



Cornwall

Cornwall Wildlife Trust

- Protects wildlife where you live
- Campaigns for wildlife and the environment
- Encourages people to enjoy wildlife
- Involves volunteers in all aspects of its work
- Gives expert wildlife advice

Cornwall Wildlife Trust cares for over 50 nature reserves around the county. Most are open to the public at all times. You can find out more about the Trust, how to become a member and events on the Trust's web site, or by phoning the Trust on the number below.

Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Five Acres, Allet, Truro, TR4 9DJ.

Tel: (01872) 273939 Fax: (01872) 225476

Website: www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk

Email: info@cornwt.demon.co.uk

How to get to Cabilla & Redrice Woods Nature Reserve



Directions:

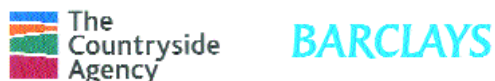
From the A38, 3 miles (5 km) east of Bodmin, take the turning towards Cardinham (next to White Lodge). Cross the bridge over the River Fowey, and access is via the first track on the right.

Please note: This is a working woodland and active management may be carried out at any time of year. Please adhere to all warning signs and leave gates as you found them. Dogs are only permitted on the public footpath marked on the map and should be kept on a lead at all times.

The purchase and management of this site has been funded by:



The production of this leaflet was funded by:



Cabilla & Redrice Woods Nature Reserve



Cornwall



Photography by Steve Chudleigh.

Illustration by Sarah McCartney. Design by Sheila McCann-Downes



Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Cabilla & Redrice Woods Nature Reserve



200 metres



Cornwall

Cabilla & Redrice Woods nature trail



Cornwall

1) Wood pasture

The flat, relatively fertile valley bottoms have traditionally been managed differently to the steep sides at Cabilla. Better soils grew better trees so some specimens, chiefly oak, were allowed to grow on to provide timber for constructing buildings and boats. Beneath these large, spreading trees, animals grazed maintaining a much more open environment than that found on the densely clad slopes.

Changing agricultural practices since the war led to a cessation of grazing, allowing masses of tree seedlings to flourish. This "secondary woodland" now threatens to over-top the existing old oaks, which, with abundant space, have grown outwards as much as upwards. If un-checked, these oaks would soon be shaded out and die with subsequent loss of their associated flora and fauna - already, many have lost lower branches. To reverse this process, the Trust has concentrated on clearing around these veteran trees to allow light and air in, and re-introduced grazing, thereby ensuring continued longevity of both trees and associated bio-diversity.

2) Coppice

The practice of felling areas of woodland for timber on a rotational basis, known as coppicing, has been practiced here for hundreds of years. Poor soil and

steep terrain have precluded primary agricultural usage resulting in continuous woodland cover for hundreds of years, thereby enabling this area to be officially classed as "ancient semi-natural woodland" that is woods that were here before 1600. This continuity of tree cover is essential for the survival of a whole range of plant and animal species, making ancient woodland a vital - and incredibly scarce - habitat.

As a result of the sites long association with coppicing, many species have evolved life cycles that are dependent on the continuation of this practice. With the arrival of spring, an area cleared that winter will burst into life as long dormant seeds of flowers and other plants germinate in the increased light and warmth, attracting butterflies, bees, moths, and other insects. Reptiles such as adders seek out these open areas to bask whilst solitary bees excavate their burrows in patches of bare ground. Following years see an increase in scrub, and its associated fauna such as dormouse and birds like the garden warbler. Eventually the coppice re-growth out competes this scrub, shading it out, until after about 25 years the whole cycle can begin anew.

3) Glade

This large open area, is the result of a failed conifer plantation the remains of

which the Trust cleared soon after it first acquired the site in 1997. Formerly, bracken dominated the ground flora, casting dense shade and accumulating such a thick leaf litter that few other plant species could compete. To break this mono-culture it was decided to include this area as part of the Trust's grazing programme, bordering as it does on to wood pasture and having been grazed in the past - note the ancient hedges and gateways that delineate this area. The introduction of large herbivores has had a dramatic effect on bracken cover. Though still abundant, the trampling of heavy hooves has weakened growth and cleared the underlying litter resulting in an increase in plant diversity and numbers, particularly of common dog-violet - an important larval food plant for some of our rarer types of fritillary butterflies.

