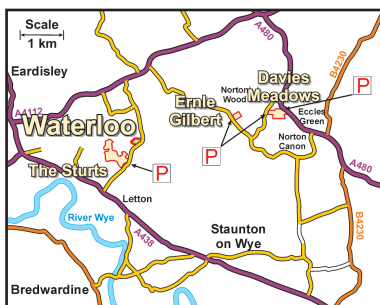


# Waterloo

Letton SO341478 (Explorer 201)

Unimproved grassland and ponds

SSSI



## Visitor Guidelines

Access around this small reserve is straightforward. Smiths Meadow can be accessed either from the lane, or by a field gate part way along the dividing hedge. Conditions underfoot can be wet even in summer, especially so around the ponds, so boots are advised.

## Description

Waterloo reserve lies in the Letton Lakes area, within the *flood plain* of the River Wye. It comprises two wet, rough grassland fields, separated by an old hedge. Both fields are subject to winter flooding, and the repeated silt deposition has built up a rich deep, moisture retentive soil. The ground is uneven and undulating in places, with many damp hollows and drier ridges, each with their own characteristic flora. Skullcap, Ragged Robin, Marsh Bedstraw, Lesser Spearwort and three species of *Juncus* rush are found in the hollows and ditches, while Devil's-bit Scabious, Knapweed, Cowslip and Greater Birds-foot Trefoil are more typical of drier raised ground. The grasses are dominated by Yorkshire Fog and Tufted Hair-grass, the latter making large clumps in the southern field. In summer, the reserve supports large numbers of meadow butterflies, such as Meadow Brown, Ringlet, and Skippers.

The two fields are surrounded by thick hedgerows containing many ancient pollard Crack Willows, a fine Black Poplar hosting some large Mistletoe plants, and numerous Spindle trees. Other shrubby species present include Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Field Maple, Dog Rose, and Hazel; there is little doubt that this species richness indicates these hedges are centuries old. Numbers of Yellow Ant mounds are found in the Waterloo field - a typical feature of unimproved grassland. During periods of flood, waders and wildfowl may be attracted in to feed. Lapwing, Curlew and Snipe have visited, while groups of Mallard and Teal are occasionally recorded.

The permanent and seasonal ponds form a special feature of the reserve. Smiths Meadow has one seasonal pool/boggy area in the north-eastern corner, while Waterloo has two, including a small permanent pool on the southern boundary. An interesting range of water plants is found in and around this pond, including Water

Starwort, Yellow Iris, Water Forget-me-not, and Pepper Saxifrage. These wet areas attract Herons, Mallard and Moorhens, and also a range of dragonflies and damselflies which breed in the permanent pool. Look for Common Blue, Blue-tailed and Emerald Damselflies, as well as Common and Ruddy Darters.

### *Present Management*

Smiths Meadow has been managed as both a *hay meadow* and *pasture*. Sheep and cattle are allowed to graze the fields through the autumn. The southern field of Waterloo is managed as *pasture* with small numbers of cattle grazing here from May to October. Smiths Meadow is a *Site of Special Scientific Interest*.

### *Acquisition Details*

Waterloo reserve was purchased with funds from the Herefordshire Conservation Development Trust (HCDT) in 1997. Smiths Meadow was purchased in 2001, with funds from HLF and the HCDT. The meadow has been named in memory of Geoff and June Smith who left the Trust a large legacy.

### *General Information:*

**Best time to visit:** Early spring to late summer.

**Habitat:** Unimproved neutral wet grassland; Freshwater ponds.

**Size:** 2.6 hectares (6.4 acres).

**Specialities:** Yellowhammer, Common Snipe. Meadow Brown (6-9), Ringlet (6-8), Gatekeeper (6-8), Large Skipper (6-9), Small Skipper (6-9). Ruddy Darter (6-9), Common Darter (6-10), Emerald Damselfly (6-9). Wild Angelica (7-9), Yellow Iris (6-8), Pepper Saxifrage (6-9), Water-Pepper (7-9), Water Starwort, Skullcap (6-9).

**Parking:** Very limited parking in entrance to Waterloo.

**Nearby HNT reserves:** The Sturts, Ernle Gilbert, Davies Meadow.

