

Kyloe Woods and Holburn Moss 4.5miles

Prepared by Ian & Keith Davison

Start at Holburn Grange Car Park (G.R. NU051351)

On leaving the car park turn left and head up a wide grassy track which is bordered by ancient Hawthorn hedges on both sides. During the autumn and winter Chaffinches, Reed Buntings and Yellowhammers abound. After about 500yards you reach a gate; at this point turn left and follow the track which can be wet and muddy in places. It winds through a mixture of Gorse scrub, Bracken and a small newly-planted deciduous plantation. During the summer months the air is full of the sounds of singing birds such as Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Linnet, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and, if you are lucky, the reeling call of the Grasshopper Warbler. Whilst walking along this section keep checking the craggy hillside to the right for Buzzards and Kestrels soaring on the thermals.

After about 1.5 miles you reach a gate beside a conifer plantation. Turn right and follow the obvious track until you reach Kyloe Wood.

To your right is the seemingly barren expanse of Holburn Moss. This is a very important area of peat bog and is home to many interesting plants, amphibians and insects. In the late summer dragonflies abound and there is always chance of a Hobby hawking for a meal.

If you have a warm, clear evening in late May or early June, Holburn Moss can be brought to life by the churring call of Nightjars which hunt over the Moss. As dusk falls watch for the tell-tale white wing patches which can be seen even in low light.

On entering the Wood keep to the marked right of way which heads through the trees for about 1 mile.

If you are lucky you may see a Red Squirrel but you are much more likely to see some of the many Roe Deer which inhabit the woods. This area is also very good for typical woodland species such as Coal Tit, Siskin, Treecreeper, Chaffinch, and the real star bird - the Crossbill.

After you leave the wood follow the track for about 600 yards until you reach a series of signposts where you should take the path that leads to St. Cuthbert's Cave.

This part of the walk is across open farmland with stock in it so please make sure all gates are fastened.

This section is usually quite wet underfoot and is good for birds such as Lapwing, Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Pied Wagtail. It is also worth looking out for pasture loving fungi such as Parasol Mushroom and Shaggy Inkcap.

From here it is best to skirt around the side of St Cuthbert's Cave Wood. This is probably the best place to see Crossbills and it is always such a thrill to see them feeding in the tops of the conifers; especially the bright orange/ red males.

From this point you can see the car park as you wind back down the hill towards the finish.

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