

## Information Sheet 2A: Wildlife and Conservation - General Information

### Introduction to the area

The Meldon district, on the north-west corner of Dartmoor, shows a remarkable transition from the lowland habitats of the well-known *Culm* of mid Devon, up to the highest part of one of the largest expanses of upland moorland in southern Britain. The cool temperatures and high rainfall means that blanket bogs are an important feature of the moor and home to many unusual and rare species.

Rocky tors, rushing streams, lakes and ponds, ancient woodlands and disused and active quarries combine to provide a wide range of habitats and geological features. Not surprisingly, therefore, the wider area includes three Sites of Special Scientific Interest, a European Special Area of Conservation and several areas of likely county importance for nature conservation, all of which are testament to its importance for wildlife and geological heritage.



Cotton grass © DNPA

With a great variety of species and habitats within a short distance of each other the Meldon area is an excellent one to study wildlife. Dormice, otters and bats are amongst the rare species recorded from the area and peregrine falcons nest in Meldon Quarry. The trees and rocks are cloaked in lichens which thrive in the clean air and Meldon Woods, an ancient woodland, as well as being home to dormice, also has pied flycatchers, which have been the subject of a long-term study.

These information sheets outline the special sites, habitats and species of the area, what the different designations mean and some of the wildlife laws and strategies that help to protect them. Web site links are also provided to facilitate access to other sources of information.

### Access

Information Sheet 1A provides some general information about access routes into the Meldon Area; once arrived, some important points to bear in mind are:

- Do not enter any areas that are fenced off unless there is a public footpath or public access.
- Stick to designated footpaths.
- Get permission from landowners before entering any other land.
- Always follow the Countryside Code:
  - Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
  - Leave gates and property as you find them
  - Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
  - Keep dogs under close control
- For more information about the Countryside Code see:  
[http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk/countryside\\_code/](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk/countryside_code/)

## Health and Safety

**Risk Assessments:** It is always advisable that group leaders visit first to evaluate risks before bringing a group. Typical hazards that may be encountered include:

- Falling rocks - *do not approach any cliff faces without wearing a hard hat!*
- Slippery rocks
- Exposure due to poor weather conditions
- Deep and fast-flowing water
- Thorny plants
- Bogs and mires
- Lymes disease and other infection hazards.

**Clothing:** Remember that the area is largely classed as upland and because of that, temperatures can be much lower and weather more unpredictable than in lower areas. Dartmoor is also one of the wettest parts of Britain!

- It is advisable that all visitors wear appropriate warm clothing (or layers in the summer). Avoid bare legs and arms to reduce injuries from thorns and rocks and also to reduce the risk of picking up sheep-ticks.
- Take waterproofs, even in the summer.
- Boots or stout shoes are essential to help avoid falls and other injuries.

**Supplies:** It is recommended that visitors bring:

- First aid kit
- Food and drinks
- Equipment for studies
- Maps, compass and other navigation and emergency equipment.

**Contact:** Ensure that someone can act as a back-up, make sure they know where you are going and when you are expected back and take a mobile phone to contact them in the event of an emergency. But remember, mobile phones do not usually work in valleys on Dartmoor – you may need to go to higher ground to get a signal.

## Suggested Activities

Many activities are possible in the Meldon area, including:

- Dormouse surveys
- Habitat surveys
- Invertebrate surveys – terrestrial and aquatic
- Environmental measurements – air and water quality.

## Sources of additional information

On Dartmoor:

- **Dartmoor National Park Authority** – information about Dartmoor's Wildlife -<http://www.dartmoor-mpa.gov.uk/laf-dartmoorwildlifeinfo>
- <http://www.dartmoor-mpa.gov.uk/index/lookingafter/laf-naturalenv/laf-ecologywildlife/laf-biodiversityprojects/laf-wealthofwildlife.htm>

And more generally:

