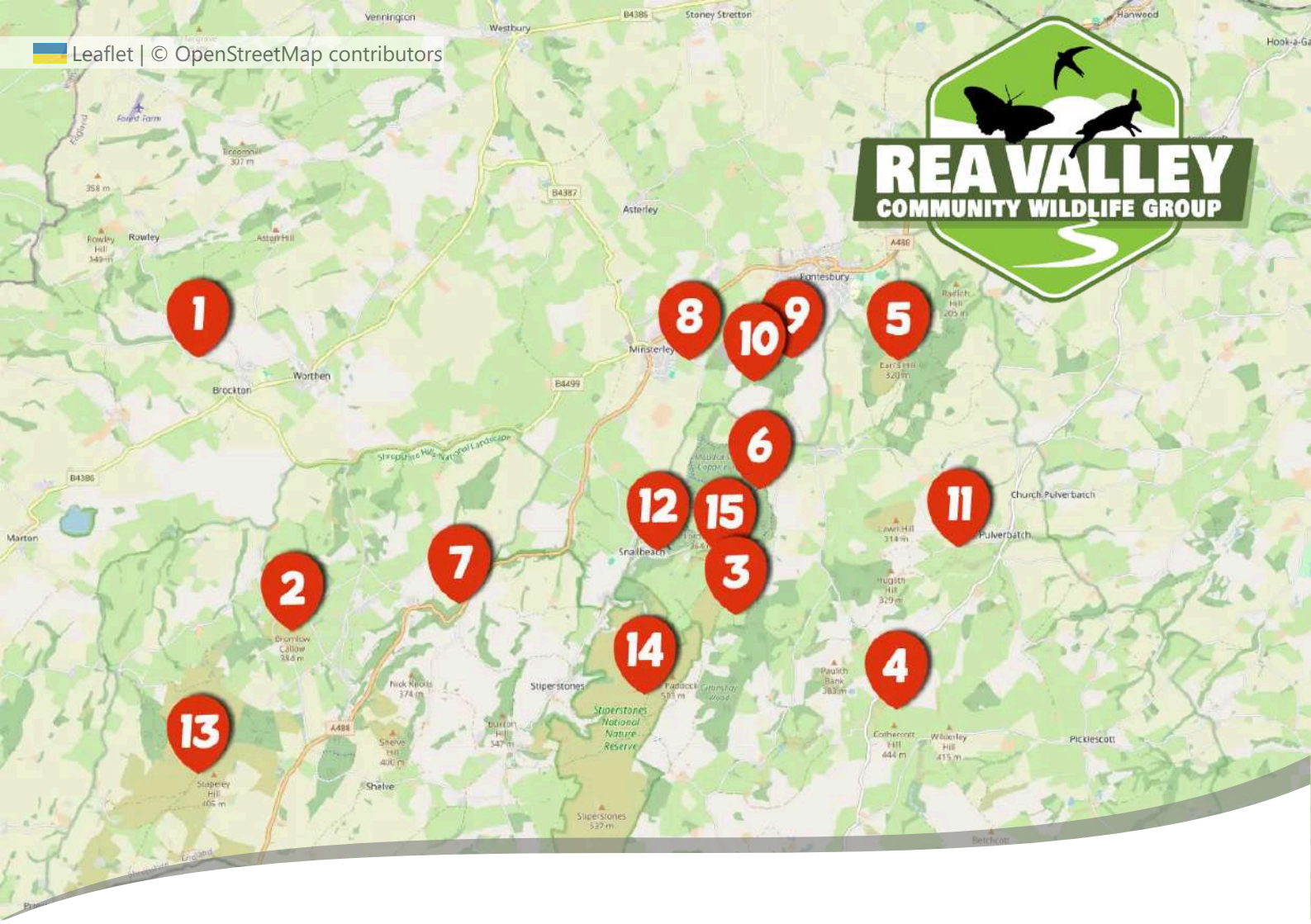
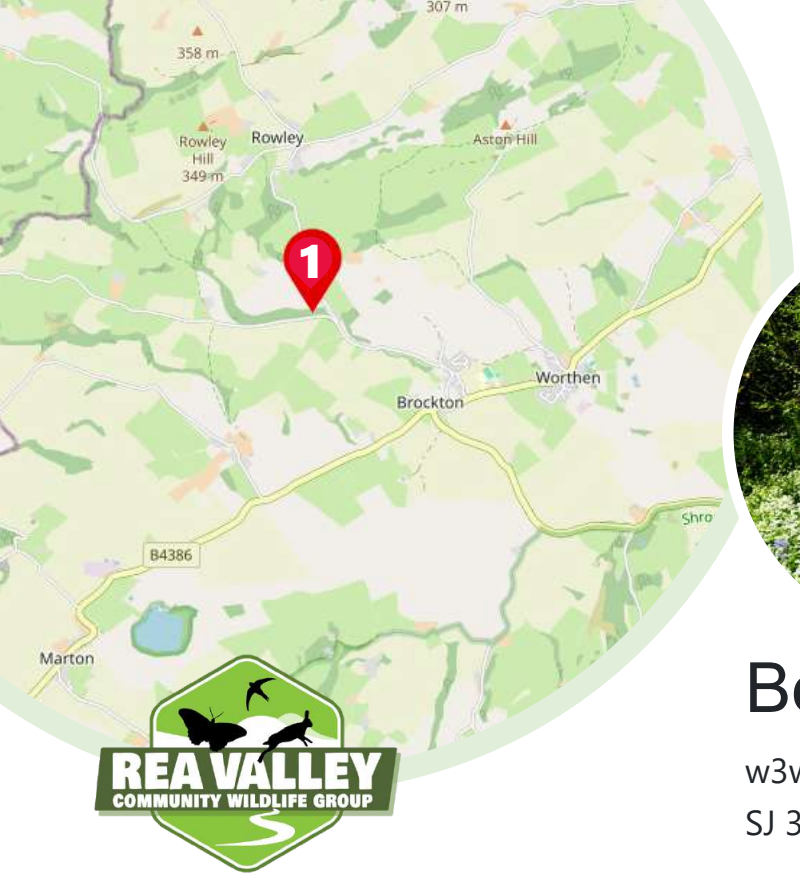


