

STAFFS WILDLIFE TRUST

# Hem Heath Woods, Trentham

**Our Reserves Officer, LUCY O'TOOLE, takes us on a guided walk of Hem Heath – a lovely area of tranquillity in the busy area of Stoke-on-Trent**

There are a network of paths enabling you to explore the 100acres of woodland stretching from Trentham Road to Wedgwood. Most of the paths have a natural surface so can be muddy! See what different flowers, birds, trees and fungi you can spot throughout the year as the seasons change.

**1** From the car park head towards the central gateway leading on to the main track. We have recently had this track improved by filling in the ruts and levelling off sections. This is part of our plan to improve access for all to this lovely woodland. Listen out for and see if you can spot different bird species as you walk round. Blackbirds, buzzards, long-tailed tits and thrushes are usually about! These woods are a great place to spot fungi, the bright red scarlet elf cup is a nice one to see and shows up well against the autumn leaves.

**2** As you walk along the main track you will notice other green tracks branching off, these are called rides. With our volunteers we have been widening these rides which had become very over grown and gloomy. Rides are an important part of woodland management. By widening them we are allowing light to reach the ground, enabling the woodland plant such as wood sorrel, wood anemone and bluebell to spread and flourish. The plants are an important nectar source and encourage insets such as butterflies, bees and beetles in, which in turn bring in a variety of bird species, such as robin, tree creeper and woodpecker. They are also important foraging corridors for bats.

**3** At the end of this track you will find a glades. This is a large open grassy area, allowing plenty of sunshine in, which is great for mammals, butterflies and birds. There is also a bench here (plus other dotted around the site) where you can sit, rest and enjoy your surroundings. Each year with the volunteers we mow the glade, rides and main footpaths to ensure these areas stay open.

**4** Follow the track around to the left and then right so you are walking parallel to the edge of the glade. If you look to your left you will see the woodland is quite dense and dark, further along the track you will see it changes, this is where we have been thinning out the trees. This allows light in and gives the trees the space to grow in to healthy specimens and saplings room to develop.



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**5** At the bottom of the track turn right and then take the next right, (if you turn left here you can walk to the World of Wedgwood). Take the track to the right and after roughly 300 metres at the end of this trackturn right and you will find yourself back at the glade. See how many different tree species you can spot on your walk. There's a good mix of ash, oak, sycamore, holly and cherry to name a few!

**6** Head back down the main track then take the first left. Continue along and then bear right on the corner. On your right you will see a boardwalk the volunteers installed earlier this year to help link up the paths over a very muddy section. A path you can explore on your next visit! You will pass a pond on your left, so don't be surprised if you hear quacking in the wood! Follow this track all the way back to the car park.

As part of our access for all plan we have installed a RADAR gate in the car park to allow people with mobility scooters access through the kissing gate.