



Broadwater Warren

News Update: Jan-Mar 2010

Major restoration work set to start



Jackie Cooper (SENPA)

After three years of planning, surveying and consultation, we are due to start the first phase of restoration of the heathland and ancient woodland from mid January 2010.

The reserve will remain open but there will be some important **temporary changes to access**, including the closure of certain gateways and paths while the work takes place. Read on to find more.

Please bear with us - we will be doing what we can to keep disruption to visitors and local people to a minimum, and above all to keep people safe.

The photo shows forestry operations during heathland restoration at RSPB Farnham Heath in Surrey, harvesting the mature timber. Photo: Jackie Cooper (SENPA)

What is happening, why and when!

By mid-January 2010, the Environmental Impact Assessment process should be complete, allowing our restoration work to begin. It will start to recreate the mosaic of habitats that is likely to have been here for hundreds of years.

Because much of the area had been turned into a conifer plantation in the 20th century, this is quite a big job, and will be phased over six winters.

Here is the likely programme of work for this first winter period in 2010, how it may affect you, and what we are doing to minimise its impact.

Timing: Work is likely to run from mid January to the end of February 2010. Work will take place during daylight hours only.

What will happen?

This first phase is to clear an area of mainly young conifer trees on areas that were open until only a few years ago.

- The site archaeology will be marked up to protect it from damage.
- Contractors will remove the young conifers using a pick-up forest mulcher. The mulch will be removed from the site.
- The blocks of mature trees will be felled or thinned using forestry machinery and the timber lengths stored near to Gate 1.
- The timber will be taken away by lorry. It will go to the construction, planking or fencing industries. The tops of the trees will be used as woodfuel in the local Community College biomass boiler at Crowborough.
- The total area being restored in this first phase is about 22 hectares

Why are we doing it?

This area of young pine is being restored to heathland, one of the rarest habitats in the world with some incredibly rare wildlife. Some of the areas of mature pine will regrow as broadleaved woodland.

What will it look like?

Whenever a conifer crop is removed, the immediate

aftermath looks awful. The conifers have starved the ground of light so there are no plants, and just a layer of dead needles and twigs, cut stumps, and vehicle tracks. If you have not seen this before, you will wonder how it can possibly help wildlife!

But it does, the original heathland plant seeds buried in the soil start to germinate in the first year, and rare Wood Larks often move in quickly. By the second summer, the first heather plants may flower, and within a few years it should look glorious and the wide views to the High Weald landscape will be restored.

Please bear with nature - she will be working as quickly as possible!

Changes to access

- The unofficial pedestrian access from the lay-by just off the Bunny Lane crossroads will be closed. Work will be happening in the reserve just inside here. This access will not reopen, so please use the main car park.
- Gate 1 will close to public access and parking - this will be the access for forestry vehicles. This will reopen as soon as work is complete.
- A number of paths will need to be closed while the restoration is taking place for your safety. Our apologies for any inconvenience while this happens
- The car park will be open as normal.

Given the very wet conditions recently, it is likely that there will be some damage to tracks in and around the restoration area, which we will repair.

Forestry traffic: We expect the timber extraction to create about 85 lorry-loads of timber, heading straight out to the A26. We apologise for any inconvenience this causes.

IMPORTANT: Your safety

- All areas where work is taking place will be clearly cordoned off.
- Please keep yourselves and your dogs out of these areas AT ALL TIMES while the cordons are in place.



The second year after heathland restoration at RSPB Farnham Heath in Surrey, with heather already starting to bloom. Broadwater Warren will retain more of a mosaic of heathland and woodland habitats, typical of the High Weald. Photo: Adrian Thomas.

Work programme: mid Jan - end Feb 2010



Calling all dog walkers

The opening of the car park has brought a new flurry of dogs and their walkers. We continue to welcome responsible owners, but we do ask that dogs are under close control (including not letting them trouble other reserve visitors), and that dog mess is not left on the paths. To help you we will be paying for a trial of dog bins to be installed at the entrances. We hope we can count on your support to clear up after your dog and keep the reserve a delight for all visitors. Thank you.

Wet woodland boardwalk is open

The boardwalk across the iron-stained pools of the wet woodland (the orange colour is natural!) past the Great Tussock Sedges is now open.

It gives visitors a walk through an area that is wet almost all year, giving you a close glimpse of this rare habitat without damaging it.

We will revise the trail guide to include this new route.



The finished boardwalk where it crosses the stream.

Photo: Alan Loweth

Decoy Pond springs back to life

The restoration of the Decoy Pond is well advanced. The badly damaged track at the head of the pond has been repaired, and the dam has been rebuilt, allowing the pond to refill to its former level.

Already, a Grey Wagtail has been enjoying the restored habitat, and we are hopeful there will be plenty of dragonflies this summer.

The plan is to keep the dam and the northern bank as refuge area for wildlife only, and improve access for people around the southern and eastern ends, where we will put in some benches.



The newly-restored pond has been looking picture-postcard perfect in the recent snows.

Photo: Alan Loweth

The RSPB is grateful to all the many groups and individuals who have supported the purchase and development of Broadwater Warren in many different ways, including:



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The RSPB is the UK charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife, helping to create a better world for us all.