Map data on following pages from OpenStreetMap

Rea Valley Wildlife Hotspots

Whether you are new to the area, or looking for ideas of local sites to visit that have been recognised for their wonderful plants and animals, here is a brief guide to some of our favourite places to visit...

1. **Beechfield Dingle**
2. **Bromlow Callow**
3. **Brook Vessons** Nature Reserve
4. **Cothercott** Heritage Site
5. **Earl's & Pontesford Hill** Nature Reserve SSSI
6. **Eastridge Woods** Nature Reserve
7. **Hope Valley** Nature Reserve
8. **Minsterley Meadows** SSSI
9. **Nills Quarry** Nature Reserve SSSI
10. **Poles Coppice** Countryside Heritage Site
11. **Pulverbatch** Scheduled Monument
12. **Snailbeach** Heritage Site
13. **Stapeley Common** Heritage Site
14. **Stiperstones Landscape** National Nature Reserve SSSI
15. **The Hollies** Nature Reserve SSSI





© Dr Richard Gulliver

Beechfield Dingle

w3w ***paces.ashes.electrode***

SJ 30768 05348 | 52.641436, -3.0245823

Beechfield Dingle, located above Hampton Beech near the village of Brockton, is a hidden gem for wildlife enthusiasts. This gorge-like valley, carved by Brockton Brook, provides an ideal environment for wildlife.

A walk upstream through Beechfield Dingle offers opportunities to observe various species of birds, insects, and small mammals. The sheltered terrain and dense vegetation create perfect nesting sites and foraging grounds. The area is especially vibrant in spring, when bluebells, wild garlic and wood anemone bloom. A few rarer plant species that can be found here include alternative-leaved-golden-saxifrage along the stream edge, as well as toothwort, early purple orchid and herb paris.

One of the Rea Valley's gems, Beechfield Dingle is a scenic woodland to explore, with historical Iron Age settlement remains on the spur above the stream. Be prepared for muddy, slippery paths on the downhill slopes, especially after rain.

