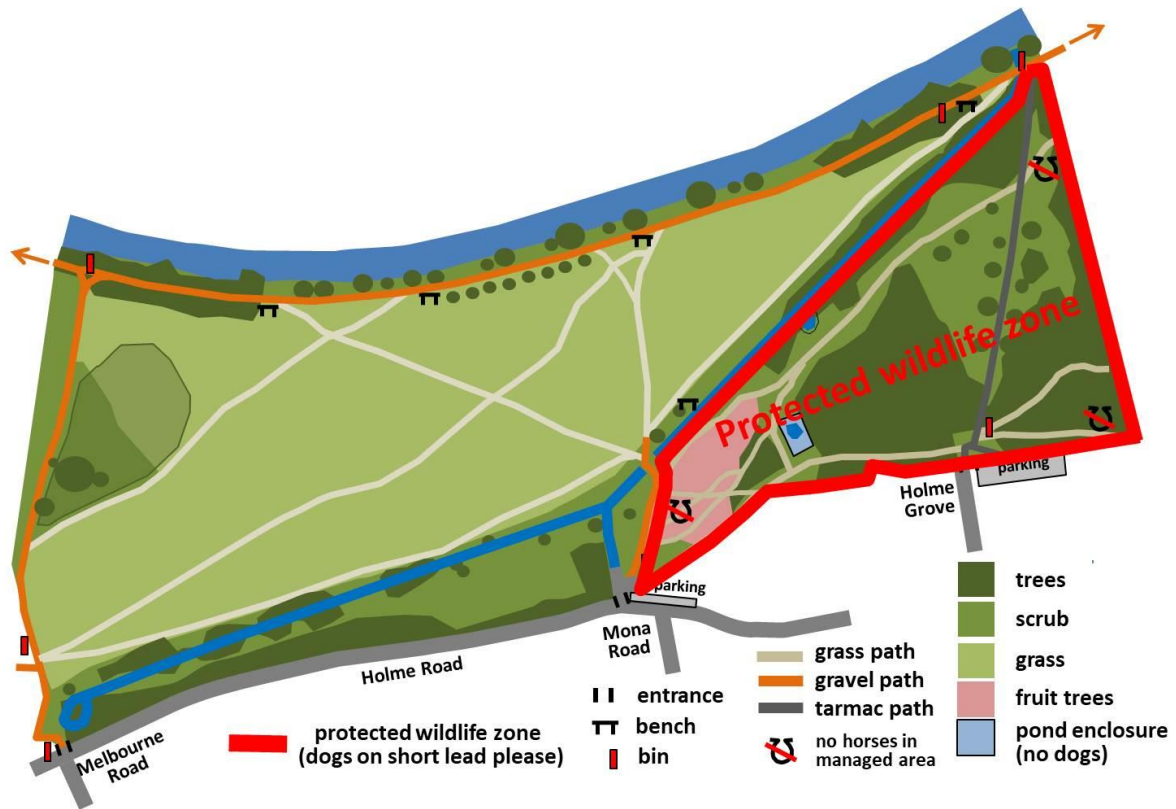


Wildlife Protection Zone on The Hook Nature Reserve



The Hook Nature Reserve is in danger if becoming a victim of its own success. Since Covid many more people, especially those with dogs, are visiting the reserve. People come to enjoy nature and do not intend to cause problems, but these increased numbers are putting extra pressure on wildlife in the more sensitive parts of the reserve. The area between Mona Road and Holme Grove, south of the dyke is particularly vulnerable. The areas of wildflower walk and meadow sown in 2021/2 are being trampled so they will not grow. Ground-feeding birds such as blackbird, thrush and woodpecker can be disturbed by dogs off a lead. Wrens, robins, dunnocks and whitethroats will often build their nests low down in scrub. An inquisitive dog just sniffing around can cause the nest to be abandoned. And last, but by no means least, there has been shocking amounts of dog fouling, particularly around the orchard, which needs to be tackled.

After consultation with Rushcliffe Borough Council (owners of the reserve) and Nottinghamshire Wildlife it has been decided that this area should become a 'Wildlife Protection Zone' where owners are asked to put their dogs on a short lead – see map. We'll be speaking at the LBCA meeting, at our AGM and at events on The Hook to explain the reasoning behind this and to answer questions.

We are also asking horse-riders to keep to the main field, as their hooves damage the paths. We have been busy spreading 2 tonnes of gravel to try and stabilise and define the paths so that people know where to walk and can avoid the germinating wildflower plants.

The majority of the reserve, the main field/meadow area, will still be available for owners to exercise their dogs off lead. As always, they are asked to keep their dog in sight and under control and to clean up after them.

We hope that this 'Wildlife Protected Zone' will do as its name suggests and allow plants and wildlife to flourish with less disturbance. It will also mean that we can resume wildlife education with local pupils knowing that any dogs will be under close control.

Butterflies on the Hook.

Friends of the Hook have supported a regular survey of butterflies since 2020. This is part of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, and involves a weekly survey, starting at the beginning of April each year and continuing until the end of September.

2022 was our best year to date, when we recorded a total of 21 species.

The 2 species that were new to us in 2022 were the Small Copper and the Brown Argos.



Brown Argos on The Hook in 2022
Picture by Annette Roe



A Comma, sunning itself on
the bench near the pond

The species that we have recorded in the greatest numbers over the 3 years (starting with the most numerous) are: Small White, Large White, Orange Tip, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood and Small Tortoiseshell. There are also reasonable numbers of Peacock, Comma, Small Skipper, Meadow Brown and Holly Blue.

The other species recorded, in smaller numbers, are: Green Veined White, Large Skipper, Essex Skipper, Red Admiral, Common Blue, Brimstone and Painted Lady.



Painted Lady on The Hook in 2022

We have at least 8 volunteers who help with the identification and recording of species and numbers. Their contribution is invaluable and much appreciated. 2023 has started well, with more Brimstone around, in particular, than we have seen in previous years. The prediction on a national level is that overall numbers will be down, because last year's drought affected caterpillar numbers. We are hoping to buck the trend locally, as planting of flowers, shrubs and trees which are attractive to butterflies has continued.

Dave Pratt April 2023

Dawn Chorus Walk Sunday April 30th – Book your place



The Blackcap has a lovely fluting call

Have you ever got up really early in late spring to listen to the Dawn Chorus? It's a really special experience, with bird song breaking through the chill of the morning air as the birds call to establish territory and attract a mate.

Sunday April 30th is our local Dawn Chorus Day. 'Friends of the Hook' will lead a Dawn Chorus walk where Lady Bay Birdwatchers will be present to help identify the birds singing on The Hook.

Everyone is welcome, beginner or expert. Book your place by emailing friendsofthehook@gmail.com

MEET AT HOLME GROVE CAR PARK AT 5.45 A.M. ON SUNDAY APRIL 30TH

Next FrOTH Working Party Sunday May 7th Meet 2pm at Mona Road entrance

Friends of The Hook Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 9th May 2023 7pm at Breckles Hall All Hallows

There will be a review of the work undertaken this year and a look at what surveys are showing about wildlife successes and challenges on the reserve. The Committee and Officers will be elected and there will be discussion about plans for 2023.

All are invited.

Jane Browne

Secretary Friends of The Hook

friendsofthehook@gmail.com