



## **RINGWOOD NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

### Holt Heath Walk

Date: 21st October 2021  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Walk Leader: Anne-Marie Rose  
 Attendees: 6

Holt Heath is one of Dorset's largest remaining areas of lowland heathland, part of the Kingston Lacy Estate, owned and managed by the National Trust. In the 1630s the Lord Chief Justice of the day, Sir John Banks, acquired the forest, wood and heath with additional holdings to the south. Today the area of the heath, from the north to the south of the Holt-Mannington road is approximately 1,048 acres (424 Hectares).

Dry heath, wet heath and mire communities are all represented at the site. The mire system and surrounding wet heathland is currently in an unfavorable condition. This is because of an extensive network of historic ditches that criss-cross the area, some of which date from the medieval period. The network of ditches causes lots of water to run-off the heath resulting in the mire becoming much drier than desired, especially during the summer months. With the support of Natural England, the National Trust are restoring the mire, in order to restore it back to support the nature that relies on this area to survive and thrive.

Local plants include Ling Heather, Bell Heather, Cross-leaved Heath, Bog Asphodel, Sundews and Marsh Gentian. Birds include Dartford Warbler, Stonechat and Nightjar. The heath is Dorset's only site for breeding Curlew and all six of Britain's reptile species are found here.

Unfortunately, powerful autumn Storm Aureole arrived from France and passed over us the night before, leaving the planned route 30 to 35 centimeters deep of flood water in places. The walk was due to start from West Moors Memorial Hall car park in West Moors, Dorset, walking westwards along the Castleman Trailway in order to access the heath. Having had to turn back due to the flooding, instead the six hardy members walked to Newmans Lane along Station Road where they were able to access the heath from the boardwalk which itself was underwater. A circular route was taken returning via the boardwalk, then back along Newmans Lane the same way back to the car park, stopping on the way at Gullivers Farm shop for well earned refreshments.

<b>Flowering Plants</b>	<b>Birds</b>	<b>Insects</b>	<b>Fungi</b>
White Clover	Robin	Ladybird	Purple Swamp Brittlelegill
Lesser Stitchwort	Carrion Crow	Brimstone Butterfly	Fly Agaric
Dandelion	Blackbird		Birch Polypore
Daisy	Wood Pigeon		White Brain
Common Ragwort	Blue Tit		Common Funnel
Ling	Jay		Common Stump Brittlestem
Bell Heather	Meadow Pipit		Spotted Toughshank
Gorse	Kestrel		
Herb Robert	Buzzard		
	Dartford Warbler		
	Stonechat		
	Magpie		
	House Sparrow		



*Brimstone Butterfly by Richard Briggs*



*Floods on Holt Heath by Maz Russell*