Location:
Brockton

Size:
5 acres

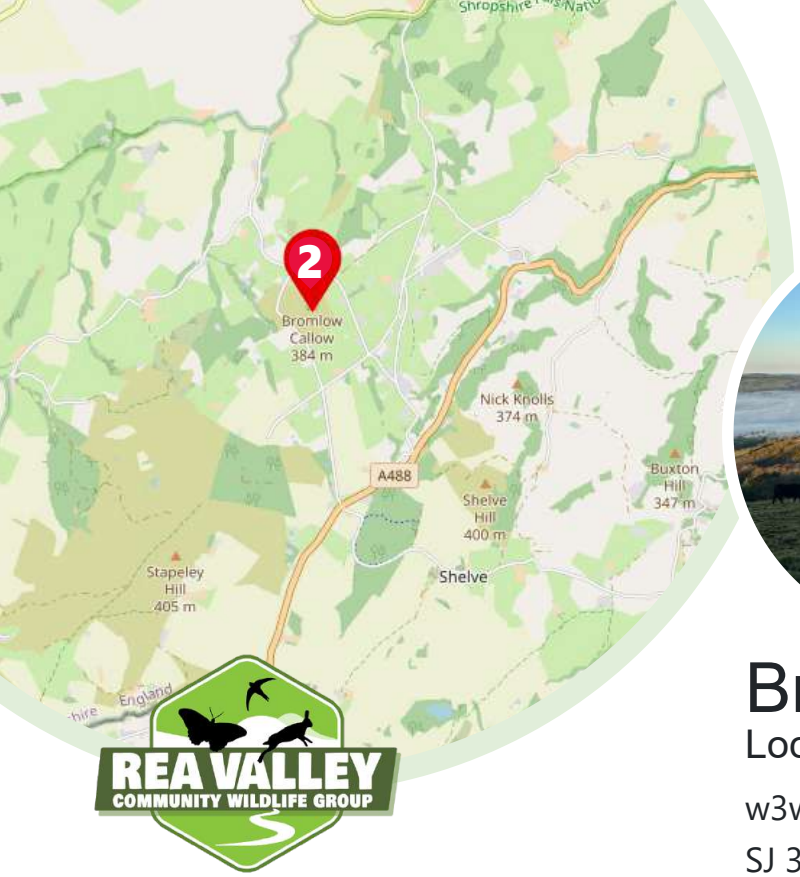
Parking:
In Brockton

Accessibility: ☆☆☆
Uneven woodland tracks

Likely to see:
Buzzards, dragonflies, woodland plants



© Katherine Edwards-White





© Ben Holloway

Bromlow Callow

Local Landmark

w3w ***villa.sparks.cavalier***

SJ 32346 00966 | 52.602251,-3.0003579

A distinctive feature of the Shropshire landscape, Bromlow Callow has been an important landmark for centuries. Most of its current distinctive 'tuft' of trees were planted by the late Viscount Bridgeman, who resided at the nearby Leigh Manor. But the 'tuft' has been a feature of Bromlow Callow for centuries before Lord Bridgeman added his mark. Believed to be a landmark along the drovers roads running through the Rea Valley, the hill providing a waymark for those venturing to markets in Shrewsbury or into mid-Wales. Further back in time, Bromlow Callow was an Iron Age hillfort, providing a vantage point to oversee the Welsh border region and beyond. Some of the ancient earthworks can still be recognised today.

Now largely cattle grazed, the lower slopes of Bromlow Callow are characterised by agriculturally improved grassland and areas of gorse. The central 'tuft' of trees are mainly evergreen species including larch and holly. Largely unmanaged, this area can provide a peaceful shelter from the wind and take a quiet moment to reflect atop the ancient landmark.

Location:
Near Bentlawnt

Size:
20 acres

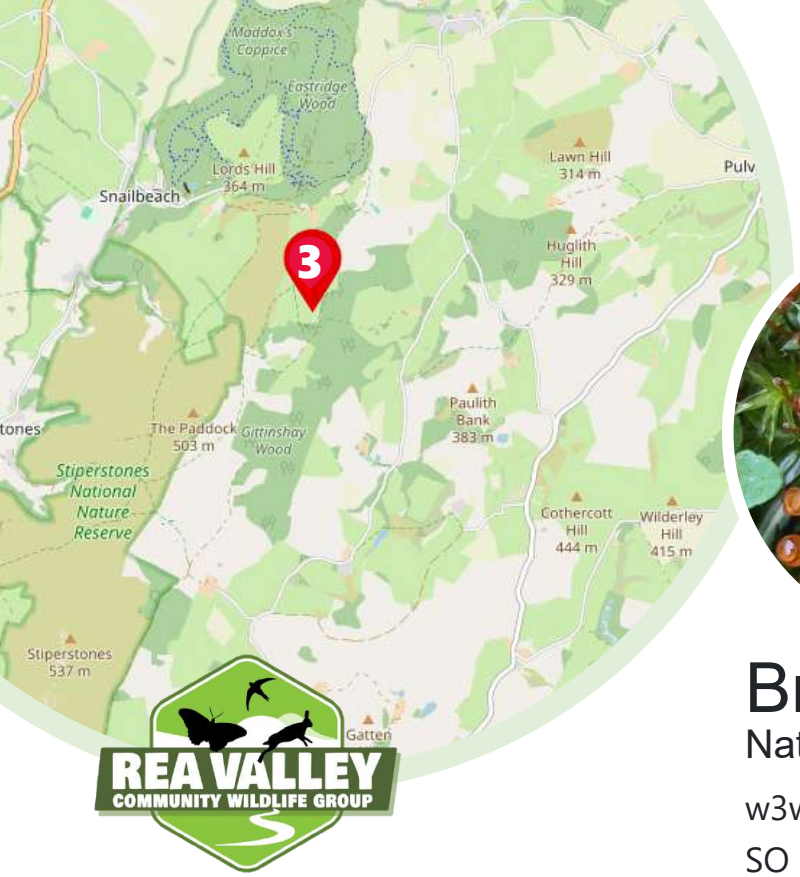
Parking:
Limited roadside parking

Accessibility: ☆☆☆
Gentle hill

Likely to see:
Butterflies, skylarks



© Julian Livsey





© Dan Wrench

Brook Vessons

Nature Reserve

w3w ***overruns.fancy.abstracts***

SO 36489 98029 | 52.576350,-2.9386349

Brook Vessons Nature Reserve, once a working farmland, has been transformed into a peaceful haven for wildlife and visitors alike. This reserve, managed by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, features a mosaic of ancient woodland, wildflower meadows, and small ponds that support a diverse range of species.

Over the years, conservation efforts have encouraged the return of native flora and fauna, making it a popular spot for birdwatching and nature walks. It is a special site in the Rea Valley because it is one of the sites where people can see the small pearl bordered fritillary butterfly. There are wet flushes on the reserve where marsh violet grows, and this is the food plant of the small pearl bordered fritillary butterfly which can be seen there in the summer months.

The reserve is particularly noted for its variety of bird species, including woodpeckers and warblers, as well as thriving populations of butterflies and wildflowers. Combine this walk with a visit to neighbouring nature reserve, The Hollies.

