

Cooper's Hill Nature Reserve



Cooper's Hill, also known locally as The Firs, is Bedfordshire's largest remaining heathland.

Located on the western outskirts of Ampthill, Cooper's Hill Nature Reserve is a special place. The area is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its rare heathland: a wild, open landscape more commonly found in uplands areas, but which survives here thanks to the sandy soil of the Greensand Ridge. It is known for being "the best surviving example of heathland in Bedfordshire" and offers visitors an eye-catching 'purple haze' of heather in spring and summer.

As well as open heath, the reserve features patches of gorse and isolated, ancient trees surrounded by pockets of woodland. It offers a contrast to the rolling countryside of surrounding areas and exemplifies the 'mosaic' of many different habitats that make up the Greensand Ridge. The landscape here is home to notable wildlife including lizards, rare beetles and ancient beech, lime, birch and oak trees. Nesting birds take advantage of the protection of the spiky gorse, which gives off its distinctive coconut smell in summer. It's truly a wonderful place to explore.

Known locally as The Firs, records indicate that Cooper's Hill was once called Ampthill Warren on account of the Norman's having introduced rabbits to Britain in the 11th Century (with warrens set up on light, sandy soil such as found here). Throughout history the site has been grazed by livestock and the heather used by locals as fuel, bedding and thatch for buildings. Later, conifers were planted here and then felled in 1917 as part of the war effort.

Today, the nature reserve is managed by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire who work with local partners and volunteers to protect the special character of this important landscape.



People Say:

"We had a great time at Cooper's Hill Nature Reserve near Amphill. I highly recommend seeking out and exploring some of the hidden gems within that landscape".

Action Points:



Encourage your customers to visit Cooper's Hill. The best time to visit is usually August and September when the area bursts into colour with purple heather.



Explore the area for yourself. If you're local, you might like to join in one of the volunteer events hosted by the Wildlife Trust - they're a great way to familiarise yourself the reserve and make some new contacts.

Info and Resources:

The Wildlife Trust:
www.wildlifebcn.org/coopers-hill