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