

25 HEDLEYHOPE FELL

Hedleyhope Fell is one of the largest examples of mid-altitude heathland in County Durham. This type of heathland occurs between moorland in the uplands and heathland in the lowlands.



Hedleyhope Fell



Adder

Mid-altitude and lowland heaths have declined in extent under pressures from development, mining, forestry and agricultural improvement and now survive only as isolated fragments. Their role in the surrounding agricultural landscape has diminished and few are currently grazed or actively managed. Neglected heaths are susceptible to scrub and bracken encroachment. Such mid-altitude heathland is now very rare in County Durham, most having been 'improved' for agriculture. As a result of its rarity, mid-altitude heathland is included in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan and supports a number of species which are rare or declining.



Curlew

Hedleyhope Fell has a complex mosaic of heather dominated areas, acid grassland, rush pasture, bracken beds, patches of gorse and scattered trees. It is this variation in habitat type that supports such a rich variety of species.

Heathland plant species present include heather, bell heather, cross-leaved heath, crowberry, bilberry and cotton grass. There are also several rare plants found including petty whin, stags-horn club moss and adders tongue fern.

Ground nesting birds such as lapwing, skylark, snipe, curlew, oystercatcher, black grouse and short-eared owl can be seen. Important species such as stonechat, tree sparrow and long-eared owl breed and utilize trees and scrub present on the reserve.

Green hairstreak

Stags-horn club moss

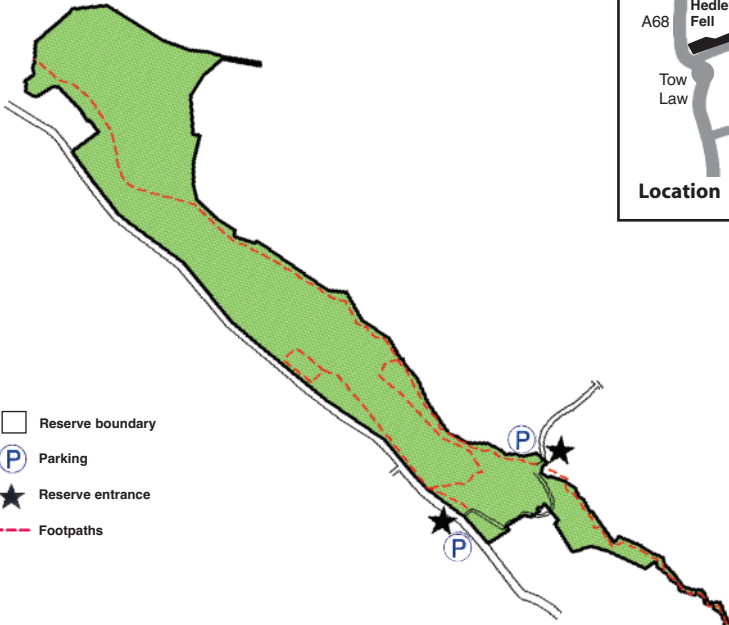
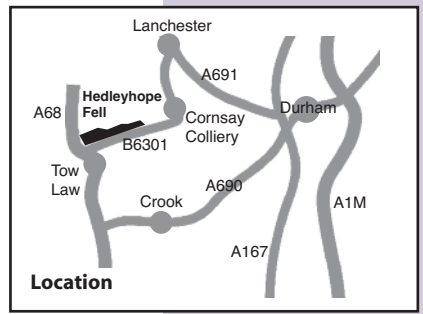


Three British reptile species including the slow worm, adder and common lizard can be found throughout the reserve and over twenty butterfly species have been recorded on the Fell, making it one of the most species-rich sites within the County. Hedleyhope Fell is the best known place in County Durham for the green hairstreak butterfly.



Best seen in August for heather in flower

HEDLEYHOPE FELL



Management

Heathlands are subject to change. This change is called succession and without management there would be a gradual change from heathland to woodland. Many of the plants and animals present rely on an open habitat to survive and maintain healthy numbers.

Grazing is the most important management tool to halt the process of succession. Both sheep and cattle graze at Hedleyhope Fell.

Bracken control is undertaken to ensure this plant does not encroach into heather dominated areas and important grassland habitats.

Tree and scrub management takes place during the winter months to make sure succession to woodland does not occur.

Heather burning is carried out to create a pattern of different aged heather.



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Location

The reserve is located between the communities of Tow Law and Cornsay Colliery. The western boundary of the reserve is very close to the A68 and the southern boundary runs parallel with the B6301. Both visitor car parks are located off the B6301. Follow brown 'Nature Reserve' signs from the A68 at Tow Law.

General Information

Ownership:

Part owned by Durham Wildlife Trust and remainder leased from defra

Area: 204 ha

Grid Reference:

NZ 138 408

O.S. Explorer Map No: 307

Parking access to site:

Two visitor car parks located off B6301

Public transport:

Regular bus services from Durham and Bishop Auckland to Crook. Local connections available to Tow Law

Dogs: Dogs must be kept on a lead at all times

Accessibility:

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This card is kindly sponsored by:



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