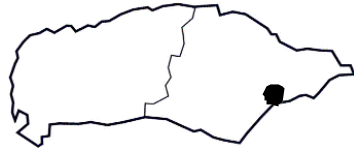


Marline Valley

A very rich wooded valley above a gill stream with meadows, ponds and scrub



Close to the town of Hastings lies a deep wooded valley, or gill. At the bottom of this valley runs a stream, babbling over sandstone. Mosses, liverworts and ferns found here are the main reason why this is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. In spring, Marline Valley Local Nature Reserve boasts rafts of wild garlic that fill the air with their pungent scent as the bright green leaves of hornbeam burst out – trees originally managed for making charcoal to support the local iron industry. Volunteers have begun the cycle of coppicing again, and the woodland floor has responded with a vivid carpet of bluebells, wood

Highlights

Hornbeam coppice, wood anemone, primrose, bluebell, wild garlic, mosses, ferns, orchids, adder's-tongue fern, wasp spiders, nightingale and various warblers.

anemones, primroses and violets. As the hornbeam starts to thicken up, together with other coppice species, such as hazel, ash and sweet chestnut, it provides a home for nightingales, dormice and warblers.

Elsewhere the hornbeam is allowed to grow to its full stature and here the unusual violet helleborine and the occasional hawfinch may be found. Above the woodland towards the main road there is a series of meadows, rich with flowers, including common spotted orchid, dyer's greenweed and adder's-tongue fern. Butterflies, such as the green hairstreak dance over the meadow in search of nectar, while in the taller grasses the huge brightly-coloured wasp spider lurks in readiness. Patches of hawthorn and bramble scrub provide homes for whitethroat, blackcap and other warblers. With so much variety there is something to see at any time of year, but April to September are the best months.

Access

Access and parking are difficult due to necessary roadside barriers. The simplest way is to park in Napier Road or nearby and cross over the busy Queensway to pick up one of the footpaths. There are many paths in the reserve, but the valley is steep and can be muddy. There are several stiles, but these are gradually being replaced by gates.