

# Stanley Bank Meadow

## Site of Special Scientific Interest

St Helens' only Site of Special Scientific Interest, Stanley Bank Meadow is a valuable unimproved damp neutral grassland habitat. It is home to many species of native wildflower, mammals, birds and insects.



Stanley Bank Meadow at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was actually woodland. During World War II the present meadow was cleared of trees and ploughed for the growing of crops. Unfortunately the meadow was too wet for crop growing and was abandoned until the early 1990s.

As the meadow was unimproved, meaning it hadn't had any fertilizers or drainage work done to it; Stanley Bank Meadow soon became rich in native plant species. Its damp neutral grassland conditions also made it a valuable habitat, earning it Site of Special Scientific Interest status.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are the very best of the United Kingdom's wildlife and geological sites. They are designated by Natural England and the land owners are legally bound to manage them responsibly.



This abundance of flowers attracts large numbers of butterflies and moths. The most regular visitors being Peacock, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and a selection of the various 'white' species. Common Blue, Small Copper and both Large and Small Skipper also occur, although these are less obvious due to their small size. In July and August, Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow butterflies arrive from continental Europe along with the migrant Silver-Y moth.

Other moth species seen on Stanley Bank Meadow include the locally uncommon Mother Shipton moth, the first St Helens record of Leopard Moth, the Blackneck which is spreading north from southern Britain and the Beautiful Hook-tip which was only the fifth record ever for Lancashire.



Black Knapweed



Catsear

St Helens Ranger Service is currently charged with managing Stanley Bank Meadow. This involves the clearance of the trees that are trying to take over the meadow and the annual mowing which encourages the wildflower growth.

### Remember to respect your environment:-

- Do not damage the meadow
- Take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- No unauthorised motor vehicles
- Consider other people

Several plants found on Stanley Bank Meadow are actually uncommon in the Merseyside region. These include Bristle Club-rush, Adders Tongue Fern, Square-Stalked St. Johns Wort and the particularly uncommon Spiked Sedge. The site is also notable for its large colonies of Common Spotted Orchids, Southern Marsh Orchids and their hybrids.

In addition to the locally uncommon plants, many more common species can also be found. Purple Loosestrife, Bugle, Black Knapweed, Birdsfoot Trefoil and Catsear can all be seen growing in their masses during the summer months.



Gatekeeper



Kestrel  
(Photo by Mike Roberts)

These plants and insects in turn attract a variety of bird species. The isolated copses on the meadow and the hedgerows at its edges are particularly good places to observe Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Yellowhammer. Skylarks can occasionally be heard in the surrounding fields.

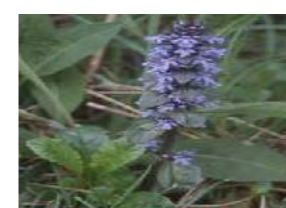


Willow Warbler  
(Photo by Mike Roberts)

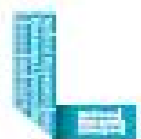
The three most commonly encountered birds of prey are Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard and both the nocturnal Woodcock and Tawny Owl are regularly seen or heard, particularly during the summer months.



Adders Tongue Fern



Bugle



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