



Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve has three, full-time Wardens to look after its geology and wildlife. They will be happy to provide information to visitors and to arrange guided walks or illustrated talks on different aspects of Wren's Nest. Please contact 01384 812785 for details.

Information on the geology of Wren's Nest is also available from Dudley Museum & Art Gallery.

Further leaflets and information on the other nature reserves in Dudley are available from Dudley Culture & Community Services.



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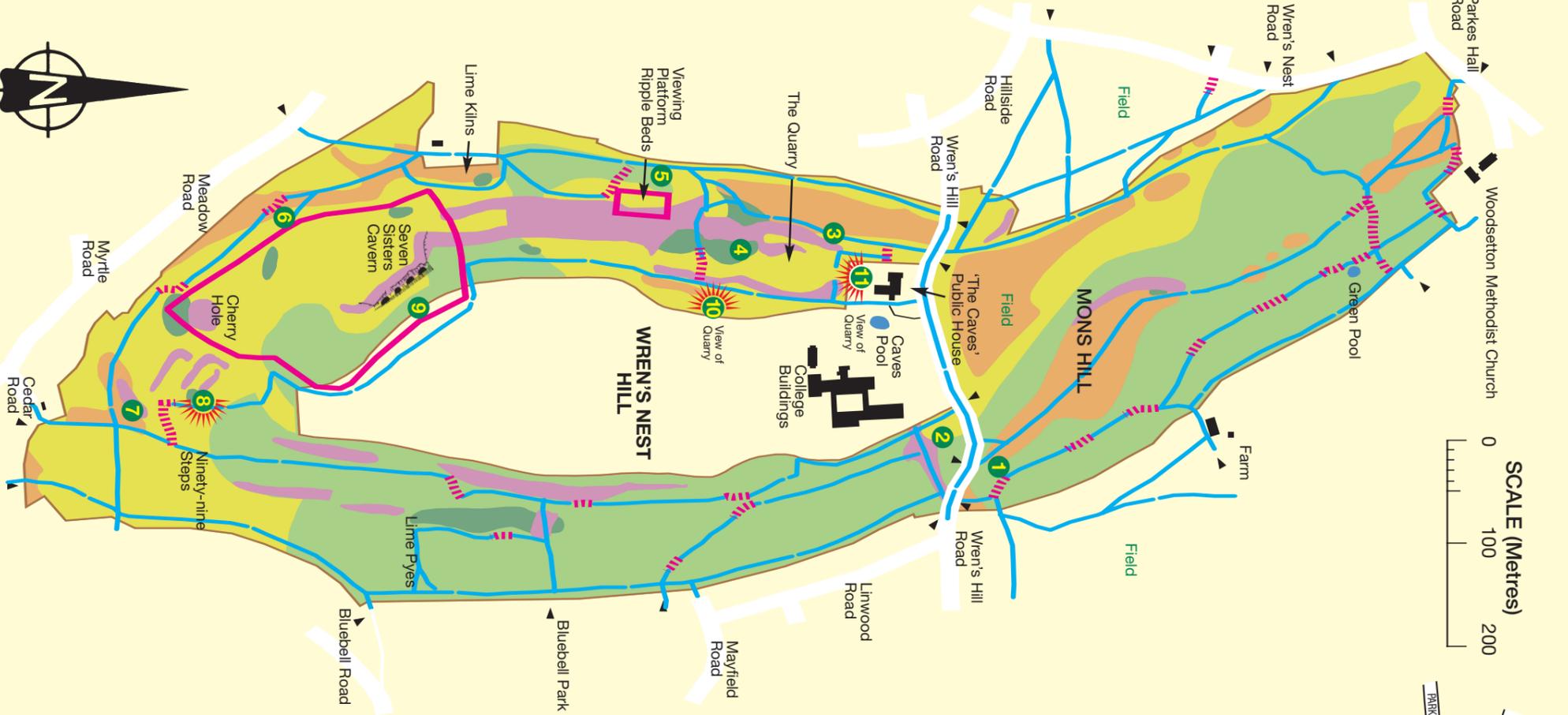
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Rock exposures are often unsafe and visitors must bear this in mind. The footpath network provides good access to the main areas of interest. The areas within the safety fences are strictly out of bounds. Visitors to the Reserve do so entirely at their own risk. Neither Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council nor Natural England can accept liability or responsibility for loss, damage or injury to property or, in the absence of negligence, to persons.

