



Highgate Common

Highgate Common Nature Reserve, near Wombourne in South Staffordshire, is the most southerly reserve managed by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Warden Hannah Dalton shares a walk around this popular lowland heath and woodland.

1 Solitary bee heaven

Begin the walk in Pool Car Park, off Camp Hill Road. Head up the hill towards craters of exposed sandy soil. This area is one of the best areas on Highgate Common to see rare bees and wasps. Look closely at the sandy areas and you'll see lots of tiny holes. These are the entrances to the bees' burrows.

2 Heathland management

Follow the path to the right. In the 60s this entire area was open and sandy. Lots of trees have begun to colonise the precious heathland at Highgate Common, and part of the management involves the removal of some of the trees and scrub to benefit the heathland wildlife.

3 Darting dragonflies

Turn left at the wonderful climbing oak tree. Local people have been climbing this tree for generations. Head up the hill to Modeler's car park and cross the road.

Take the first path on the right and then the first left after you've crossed the road until you reach the pond. On a summer's day, dragonflies dart around in the sunshine.

4 Hazel alley

Follow the path behind the pond and head into the woods. Follow the Staffordshire Way to the right until you reach a crossroads. Turn left and make your way down hazel alley. This ride of hazel is a great place to see the white admiral butterflies on brambles or laying eggs on honeysuckle.

5 Picnic spot

At the end of hazel alley take the path to your right which leads you to Brandt's Hill. From the top of the hill, on a clear day you can see out to the Wrekin. This patch of heath was cut off from the other heath further along the path. Our devoted volunteers spent the winter creating a corridor to allow the tiny invertebrates to move between

heath areas. Continue to follow the red route waymarkers until you reach Goldie Heath.

6 Glow worm central

Goldie Heath is home to some of our rarer species, including the bog bush cricket and glow worms. Before Staffordshire Wildlife Trust took over, Goldie Heath had become overgrown with young birch scrub. Again, volunteers and wardens have done a lot of work to open up the area and the heathland plants are beginning to recover.

7 Fascinating past

Make your way through the woodland and head back to the main common. During World War II Highgate was used as a training camp for soldiers and was also an area for bomb disposal. Tanks used to track all over the common, which created some great sandy habitat for the mining bees and wasps.

Six to spot



Andy Payne

Bee burrows

Highgate is home to 140 different species of solitary bees and wasps that live in the sandy soil. Look out for tiny holes in the ground along paths – each of these is the entrance to a burrow.



Andy Payne

Oil beetle

Oil beetles are very impressive creatures. They have an enormous abdomen which the female uses to carry her eggs. She will lay thousands each year.



Andy Payne

White admiral

Can be seen from mid June on honeysuckle and bramble. The upperside is black, with a bold, white stripe, while the underside is bright orange with a white stripe.



Philip Roxby

Glow worm

These little beetles can be found feeding on snails in the heathland. Only the females produce a glow, which they use to attract a flying male. Look for them from the end of May.



Andy Payne

Tree pipit

Can be seen perching in trees on the heathland. They have a very distinctive song when in flight. When leaving a tree they parachute down with stiff wings and their song is drawn out towards the end.

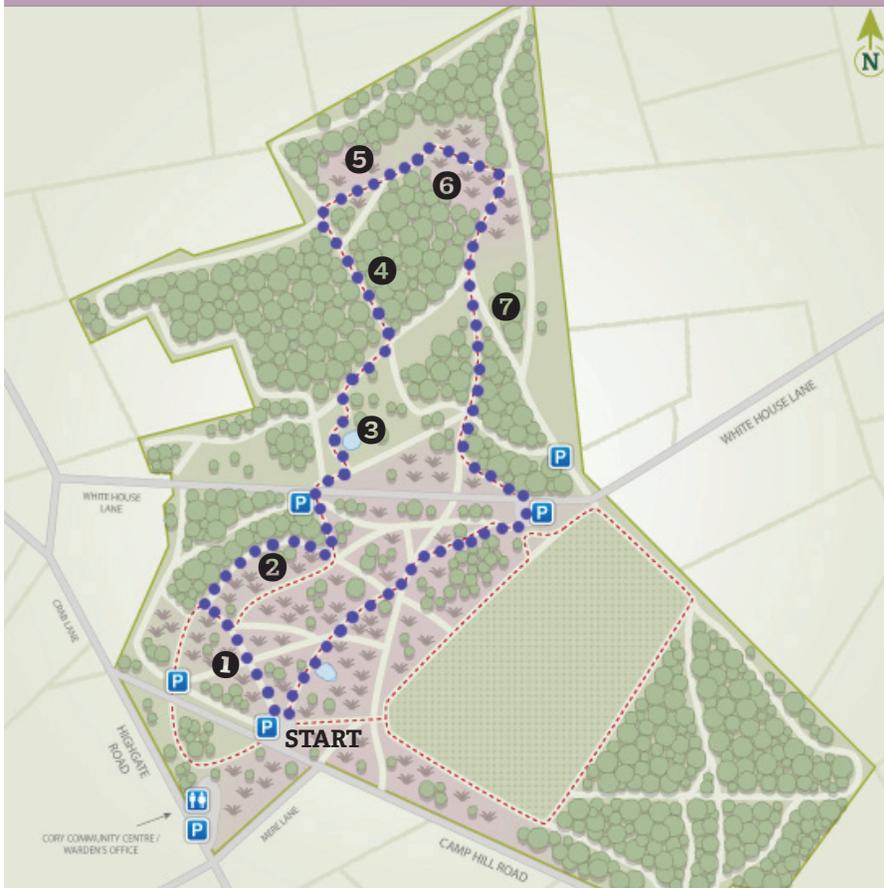


Andy Payne

Minotaur beetle

A dung beetle, they can sometimes be seen rolling rabbit droppings down into their burrows. The males have three very distinctive horns on the thorax and glossy, ridged wingcases.

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Getting there

Highgate Common is west of Wombourne and Kingswinford, between Swindon and Bobbington. Leave the A449 at Himley and head to Swindon village. Follow the High Street which turns into Chasepool Road. Follow this to the crossroads and turn right on to Camp Hill Road. The wardens office and toilets are located in the Cory Community Centre on Highgate Road. Nearest postcode: DY7 5BS Grid ref: SO 836 895

Useful information

The walk will take around 1 hour to complete. The terrain is fairly flat with some small inclines, and paths are rugged. Well-behaved dogs are welcome.

Latest sightings

Check out Trust volunteer Andy Payne's blog to discover more about the wildlife of Highgate Common. Visit www.highgatecommonwildlife.com