

# Creation of a Nature Reserve

In 1968 Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation acquired the derelict bomb factory. It took 3 years to demolish – twice as long as it took to build. The new town of Birchwood was designed and built on the former Royal Ordnance Factory site in the 1970s and 1980s. Warrington New Town Conservation Group carried out an ecological survey of Risley Moss. On realising the value of the mossland, they recommended that the site should be developed and managed as an Educational Nature Reserve. To preserve the character of the site it was divided into two zones, the woodland zone and the mossland zone. To protect the fragile mossland habitat and because of its treacherous nature, the mossland can only be visited on Ranger or RIMAG led guided walks.

**The woodland zone was designed for recreational and educational use, with a series of woodland walks, tranquil seating areas, ponds and meadows. The Woodland and Mossland Hides and the spectacular Observation Tower combine the needs of wildlife watchers and those seeking a few tranquil moments of relaxation.**

## A Wealth of Wildlife

A variety of common woodland birds can be seen from the Woodland Hide during the winter months when they are fed by the Rangers. Scarcer visitors such as the brambling, reed-bunting or yellowhammer can sometimes be seen.

Many species can be seen from the Observation Tower ranging from the smaller meadow pipit and whitethroat to the larger birds of prey such as the buzzard or short-eared owl.

Important residents within the reserve include protected species such as the great crested newts, adders, water voles, slow worms and common lizards.

11 species of dragonfly are confirmed as breeding at Risley Moss and notable flower species include northern and southern marsh orchids, common spotted orchids and round-leaved sundew.

## Peat Bog Habitat

Risley Moss is one of the last remaining fragments of the raised peat bog system that once covered large areas of South Lancashire and North Cheshire. The surface of the moss has been drained and cut for peat but a significant part of the peat body remains. Derelict peat bogs or mires are rare habitats and Risley Moss is one of only two examples in Cheshire where the water level has been raised and steps taken to encourage the regeneration of an active mire surface. This has resulted in the re-establishment of sphagnum and cotton grass over large areas of the bog.

## Re-wetting the Bog

Work has been taking place on Risley Moss since the 1970s to prevent water from draining off the site or to 're-wet' it, using methods such as building bunds, dams and re-contouring of the bog surface.

Risley Moss entered into Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) in April 2011, a scheme run by Natural England which aims to deliver significant environmental benefits in priority areas such as peat bogs, like Risley Moss.

## Designations

Risley Moss is legally protected to help safeguard its existence into the future. It has Local Nature Reserve status (LNR), Site of Special Scientific Interest Status (SSSI) and is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is a European designation. The site is designated under the Manchester Mosses, showing the importance of the peat bog habitat in a nationwide and international context.

**RISLEY MOSS**  
Local Nature Reserve



Buzzard



Reed Bunting



Whitethroat



Orchid



Emperor Dragonfly

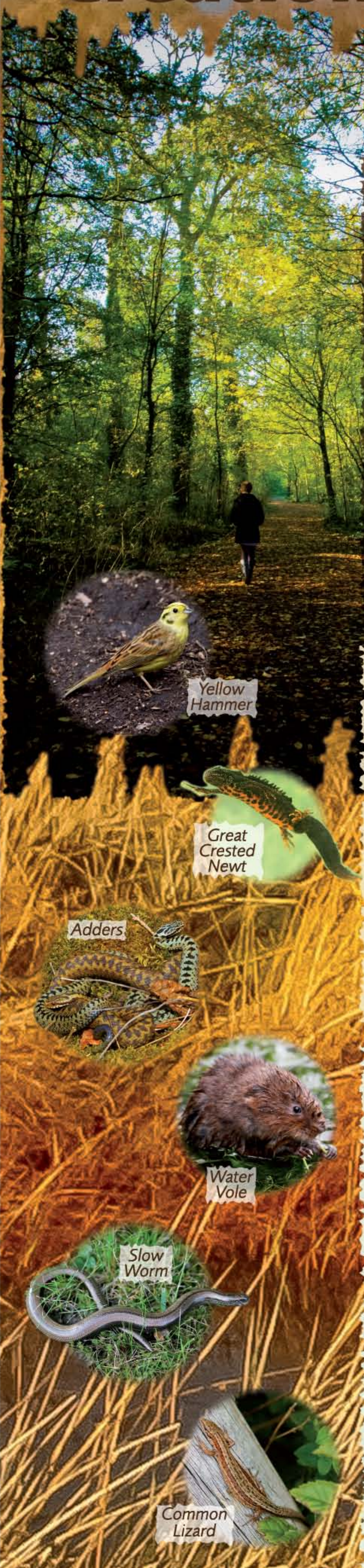


Emerald Damselfly



Sundew

Photos by Mike Roberts and Chris Rose



Yellow Hammer



Great Crested Newt



Adders



Water Vole



Slow Worm



Common Lizard