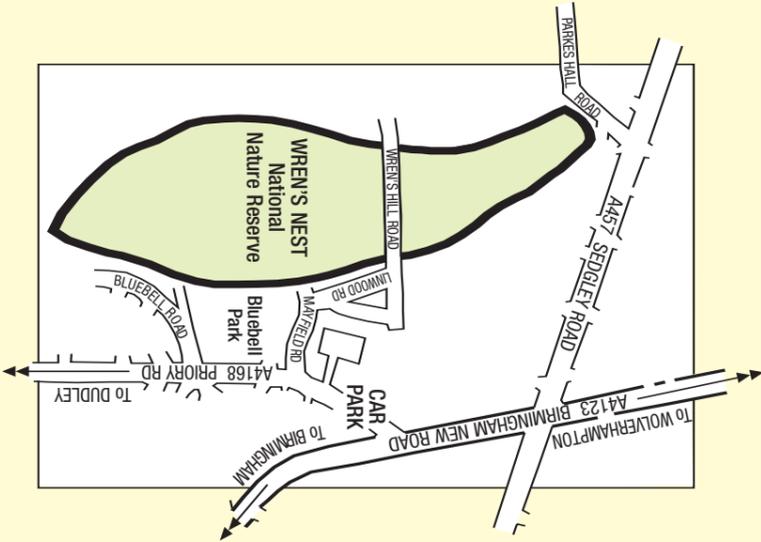
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KEY

- Geological trail markers - see separate field guide
- View point
- Footpath
- Steps
- Safety fence
- Reserve Boundary
- Access Point
- Woodland
- Limestone Grassland
- Other Grassland
- Bare Ground/Rock
- Pool

PLEASE KEEP TO THE FOOTPATHS PROVIDED AND OBSERVE ANY PATH DIVERSIONS. TAKE SPECIAL CARE IN FORMERLY QUARRIED AREAS. NO HAMMERS PERMITTED ANYWHERE ON THE RESERVE.



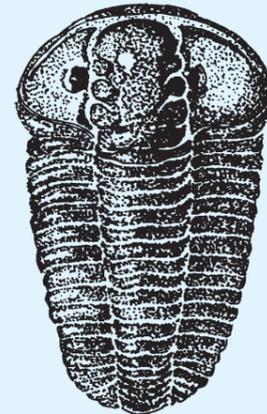
The Wildlife of
WREN'S NEST
National Nature Reserve



The Wildlife of WREN'S NEST National Nature Reserve

The green island rising from a sea of housing that you see today has been used by man for many centuries, but time and nature have begun to disguise the scars of its industrial past and clothe the worked out quarries and hollows in grassland and ash woodland.

The fossils found in the limestone of Wren's Nest have made it an internationally important site for geology.



The "Dudley Bug" exposed to weathering by wind, rain and frost. As the process of weathering continued, mosses and lichens colonised the bare rocks, forming pockets of soil in cracks and hollows. Soon enough soil accumulated for seeds, blown in by the wind or dropped by birds, to germinate and slowly the bare rock became colonised by plants.

The areas of limestone grassland at Wren's Nest are an important part of the Reserve. Because there is only a thin layer of very poor soil over the limestone, the plants that are best able to survive these conditions are those that can tolerate both lime and low nutrient levels. Limestone grasslands are usually rich in different species of wild

flowers, and early summer at Wren's Nest is marked by fine displays of yellow, pink and white, with a great variety of plant forms and leaf shapes. Many of these plants are locally rare and Wren's Nest is one of the few places in the West Midlands where attractive plants like *Small Scabious*, *Milkwort*, *Quaking Grass* and *Hoary Plantain* can be seen.



Small Scabious

The limestone grassland at Wren's Nest also supports good numbers of common spotted orchid, bee orchid and pyramidal orchid.

Grasslands on the Reserve are cut once a year towards the end of summer, a style of management which favours an attractive variety of wild flowers and grasses including *Sweet Vernal Grass*, *Crested Dog's-tail* and *Hay Rattle*.



Redwings on Hawthorn

Where deeper and richer soils have developed, coarser grasses like *Cocksfoot* will be found, with swathes of *Willowherb*, *Thistle* and *Bramble*. These areas are a good place to see butterflies and other invertebrates.

Whenever grassland has not been grazed or mown for a few years, scrub develops. This



Ash - flowers, fruit & leaf

is an early stage in the natural process called *succession*. In this intermediate stage between grassland and woodland, thickets of *Hawthorn* and *Blackthorn* develop, providing valuable nesting sites for birds and a feast of fruit for birds and small mammals in the autumn.

As the scrub matures, providing shade and shelter from wind and cold, seedlings of trees and other woodland plants establish themselves. Plant nutrients are recycled as their leaves fall each autumn, enriching the soil, and eventually the scrub becomes woodland. Much of Mons Hill in the northern part of the Reserve is covered by *Ash woodland*, the natural endpoint of succession on thin and limy soils in our damp, mild climate. On Wren's Nest Hill in the southern part of the Reserve most of the oldest *Ash*, *Beech* and *Sycamore* are survivors of trees planted over the last 200 years.

