

New Car Park for RSPB Reserve

The RSPB will open the car park at its new Broadwater Warren nature reserve for the first time on Saturday 16 May at 10.30am.

RSPB staff and volunteers will be on hand throughout the day to introduce people to the reserve, which until this point has had no official parking. The car park will then be open daily.

Visitors will be able to enjoy long walks around the new circular nature trail, which takes in the existing remnants of heathland, a little stream and wild pond, ancient woodland, and a rare wetland habitat called valley mire.

All of these habitats are in urgent need of restoration. Over the next 10 years, the RSPB hopes to recreate the landscape of ancient woodland and heathland that is thought to have existed here for thousands of years before much of the site was planted with conifers.

The reserve manager, Caroline FitzGerald, said: "We've got a big job ahead of us, and it will involve some upheaval, but we're keen for nature-lovers to come and get to know the site before the restoration begins. Broadwater Warren is already a really special place, so it's great to be able to give people in the Tunbridge Wells area the chance to come and enjoy the wildlife and landscape as it is now.

"In these first two years since we took over the site, we have been surveying everything. We've turned up unusual wildlife such as dormice and rare fungi, and identified over 200 archaeological features. It means we can now ensure they are protected when the restoration starts."

The reserve is what the RSPB calls a 'quiet enjoyment' site; apart from the car park and trail, there are no other facilities planned, keeping the reserve a place of peaceful walks for local people to enjoy.

The car park is on Broadwater Forest Lane, accessed by turning right to Groombridge off the A26, two miles south of Tunbridge Wells.

People can comment on the full plans for the reserve later this spring when the Environmental Impact Assessment is released for public consultation. It will examine any potential impacts the RSPB's plans might have, from environmental issues to access.