Location:
Near Snailbeach

Size:
45 acres

Parking:
Park at Snailbeach Village Hall

Accessibility: ☆☆
A steep uphill walk

Likely to see:
Rowan, crab apple and holly trees.



Simon Tonge iRecord CC0



REA VALLEY COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GROUP



© Julian Livsey

Cothercott

Heritage Site

w3w ***deeds.duos.clash***

SJ 40688 00268 | 52.596948,-2.8770769

The main feature here is the old baryte mine at Cothercott, which was working from 1910 to 1928. The mineral had a variety of uses, from food to textiles and paint. The old mine workings have left behind relics like old burr stones that can still be seen today, most within a short walk of the main car park.

The hillside is made of adits and spoil heaps from the mining days, but nature has reclaimed and there are various pockets of scrub that attract a good number of birds, insects and wild flowers. A range of waxcap fungi species can be found in the grassland in Autumn. Curlew surveys have found breeding pairs in this area in the past, you may be lucky to hear their haunting call in the late spring and early summer months as they return to the upland to nest.

A short distance from Pulverbatch, the land around Cothercott is primarily pastureland, and there are plenty of footpaths that link it to other local wildlife spots.

Location: South of Pulverbatch

Size: 60 acres

Parking: 3 cars

Accessibility: ☆☆☆
Steep grass track, uneven ground

Likely to see:
Brown Hare, Red Kite, Heath Bumblebee



© Julian Livsey





Earl's & Pontesford Hill

Nature Reserve SSSI

w3w ***commit.realm.lightly***

SJ 40903 05702 | 52.645685,-2.874311

Earls Hill and Pontesford Hill form a large, ecologically diverse site near Pontesbury, managed jointly by Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Friends of Pontesford Hill. The reserve features Green Woodpeckers and Grayling Butterflies. Ancient woodland plants such as Goldilocks Buttercup, and a small patch of Meadow Saffron is worth visiting when in flower. Yellow Meadow Ants, Adder's-tongue fern, Upright Chickweed, Changing Forget-me-not and Small Cudweed. Occasional sightings of Dormice and Dippers add to its ecological richness.

Geologically, the hills are part of the Pontesford Linley Fault and consist of ancient volcanic rocks like Rhyolites, Basalts, and Dolerite, shaping the landscape and soil acidity. The steep walks to the summit reveal remarkable views, with an Iron Age hill fort at the top, offering historical insights and stunning scenery. If you don't fancy the trip to the summit (take kendal Mint Cake!), then there is small Iron Age fort quite close to the carpark.

Overall, Earls Hill and Pontesford Hill offer a blend of natural beauty, wildlife, and archaeology. Visitors can explore diverse habitats, observe rare species, and delve into geological and historical features, making it a fascinating destination for nature lovers and history enthusiasts alike.

Location: East of Pontesbury

Size: 114 acres

Parking:
Dedicated reserve carpark and three bike racks

Accessibility: ☆☆☆
Steep walk to the summit, easier path at the base of the hill. Benches

Likely to see:
Acid grassland and ancient woodland plants







Eastridge Woods

Nature Reserve

w3w ***slamming.pursue.teaches***

SJ 39168 02730 | 52.618911, -2.8999776

Eastridge Woods, within the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve, is perched on a hill with panoramic views, and is teeming with birdlife, including flocks of siskin, marsh tits and treecreepers in the woodland, and ravens. The woods are also home for mammals such as deer and bats. The area's diverse habitats support a variety of fungi and mosses. The pools are teeming with dragonflies in the summer, making it an ideal spot for nature observation.

The lush foliage tends to grow along the path edges and along the water courses in the summer, attracting all the insects. In general, the flora beneath the dense coniferous canopy is poor, it tends to be very mossy, but wood sorrel is common. In the areas of broadleaved woodland there are patches of wild garlic and other ancient woodland indicators also grow such as yellow archangel and wood speedwell. The woodland is a real mix of conifer plantation and broadleaved regeneration.

Varied landscapes and wildlife make Eastridge Woods a great walk location for anyone wishing to experience the rich biodiversity of the Rea Valley.

Location:
near Habberley

Size:
430 acres

Parking:
space for 10 cars

Accessibility: ☆☆☆
quite hilly in parts, some flat tracks

Likely to see:
Butterflies







© Julian Livsey

Hope Valley

Nature Reserve

w3w ***train.internal.thudding***

SJ 34959 01660 | 52.608811,-2.9619212

The Hope Valley Nature Reserve is tucked away beside Minsterley Brook and the main Minsterley to Bishops Castle road, between Ploxgreen and Hope. This steep wooded gorge is a mix of native deciduous and coniferous Douglas Fir plantation and recorded as a Planted Ancient Woodland Site - ancient woodlands which have been felled and replanted with non-native species. The site is damaged but still retains the soil of ancient woodland and may be restored with careful management. There are plans to increase the parking area and fell much of the non-native woodland.

One of the highlights of this nature reserve are the late spring bluebells which cover the top path and spill down the steep slopes. Yellow archangel is an ancient woodland indicator species. The wood is also home to a colony of dormice, and bird species including skylarks and meadow pipits, which nest in the open fields and hedgerows.