4) Pond

Areas of open water are often scarce features on such steep sided valleys and this pond is a vitally important habitat for amphibians and insects. Originally formed as a result of poor drainage on the main track, it was considered appropriate to shift it to one side for obvious reasons. After a day's clearance and an hour or two with a digger, the end result was quickly colonised by common frog, common toad, and palmate newt, as well as many

species of dragonfly and other insects. Some of the livestock that graze the woods have access to one edge of the pond, their grazing and "poaching" of the margin adding another habitat type for certain species to exploit. The water source that feeds the pond issues from the small adit about 50 metres up the track that drains the mine workings further up the hill. The red colouration is caused by iron oxide flushed from the old mine and deposited here, staining the watercourse - it causes no harm to the local wildlife.

5) Large adit

Another legacy of Cabilla's mining heritage, this large adit is an important roosting and hibernation site for bats, in particular two of our rarer species - greater and lesser horseshoe. It provides a dark, safe haven in which they can pass the winter months protected from predators whilst cushioned from the vagaries of external temperature fluctuations that might cause them to emerge too early in the year. For the protection of both bats and humans alike, this adit is secured with a locked steel gate.

From this point, continue along the track until you reach the hairpin bend and point number:

6) Old field

Shown on the earliest of maps for the area (circa C16th) as an established field system, this area had a long, un-broken history until the early 1970s. Although there is evidence of limited arable use at the eastern end in the 17th and 18th centuries, it is as a meadow that this land has chiefly been used. Even relatively recently in the 1950 it was still being cut for hay to feed the horses that worked in these woods. Unfortunately in the 1970s tax incentives for forestry resulted in the whole area being planted with conifers, thereby wiping out any remaining old grassland species that may have been associated with the existing habitat. To add insult to injury no follow up work was ever attempted to the new crop, resulting in the Trust inheriting a deer and squirrel damaged, un-thinned, poorly formed plantation of no commercial, let alone wildlife, value. Consequently it was decided to remove the timber altogether with the resulting produce being used in the construction of the many bird and mammal boxes erected here and on other Trust reserves, or going for firewood. This area is also being grazed to try to re-establish the more open "pre-coniferisation" habitat of the past.

From here, walk on down the track and continue straight ahead at the junction - just follow the green arrows - until point number

7) Alder coppice

The transitional zone from the drier slopes to the wet valley bottom is made obvious here by the change in vegetation type. Oak, ash, hazel and other species that predominate on the slopes are unable to tolerate the lower waterlogged ground, and give way to willow and alder. This alder has been coppiced in the past, as is evident by the multi-stemmed growth from the stumps. Alder wood was used in the manufacture of clogs, but here it was probably coppiced for charcoal. Alder charcoal was an important component in the manufacture of gunpowder, formerly produced at nearby Trago Mills. Looking towards the stream, you may notice large muddy patches devoid of vegetation. These are wallows created by red deer rolling in mud to relieve the irritation of parasites and to keep cool in summer and in the autumn rut.

As you cross the wooden bridge over the stream, you enter Redrice woods, which are different in character to Cabilla as will be seen a little later. Continue up the boardwalk to reach point number



8) Royal fern

Found in wet areas in western parts of Britain, the large royal fern is often cultivated in gardens for its beautiful stately appearance.