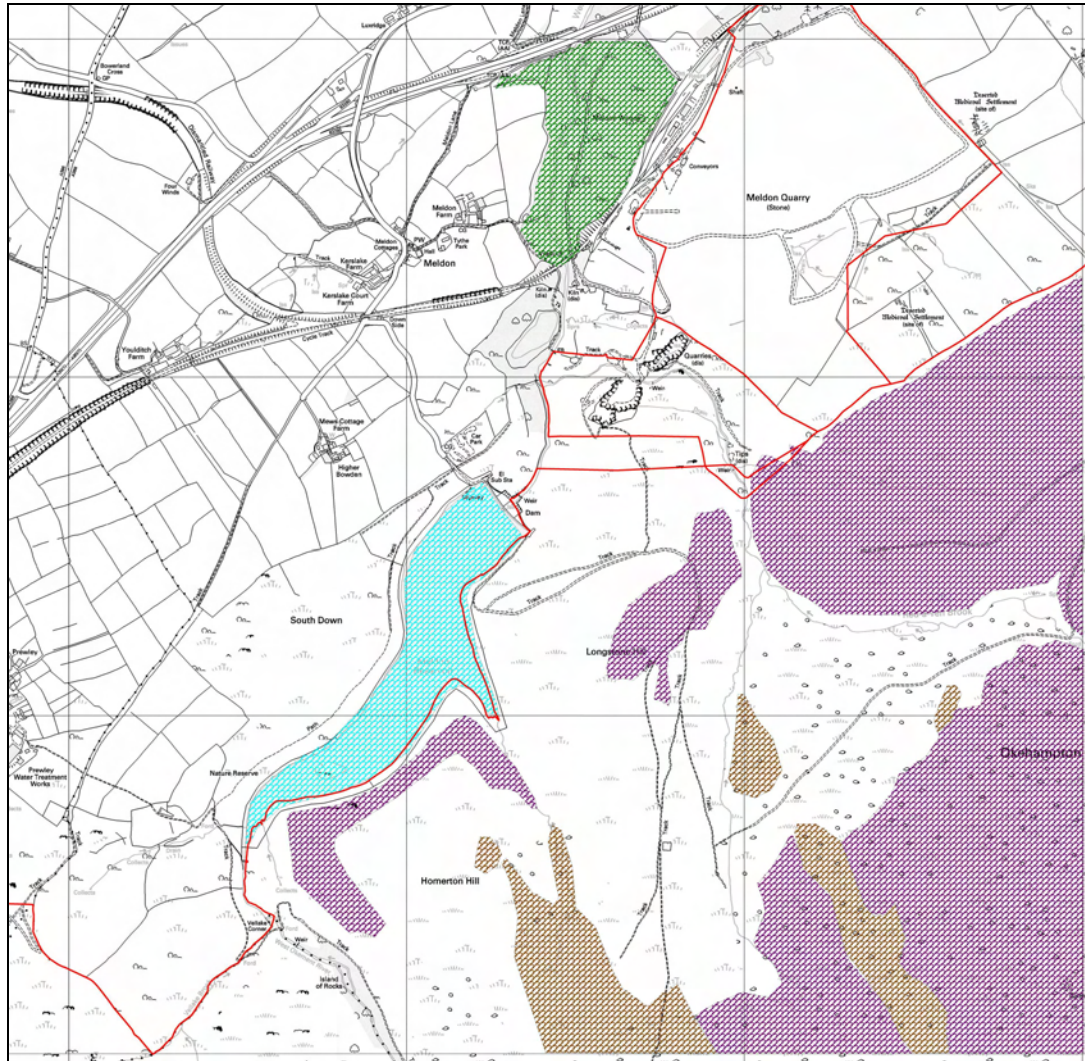
- **Bat Conservation Trust** – home page – links to information, help and advice.  
<http://www.bats.org.uk/>
- **British Dragonfly Society** – ideas for projects and information about dragonflies.  
<http://www.dragonflysoc.org.uk/>
- **British Trust for Ornithology** – lots of information about birds including 'Birdfacts' about the different species, surveys to get involved with (including Garden Birdwatch) and the latest research into bird populations and trends.  
<http://www.bto.org/>
- **Butterfly Conservation** – Lot of information about British butterflies and moths including fact sheets on species, habitat management, projects and news.  
<http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/index.shtml>
- **Devon County Council** – Includes the Devon BAP, the *Geodiversity Audit of Active Aggregates Quarries* and the *Devon Educational Register of Geological Sites*.  
<http://www.devon.gov.uk>
- **English Nature** – information about wildlife, reserves and good section on publications – many of which are free.  
<http://www.english-nature.org.uk/>
- **Flora Locale** – promoting wild plants including information, projects, training and suppliers of native plants.  
<http://www.floralocale.org/>

- **Froglife** – Charity that concentrates on Amphibians and Reptiles. Home page with links to information leaflets in the Information Service section.  
<http://www.froglife.org/>
- **Herpetological Conservation Trust** – information on amphibians and reptiles and their habitats.  
<http://www.herpconstrust.org.uk/>
- **The Mammal Society** – information on projects to get involved with as well as an excellent set of fact sheets on all British Mammals.  
<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal/>
- **Mammals Trust UK** – information about British mammals as well as projects to get involved in.  
<http://www.mtuk.org/>
- **National Biodiversity Network** – links to lots of databases for British species distributions and records.  
<http://www.searchnbn.net/>
- **Natural History Museum** – information about British natural history and wildlife.  
<http://www.nhm.ac.uk>
- **Natural History Museum** – search for plant lists by postcode.  
<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/life/plants-fungi/postcode-plants/>
- **Plantlife** – information about rare and endangered plant species in Britain.  
<http://www.plantlife.org.uk/>
- **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)** – brilliant website with lots of bird information including habitat management, gardens for birds and A-Z of British birds.  
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/>
- **South West Biodiversity Partnership (SWBAP)** – information about the south west's wildlife and habitats, South West Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and links to all the BAPs in the region.  
<http://www.swbiodiversity.org.uk/>
- **UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP)** – information on the national strategy for wildlife conservation including information and action plans about individual species and habitats that are most at risk of declines or extinction.  
<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/>
- **The Wildlife Trusts** – information on wildlife, encouraging wildlife, events and links to local Wildlife Trusts.  
<http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/>
- **Woodland Trust** – links to several woodland management information booklets and leaflets  
<http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk/publications/index.htm>

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## Map showing designated sites and main habitat types



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Designated sites and key habitats in the Meldon district. Designated (edged in red): Meldon Aplite Quarry SSSI, Meldon Quarry SSSI, North Dartmoor SSSI/SPA. Key habitats: Ancient Woodland (green), Blanket Bog (brown), Upland heathland (purple), Open water (Meldon Reservoir – light blue).