Location:
Hope Valley

Size:
47 acres

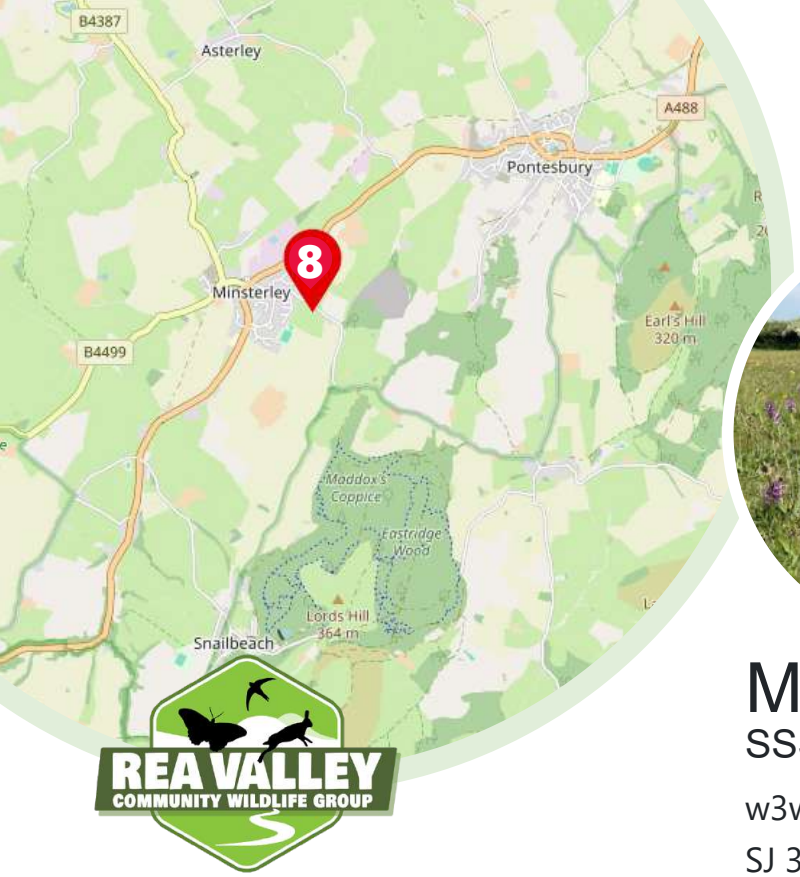
Parking:
Space for 3 cars

Accessibility: ☆ ☆
Steep uneven paths, narrow steps, fallen trees

Likely to see:
Woodland birds, moss, insects, bluebells



© Julian Livsey





Minsterley Meadows
SSSI

w3w ***filer.winds.puddles***

SJ 37881 04966 | 52.638866,-2.919399

Minsterley Meadows SSSI is a 5.45 hectare hay meadow located in the village of Minsterley. Owned by The Middle Marches Community Land Trust and open to all. Two meadows named May Piece and Alderley Leasow on the 1836 Tithe map represent a chance to see and experience how hay meadows would have looked in the past. Pause a while at the log bench and enjoy the rich tapestry of flowers on a summer's day, rich in insects and birds in the the thick hedgerows that surround and divide the two fields.

The most notable feature of the meadows are the approx 5000 Green-Winged Orchids that flower in April-May. This the only site left in the West Midlands where such a profusion of these orchids can still be seen. Other ancient grassland plants are also present such as Moonwort.

In Autumn Waxcap and other grassland fungi appear and are worth a visit to hunt them out. The Ariel ropeway (constructed in 1918), that took ore from The Bog mine to the barytes mill at Malehurst passed through the meadows, A concrete base of one of the pylons can be seen near the log bench.

It is possible to walk to Poles Coppice and Eastridge Woods from the meadows to make a longerwalk.

Location:
Callow Lane, Minsterley

Size:
14 acres

Parking:
limited but not usually a problem

Accessibility: ☆☆☆☆☆
Easy walking with two log benches

Likely to see:
Green-Winged Orchids, Moonwort







© Julian Livsey

Nills Quarry

Countryside Site SSSI

w3w ***skims.barrel.digit***

SJ 39491 05285 | 52.641916,-2.8956713

Once productive stone quarry that shut down following the reduction of road building during the Second World War, this site has undergone a remarkable transformation. Nature gradually reclaimed the area, which has now been landscaped to create a hidden wildlife sanctuary on the edge of Pontesbury. Today, Nills Quarry is a haven for local flora and fauna, featuring a series of small pools and ditches, lush broadleaf woodland, and a wild meadow that provides a rich habitat for many species.

In 2025, further enhancements were made to improve accessibility, using Shropshire Hills National Landscape 'Access for All' funding. New raised hard surface paths were put down and seating installed, making it an inviting place for visitors to enjoy nature.

The site is especially notable for its impressive biodiversity, boasting records for around 390 species of moths and butterflies alone, including the nationally scarce Pseudotelphusa scalella. A pond with a wooden platform shows off dragonflies, diving water beetles and newts. And in spring, a good number of Common spotted-orchids can be found.