From here, take a deep breath and head straight up the hill to the strategically placed seats at point number:

9) Charcoal platform

As you pause to take a breather, the flat area you are sitting on is an example of one of the most abundant archaeological features in the woods. These charcoal burning platforms may have been used as early as 1300 as sites on which coppiced oak was converted to charcoal. Charcoal was valued for its intense heat on burning - it produces roughly twice the amount of heat as wood. It was therefore used in iron working and other metallurgical industries. In Cornwall, enormous quantities were required for smelting tin ore in the blowing houses, common by the mid-14th century and continuing until the late 18th century when charcoal was superseded by coal and coke. It was this continuous demand for charcoal that determined the character of much of Cabilla and Redrice woods. Redrice differs from Cabilla in that it has been completely clear-felled on a couple of occasions and it consists almost entirely of sessile oak coppice. Sessile oak is the dominant oak in much of western Britain and as well as its use for charcoal it was also valued for its bark which was used in the leather tanning industry. Redrice has also had a history of being grazed, traditionally by cattle and latterly by sheep. This, coupled with the heavy shade cast by the oak canopy, has resulted in a reduced shrub layer giving the wood a more "open" feel and providing an ideal niche for certain special plants and animals. In places large numbers of ferns carpet the woodland floor while the trees are festooned with mosses and lichens. In spring you may hear or see the delightful pied flycatcher as it sets up its breeding territory. Redrice is also a stronghold of the rare blue ground beetle, found on fewer than a dozen sites in the U.K., all of which are in the south-west. In the near future it is hoped to re-introduce grazing to maintain this habitat.

You now have a choice of continuing down the hill or up the hill to point number:

10) The hide, where a feeding station has been set up, or continuing down the hill. If using the hide, please ensure you remain quiet at all times (including entering and exiting), close the door behind you, and take all litter home with you.

Otherwise, continue down the main track. On your way down, you may notice some wooden nest boxes mounted on the surrounding trees. The low frequency of mature trees in large parts of the reserve results in a lack of natural nest sites for birds, particularly the late-arriving pied flycatcher, and mammals such as dormice and bats. Although the habitat may be ideal, there is no place to raise a family. Thankfully the provision of appropriate nest boxes has helped overcome this shortage of accommodation! As all species that use these boxes are protected by law, **we request visitors to the reserve not to touch or interfere with the boxes in any way.**

At the bottom of the hill turn right and you will see point number:

11) Oak plantation.

The large oaks that you can see here are of a different species to the sessile oaks through which you have just passed. These English oaks were planted and have been allowed to grow on as timber trees for use in construction of buildings, boats etc. They now provide one of the few areas of mature woodland on the site. As they age and slowly decay, the associated dead and dying timber supports a huge variety of invertebrates and other animal life, notably the aforementioned blue ground beetle, as well as providing a home for many species of fungi and lichens.

12) Granite bridge

Built in the 18th or early 19th century but certainly marked on the 1840 tithe map, this bridge linking Cabilla with Redrice had been almost completely destroyed by flooding and neglect when the Cornwall Wildlife Trust first acquired the site. Both bridgeheads

were completely rebuilt with the help of volunteers, and the original granite lintels were extracted from the river bed. Even after this rebuilding work the bridge was too fragile to bear the weight of even the relatively light machinery the Trust was using to work the woods. A wider, more solid timber structure was therefore constructed over the top of the original which, as it turns out, has provided an ideal habitat for nesting dippers. Otters also regularly pass underneath using some of the surrounding stones as sprinting points.

After crossing the bridge, bear left and follow the track up the slope until you arrive back at the hairpin bend. Turn right and continue up the hill where you again have the option of a detour up to point number:

13) Mine workings

Built in the early 19th century and repaired and repointed in the late 20th, this is East Wheal Jane a former lead/silver mine that commands impressive views over the Glynn valley. The large beech trees in this area were planted about 150 years ago. Although impressive to look at, beech has the unfortunate habit of becoming dominant over oak in traditional woodlands such as this due to its ability to grow in dense shade, thereby out-competing native species. In the long term, the Trust plans to remove the beech gradually to favour the remaining oak and ash. The result will be more natural woodland dominated by native trees. Replacement of mature beech will also remove the source of seed, which has allowed beech seedlings to invade many other areas of Cabilla and Redrice Woods.

Retrace your steps from the mine and follow the arrow right, along down the hill until you meet the main track. Turn right and follow the path back to the site entrance.

Thank you for visiting Cabilla & Redrice Woods.