



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

North Leigh Common

a quiet place to enjoy

The present Common is a remnant of what was a much larger area of heathland, covering several parishes, prior to the impact of the Enclosure Acts of the 17th & 18th centuries. Certain people, known as Commoners, would have then had legal rights to use the Common in various ways, such as livestock grazing or the collection of wood for fuel. By the early 1900's such rights were no longer taken up and the area gradually became overgrown with trees and shrubs.

Today under the guidance and control of West Oxfordshire District Council the area is being carefully managed to restore and maintain a wide range of wildlife habitats whilst also providing a highly valued open access facility for all-year-round public enjoyment.

Grassland

The soil conditions on the Common are suitable to support grass swards which do well in slightly acid conditions, a very rare habitat in Oxfordshire. However, without the facility available for introducing grazing stock, it is necessary to carry out occasional mechanical mowing to prevent the swards being smothered by Scrub and Bracken re-growth. A prime objective is to see the re-establishment of Heather.



Heather



Bee Orchid

Scrub Management

Clearance of areas of naturally regenerated thick scrub, particularly Hawthorn and Blackthorn, has encouraged greater diversity of ground flora including Orchids, Wood Anemones and Devil's Bit Scabious. In other situations, tall scrub has been cut down to ground level (coppiced) to encourage it to grow back more densely to provide better cover for nesting birds.



Hawthorn Berries

Birds and Insects

The woodland and scrub provide excellent nesting and feeding habitats for a wide range of bird life, including summer and winter migrants. The swathes of spring blossom and increasing diversity of summer-flowering plants provide excellent nectar sources for insects.



Fieldfare

Wetlands

A scarce resource in West Oxfordshire. The various pits on the Common, abandoned after a period of post Enclosure Act clay and sand / gravel digging, have been partially cleared and now provide important all-year ecological and landscape interest.



Common Reedbeds



Key

	Woodland		Main paths
	Scrub		Minor paths
	Bracken		Car park
	Former sand and clay pits		
	Short grass		

0 20 40 60 80 100

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Common Frog