Location:
Pontesbury Hill

Size:
20 acres

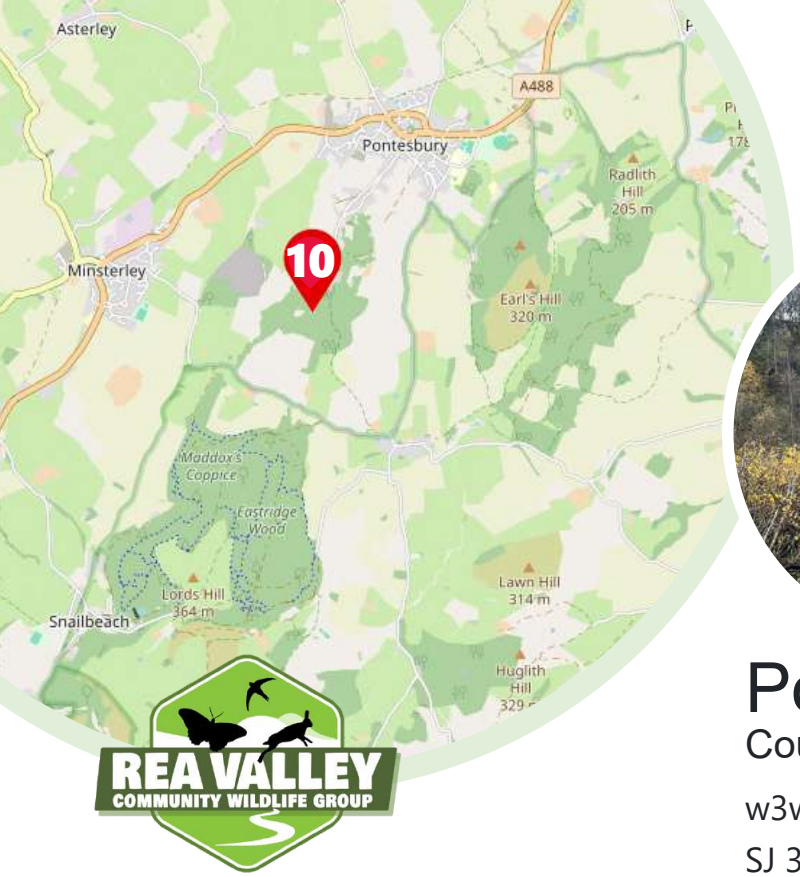
Parking:
Space for 3 cars. Road parking nearby

Accessibility: ☆☆☆☆☆

Likely to see:
Butterflies and moths, swimming beetles, dragonflies



© Julian Livsey



REA VALLEY COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GROUP



© Julian Livsey

Poles Coppice

Countryside Heritage Site

w3w ***disbelief.hindering.lift***

SJ 39247 04618 | 52.635889,-2.8991568

Poles Coppice Countryside Heritage Site is a designated nature reserve that can be accessed to the South of Pontesford Hill or the North of Callow Lane Minsterley. Ancient woodlands and traditional coppiced woodland management spill over into several former quarry sites that have now been returned to nature. Visitors to Poles Coppice can enjoy scenic walks along well-maintained paths that wind through the woodland, providing opportunities to observe the diverse flora and fauna of the area.

The site is well managed for nature with conservation projects supporting bat roosts, and bird boxes of various sizes dotted throughout the coppice. Don't be surprised to come face to face with deer on your wander, or to trip over numerous species of fungi during late autumn.

The site is home to common woodland birds such as woodpeckers, owls, and finches. It is also packed with mammals like foxes, badgers, and squirrels. The dense undergrowth and open clearing create an ideal habitat for insects and invertebrates, contributing to the rich biodiversity of the site. In spring and summer, wildflowers bloom across the woodland floor, adding a welcome splash of colour.

Location:
Pontesbury Hill

Size:
74 acres

Parking:
Parking for 4 cars

Accessibility: ☆☆☆☆☆

Likely to see:
Fungi, woodpeckers, beetles and wild flowers



© Julian Livsey



REA VALLEY
COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GROUP



© Alison Gill

Pulverbatch

Scheduled Monument

w3w ***streaks.planet.creatures***

SJ 42253 02199 | 52.614476,-2.854322

Park beside and explore the amazing motte and bailey castle that dates from 1086. At the top of the Castle Pulverbatch mound you will be able to spot some interesting wildflowers growing on the thin soils such as annual knawel. Then walk west along Puntley Lane past Upper Castle Farm. The sunken road, which served as the main road between Shrewsbury and Bishops Castle back in the medieval period, becomes more like a footpath but be aware it is a byway open to all traffic so don't be surprised to meet everything from bikes and horses to off road vehicles.

There are plenty of public footpaths to turn this into a circular walk, or you can just stay on the lane past Riddles Wood and Westcott Hill.

In spring and summer this route is filled with amazing wildlife. Butterflies frequent the wild flower banks, beetles scuttle back and forth across the rutted path, Yellowhammer and Crossbills can be found along the hedgerows and in the woods. We have had so many amazing records from this area, and the views across the rolling hills are spectacular.

