

In the summer the hum of insects can be overwhelming and the intense purple of the heather breathtaking. While later in the season one can indulge in a veritable feast of blaeberrries. This part of the reserve is where most of the Scot's pines are found, hinting towards a more rugged highland landscape rather than central lowland Scotland.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER



Spagnum moss can be found growing throughout the reserve in most of the damp hollows, though not more so than in a large strip of marsh that divides the woodland from the meadow. Two ponds have been dug by volunteers nearby to encourage amphibians.

RAGGED ROBIN



The meadow itself is of interest due to the variety of wildflowers that can be found here, including devil's bit scabious, ragged robin, tormentil, sneezewort as well as the rare adder's tongue fern and greater butterfly orchid. The meadow is carefully managed for the wildflowers.

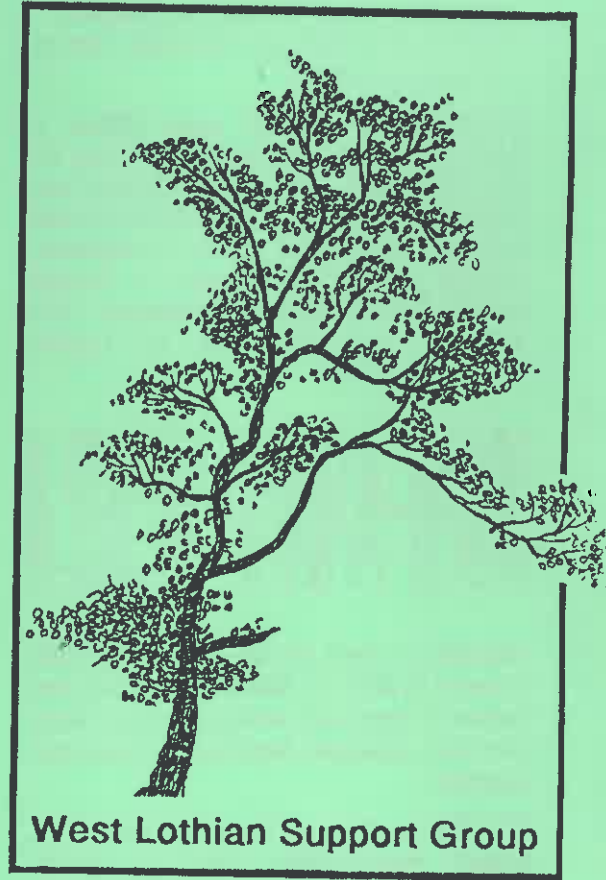
#### LOCATION

Hermand Birchwood nature reserve is situated one mile south of West Calder on a small road off the B7008 to Harburn.



## HERMAND BIRCHWOOD

Scottish Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve



For more information on the Scottish Wildlife Trust contact Edinburgh 226 4602

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**H**ermand Birchwood is a ten hectare area of woodland sited upon a raised peatbog which was once a common feature in many parts of lowland Scotland. The reserve was originally part of the old Hermand estate and on old maps is referred to as Turnliemoon, a name derived from the old celtic Torr na moine or hill of peat.

Despite a chequered past history of drainage, coal mining and tree felling, the reserve remains an important habitat and was designated a site of special scientific interest by the then Nature Conservancy Council in 1987. It became a Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve in September 1984 after an agreement with the Lothian Regional Council.



