

Hunsdon Mead

An area of common land between the River Stort and the Stort Navigation. About two thirds of the site is in Essex and a third in Hertfordshire, and it is one of the finest surviving unimproved grassland sites in the two counties.

The Hertfordshire & Middlesex and Essex Wildlife Trusts acquired Hunsdon Mead when it became available for purchase in 1981. Eastwick Mead was purchased by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust in 2007.

Traditional management of Hunsdon Mead (see below) has maintained the conditions required by a wide range of flowering plants. In April and May it is yellow with cowslips and marsh marigolds. As May gives way to June colours change continually, as plants such as yellow rattle, ragged robin, lady's smock, meadowsweet, bugle and many others flower in profusion. There are small colonies of green-winged orchid and adder's-tongue fern. Quaking grass and several uncommon sedge species are also present. Eastwick Mead has been more intensively managed over recent years and as a result does not have the diversity found on Hunsdon Mead. However, it is hoped that through appropriate management the Trust can create the right conditions for species to recolonise

All the typical butterflies of hay meadow occur and the day-flying small yellow underwing moth is also established. Mayflies and dragonflies are much in evidence.

During the winter, when the Mead floods, large flocks of lapwing and golden plover come to feed along with other winter migrants.

For over 600 years Hunsdon Mead has been managed on the ancient Lammas system under which local farmers graze their cattle in late summer after a July hay cut. If it were cut earlier some of the flowering plants would not have time to set seed for the following year. Grazing by cattle and sheep is allowed only between 1st August and 1st March, after which the vegetation is allowed to grow up. The remarkable abundance of wildlife found there is a result of that management regime, which we are continuing today. We are working to introduce a similar management regime to Eastwick Mead.



- [Get driving directions](#)
- [Find nearby public transport](#)

How to Get Here

Location

Roydon

Directions

The reserve is about one mile north-east of Roydon and can be reached by following the Stort Navigation towpath from Roydon in the direction of Harlow a walk of about one mile. The easiest parking is at Roydon BR station.

Public Transport Links

Roydon station (Liverpool St - Cambridge).

Walking Links

Map Reference

TL 416108

Visitor Guide

Size

28 hectares

Access to site

Accessible at all times

Access around site

Walking time

Advice on what to wear/bring

Between March and July please do not walk across or into the Mead itself until the hay is cut. Trampling damages the plants and also reduces the value of the grass as hay for the farmer. During this period please keep to the towpath or walk in single file along the permissive path beside the River Stort.

Map of site (if available)