



Parrot's Drumble near Talke

Reserves Officer, Lucy O'Toole, takes you on a guided walk around Parrot's Drumble, an ancient woodland filled with wildflowers and bird song, tucked away on the edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

1 Ancient woodland

Visiting in April and May is a treat. Enter the wood and walk through a carpet of bluebells, which will awaken all your senses.

Parrot's Drumble, situated in the village of Talke, four miles northwest of Newcastle-under-Lyme, is an ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) meaning woodland which has existed since at least 1600AD.

Ancient woods have unique features as they have developed over such a long time. Their relatively undisturbed soils are the perfect host to the carpets of spring wildflowers which have spread slowly and naturally throughout the woodland over centuries to form the awesome sight you see today.

2 Spot the tree species

Follow the footpath round and down the hill, cross the boardwalk and take the left fork.

Enjoy walking through the tall oaks and multi-stemmed hazel coppice and see how many other tree species you can spot.

3 Rich mining past

Continue along the path until you reach the two bridges. Here, the rich mining past of this area becomes more evident as the waters merge. One stream running clear, the other bright orange, this is due to the iron-oxide leaching from the old mine workings. From here you can either just cross the first bridge for a longer route or cross the second bridge for a shorter loop.

4 Flowers and fungi

On either of these routes keep your eyes peeled for the wide variety of woodland plants such as dog's mercury, the delicate leaves and flowers of wood-sorrel, wood anemone, yellow archangel, and the beautifully but tiny moschatel (also named town hall clock as the flower heads have four faces which point in different directions). In the autumn, the damp shady conditions make the reserve a great place to see many species of fungi. Also, keep a look out for birds, and keep your ears open to the drumming of the woodpeckers, singing warblers

and thrushes, and the subtle digging by badgers searching for worms in the soft ground.

5 Turkey Oaks

At the top of the big steps are the Turkey oaks, amongst several tree species planted here by previous owners. Turkey oaks are non-native and were planted for timber as they are faster growing than our native oaks. The timber from the trees was found to be unsuitable for use as it warps and splits when it is being seasoned. The leaves and acorn cups of Turkey oaks are very distinctive the latter having a hairy appearance, making them look like miniature woolly hats!

6 Beech trees

Follow the path round and across the bridge and back up the hill to the main entrance. Take time to admire the magnificent beech trees which line your route. As with the Turkey oaks and poplars which you may have spotted on your walk these were also introduced by previous owners.



Philip Precey

Yellow archangel

The flowers of yellow archangel come into bloom just as the bluebells are fading, replacing the blue carpet of a spring woodland with bursts of golden yellow.



Bluebells

An indicator species of ancient woodland. Bluebells like undisturbed soil and need light in early spring to flower before the tree canopy closes over.



Wood-sorrel

The fresh green trefoil leaves of wood-sorrel form distinctive clumps in woodlands. The delicate white flowers hang on tiny stems, blooming around Easter time.



Bob Coyle

Birdsong

As you head deeper into the wood, you should be able to hear plenty of birdsong. Listen and look out for blue tits, willow tits, wrens and willow warblers.



Bob Coyle

Great spotted woodpecker

Both great spotted woodpeckers and lesser spotted woodpeckers have been sighted here. Listen out for them drumming on trees as they search for insects to feast on.



Wild garlic

In the spring, wild garlic flourishes in ancient woodlands. The flower has broad and long green leaves, and you may even smell its strong perfume before you spot it.

Parrot's Drumble



Getting there

Use the nearest postcode ST7 1UH. Travelling north on Pit Lane, shortly after Freeport Talke shopping centre, you will see a gravelled area on the left. Park here and follow the path through the wood.

Useful information

The visit time can take around 1-2 hours. The longest trail is 1 mile. There are some steep hills and the paths are often muddy and uneven in places.

So that we can protect the wildlife of this special place, we ask that you keep your dog close to you and on a lead.