Location:
Pulverbatch

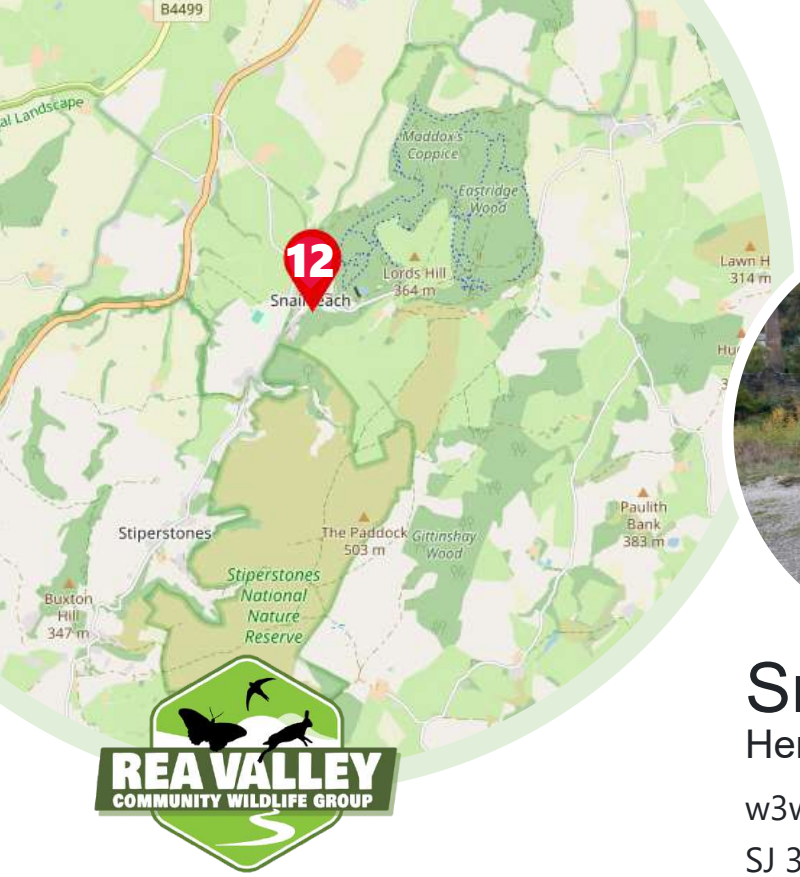
Parking:
about 10 cars

Accessibility: ☆☆☆☆
Can become muddy in places during wet weather

Likely to see:
Butterflies, birds, soldier beetles



© Julian Livsey





© Julian Bromhead

Snailbeach

Heritage Site

w3w ***unwind.spits.comedians***

SJ 37323 02248 | 52.614368,-2.927128

Snailbeach Heritage site is owned by Shropshire Council and includes the remains of Snailbeach lead mine. This was mainly operational in Victorian times with small scale working continuing until the 1950's. The former mine buildings and remains are protected as a scheduled ancient monument.

The site has a variety of habitats including bare ground, mine spoil, scrub and woodland and there is a pool which was the former mine reservoir. A few plants of the green winged orchid grow at the edge of the spoil heap. The bank opposite the village hall is good for wildflowers, including orchids and the rare Yellow Bird's-nest can occasionally be found flowering there. Snailbeach is a good site for seeing slow worms on the tracks and lizards basking in the sunshine on the walls. The mine workings are an important hibernation site for bats. Eight bat species were recorded during a RVCWG event in summer 2025.

The site is a gateway to adjacent wildlife areas including Eastridge Woods, the SWT Hollies NR and the Stiperstones NNR.

Location: Snailbeach

Size: 20 acres

Parking:
35 spaces. Donation box

Accessibility: ☆☆☆
Steep uphill woodland walks

Likely to see:
Butterflies and moths, bats, wildflowers, fungi.



Martyn Drabik-Hamshare iRecord CC0





© Ben Holloway

Stapeley Common

Heritage Site

w3w ***sprouting.origin.goggles***

SO 30274 98068 | 52.575938,-3.0303346

Shropshire is an ancient county rich in myth and folklore, Stapeley Common is a site with legends of its own. Part of a volcanic landscape, the hill and common are parts of a ridge running from Bromlow Callow to Corndon. Panoramic views to the east and west from the top of Stapeley Hill draw walkers up to the Bronze Age cairns found there. Mitchell's Fold Stone Circle is located in the south, a Bronze Age landmark shrouded in legend. We won't spoil the tale, but it features a witch, a cow and the devil!

Stapeley Common is very exposed to the elements, with few trees the landscape is open and weather can change rapidly. Grazed by cattle and sheep, the site has been agriculturally improved and drained over the past century. Some areas remain boggy, but the extent of waterlogged ground once present across the common has been vastly reduced. A site popular with ground nesting birds Skylarks, Stonechat and Meadow Pipits are abundant on Stapeley. This is a good site in spring to see migrating birds such as Wheatear. It is also a place to see or hear Curlew in spring and summer. Several butterfly species can be seen across the common through the summer.