Because ash trees have a light, airy crown and are late into leaf, light levels reaching the ground are high, particularly

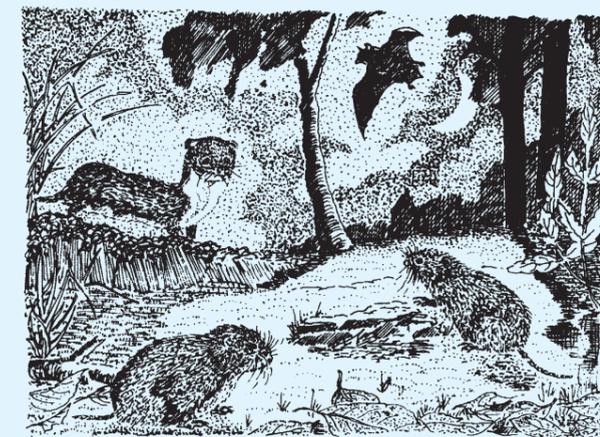


Lesser Celandine

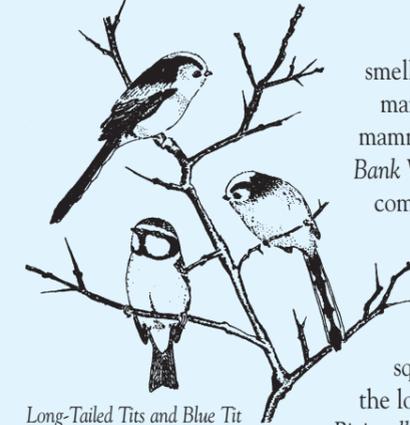
in late Spring. Consequently, ash woodland has a good range of shrubs and a wide assortment of mosses, ferns and other plants growing on the woodland floor. Under the ash trees which form the woodland 'canopy' is a shrub layer of smaller trees and bushes like *Field Maple*, *Hazel* and *Wych Elm*. Although many of the large elm trees on the Reserve have died back because of Dutch Elm disease, there is still plenty of new growth from the rootstocks of the old trees. Beneath the shrub layer you will find plants like *Yellow Archangel*, *Sweet Violet*, *Enchanter's Nightshade* and the *Dog's Mercury*.

The richness of the flora and the presence of three distinct woodland layers (tree layer or canopy, shrub layer and ground layer) provides a wide range of habitats for invertebrates, birds and small mammals to find food and breeding sites. *Felled timber* and *dead trees* left where it is safe to do so in the woodland, can be important as a habitat for invertebrates, mosses and fungi and as a source of food and nest-sites for birds.

The supreme survivor among British mammals, the *Fox*, is able to make a good living from man's wastefulness in urban areas. You will see one only if you are lucky, but you may



From left to right: Weasel, Field Vole, Pipistrelle Bat, Bank Vole



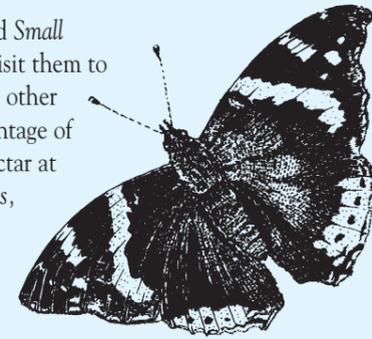
Long-Tailed Tits and Blue Tit

In winter, mixed flocks of *Long-tailed Tits*, *Blue Tits* and *Great Tits* may be found moving through woodland areas together, while *Redwings* and *Fieldfares* will be busy feeding on Hawthorn berries if there is a prolonged spell of cold weather. At the height of the breeding season in late spring, the woodland on Mons Hill rings with the territorial song of *Wren*, *Blackbird*, *Robin*, *Chiffchaff*, *Great Tit* and *Willow Warbler*. If you are in luck, you may also hear a *Nuthatch* or *Treecreeper* calling as it flits from one tree to another.

At the height of summer on a warm sunny day, a walk across Wren's Nest should allow you to see as many as ten different kinds of butterfly. Clumps of *Thistles* and *Knapweed* are a good place to see *Red*

smell one at its territorial marking point. Smaller mammals like *Wood Mice*, *Bank Voles* and *Weasels* are common on the Reserve but are rarely seen, although you may hear the high-pitched squeaking of *Shrews* in the long grass by day or of *Pipistrelle Bats* by night. The commonest mammal on the Reserve is probably the *Grey Squirrel*, which can cause a great deal of damage to trees by nibbling bark and young shoots.

Admirals, *Skippers* and *Small Tortoiseshells* which visit them to feed on nectar. Many other insects also take advantage of the rich sources of nectar at Wren's Nest and *moths*, *bumble bees*, *hoverflies* and a great variety of *beetles* are all likely to be seen. *Brown Hawker* and *Common Darter dragonflies* may be found hunting along hedgerows or in quarries, and *damselflies* are often seen around the Caves pool.



Red Admiral

Plant succession

Bare Rock

Mosses and Lichens

Grasses and Herbs

Scrub

Woodland