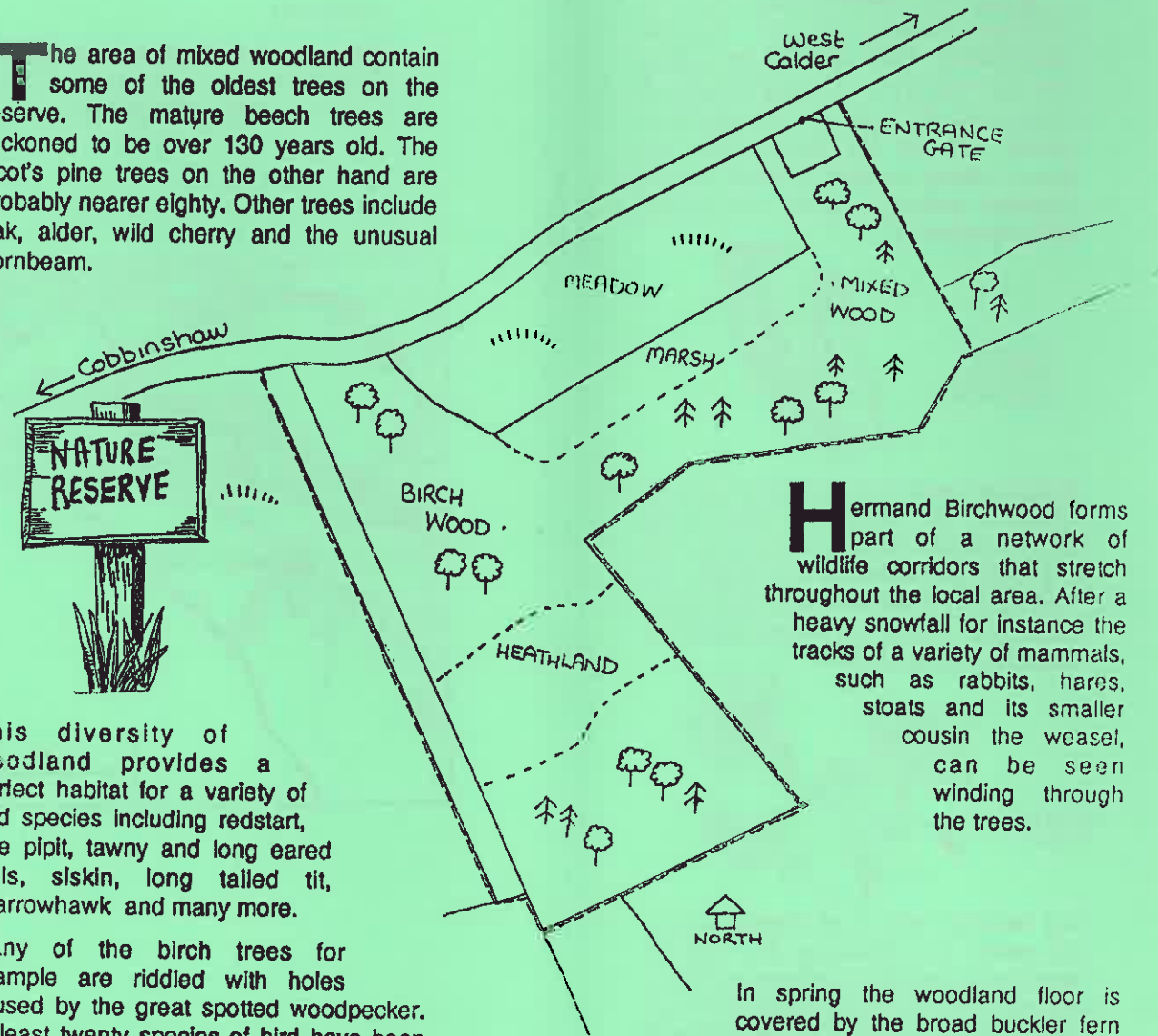
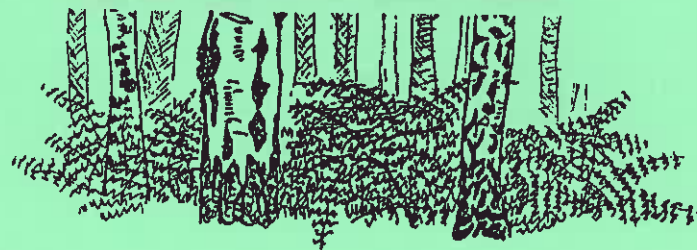
Despite its name the area is only partially covered in Birch (or birk as it is sometimes known in Scotland), containing also areas of mixed woodland, heathland, marsh and meadow.

The Birchwood itself has developed from natural regeneration which is slowly colonising most of the raised bog. Wartime felling and more recent clearings have created a good diversity of old and young trees. Amongst them a few rowan trees can be found struggling to survive the attention of the roe deer.

**T**he area of mixed woodland contain some of the oldest trees on the reserve. The mature beech trees are reckoned to be over 130 years old. The Scot's pine trees on the other hand are probably nearer eighty. Other trees include oak, alder, wild cherry and the unusual hornbeam.

This diversity of woodland provides a perfect habitat for a variety of bird species including redstart, tree pipit, tawny and long eared owls, siskin, long tailed tit, sparrowhawk and many more.

Many of the birch trees for example are riddled with holes caused by the great spotted woodpecker. At least twenty species of bird have been recorded breeding.



**H**ermand Birchwood forms part of a network of wildlife corridors that stretch throughout the local area. After a heavy snowfall for instance the tracks of a variety of mammals, such as rabbits, hares, stoats and its smaller cousin the weasel, can be seen winding through the trees.

In spring the woodland floor is covered by the broad buckler fern and in the more open areas by the blaeberry and heather. The heather reaches its glory in late summer especially in a small patch of heathland in the south-west corner of the reserve.