Location:
Between Black Marsh and Rorrington

Size:
200 acres

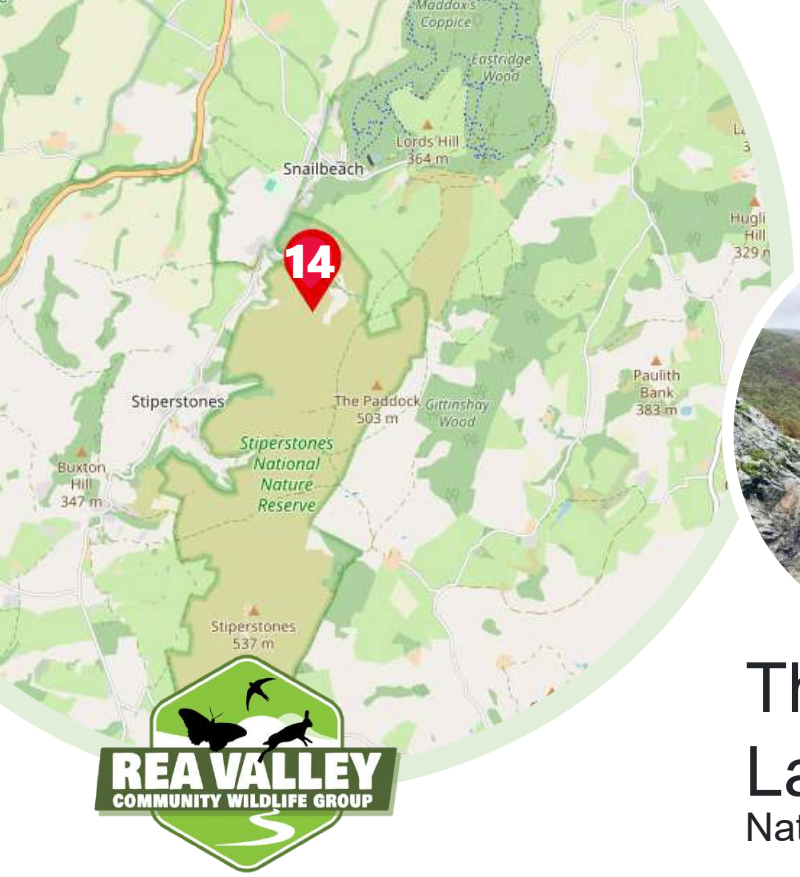
Parking:
near Mitchell's Fold

Accessibility: ☆☆☆
Not too hilly, uneven moorland tracks

Likely to see:
Butterflies, skylarks



© Julian Livsey



REA VALLEY COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GROUP



© Julian Livsey

The Stiperstones Landscape

National Nature Reserve SSSI

w3w ***overruns.fancy.abstracts***

SO 36489 98029 | 52.576350,-2.9386349

The Stiperstones National Nature Reserve is famous for its distinctive rocky quartzite ridge, which stretches approximately three miles across the landscape, between the Bishops Castle road and the Ratlinghope road. The rugged terrain features dramatic rocky outcrops and rugged hills, making it popular with walkers.

Common wildlife on the reserve includes red kites, skylarks, cuckoo, curlew, meadow pipits and stonechats. There are various projects and bird walks throughout the year. The heathland also supports various insects, including a colonies of Grayling and Green hairstreak butterflies and dragonflies, during the summer months. The Bilberry bumblebee can be seen here at the most southerly part of its range. The Stiperstones is one of the best places for diversity of waxcap fungi in Autumn.

The Stiperstones is also notable for its rich archaeological history, and remnants of old lead mining operations. The reserve offers a unique combination of natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage, making it a treasured part of Shropshire's landscape and a wonderful place to have on our doorstep.

Location:
Stiperstones

Size:
3,700 acres

Parking:
Park at The Bog

Accessibility: ☆☆☆☆

Likely to see:
Stonechat, red grouse, gorse



© Julian Livsey





© Julian Livsey

The Hollies

Nature Reserve SSSI

w3w ***enlarge.twinkled.daunting***

SJ 38054 02110 | 52.613215,-2.9163087

The Hollies Nature Reserve is a protected area on the edge of the Stiperstones in Shropshire, England. A short walk from the village of Snailbeach, the reserve offers visitors a peaceful retreat into woodland and grassland habitats. The landscape is characterised by gently rolling hills, ancient woodland, and open meadows, providing a diverse environment for numerous wildlife and plant species.

Visitors to The Hollies can enjoy scenic walks. The woodland is home to tree species such as oak, ash, hawthorn and of course the ancient holly trees that give the name - reported to be one of the oldest holly groves in Europe. There are also wildflowers like bluebells and primroses in the spring. Birdwatchers may spot woodpeckers, song thrushes, and various warblers. Autumn sees the arrival of redwing and fieldfares feeding on the berries. The reserve is also home to small mammals like hedgehogs, squirrels and brown hares, and numerous insects such as butterflies and bees. Also, this is another great spot for grassland fungi including parasols and waxcaps.

Managed by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, The Hollies Nature Reserve plays a vital role in conserving local biodiversity and is a peaceful spot to enjoy the natural beauty of our Shropshire countryside. Its proximity to the Stiperstones and Snailbeach makes it an excellent complement when exploring the area.

Location:
East of Snailbeach

Size:
90 acres

Parking:
Park at Snailbeach Village Hall

Accessibility: ☆☆☆

Likely to see:
Brown hare, fungi



Stephen James McWilliam iRecord CC0