

16 RAINTON MEADOWS

A large wetland site developed following the restoration a former opencast coal site and the location of Durham Wildlife Trust's Headquarters and Visitor Centre.

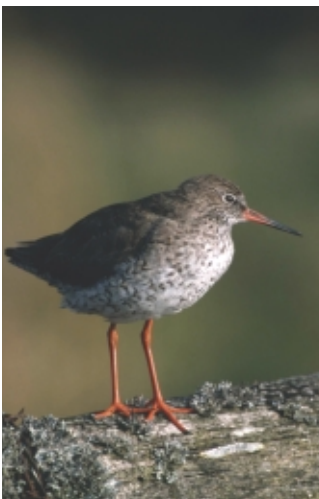


Rainton Meadows

Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve has developed as a result of the restoration of the former Rye Hill Opencast coal mine by UK Coal Ltd in partnership with Durham Wildlife Trust and the City of Sunderland. Restoration has created an interlinked series of ponds and scrapes, newly re-seeded grasslands and a larger area of new woodland all linked by an extensive footpath network.

The new ponds and scrapes have been constructed to varying depths and small scale planting with native marginal vegetation including rushes and reeds is complementing natural colonisation from surrounding wetlands. Woodland planting commenced in 1996 and involved mostly native species to create Oak and Hazel woodland and Willow and Alder carr woodland. The habitats on the reserve complement those found at Joe's Pond Nature Reserve and both sites can be enjoyed in one visit.

The new wetlands and grasslands are proving highly attractive to birdlife, with over 200 species recorded. Regular sightings include Redshank, Oystercatcher, Lapwing and large numbers of breeding Skylark. All five species of owl present in the region have been recorded. Water Voles have been recorded in the ponds and connecting watercourses and Brown Hare are seen frequently in the grasslands. The reserve attracts large numbers of dragonflies with occasional records of unusual migrants such as Lesser Emperor. Several species of butterfly are common on the reserve including Small Heath, Large Skipper and Wall Brown.



Redshank

Brown Hare



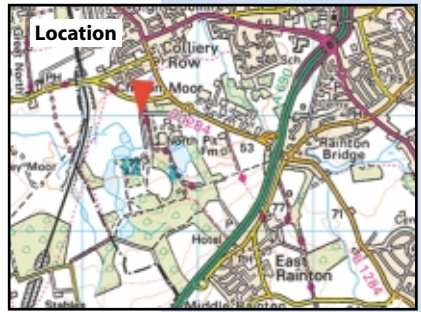
Small heath

Skylark (©RSPB)



Best seen – Something to see all year round.

RAINTON MEADOWS



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- Reserve boundary
- Parking
- Reserve entrance
- Footpaths

Rye Hill opencast coal mine



Management

The reserve is still in the early stages of development and much of the management activities focus on enhancing the existing habitats. Re-profiling of the lake margins will diversify the marginal habitats attracting waders and the construction of islands will provide breeding sites for wildfowl free from disturbance. The re-seeded grasslands are cut annually and the floristic richness is being improved by importing wildflower seed from several of the Trusts other species rich grasslands.

The woodland plantations require regular maintenance and access control will ensure that visitor disturbance to wildlife is kept to a minimum.

Yellow rattle



Rainton Meadows is situated in the heart of what was once the Durham Coalfield with 8 coal mines previously located within 2 miles of the current reserve.



Water Vole

Location

Situated midway between Durham and Sunderland just off the A690. Follow the brown signs for Rainton Meadows just south of Houghton-le-Spring or alternatively leave the A1(M) at Chester-le-Street and head west on the A183/A1052.

Access is available to the Visitor Centre for wheelchair users with disabled toilets. Access is also available to the lakeshore and bird hide via surfaced level footpaths.

Visitor Centre with shop, toilets, interpretative displays, education centre, conference room, large free car park, large bird hide.

General Information

Ownership:
UK Coal Ltd & City of Sunderland.

Area: 60 hectares

Grid Reference:
NZ 323485

O.S. Explorer Map No: 308

Parking access to site:
Parking available for up to 50 cars at Visitor Centre. Immediate access onto reserve with several waymarked footpaths.

Public transport:
Sunderland/Durham buses stop at the Mill Inn leaving a short walk to the reserve. Buses from Chester-le-St. to fencehouses.

Dogs: Dogs must be kept on a lead from March to August

Accessibility: ▲▲▲▲

This card is kindly sponsored by:



Durham Wildlife Trust, Rainton Meadows, Chilton Moor, Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne & Wear DH4 6PU

Tel: 0191 5843112

Fax: 0191 5843934

Charity no. 501038



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