

Welcome

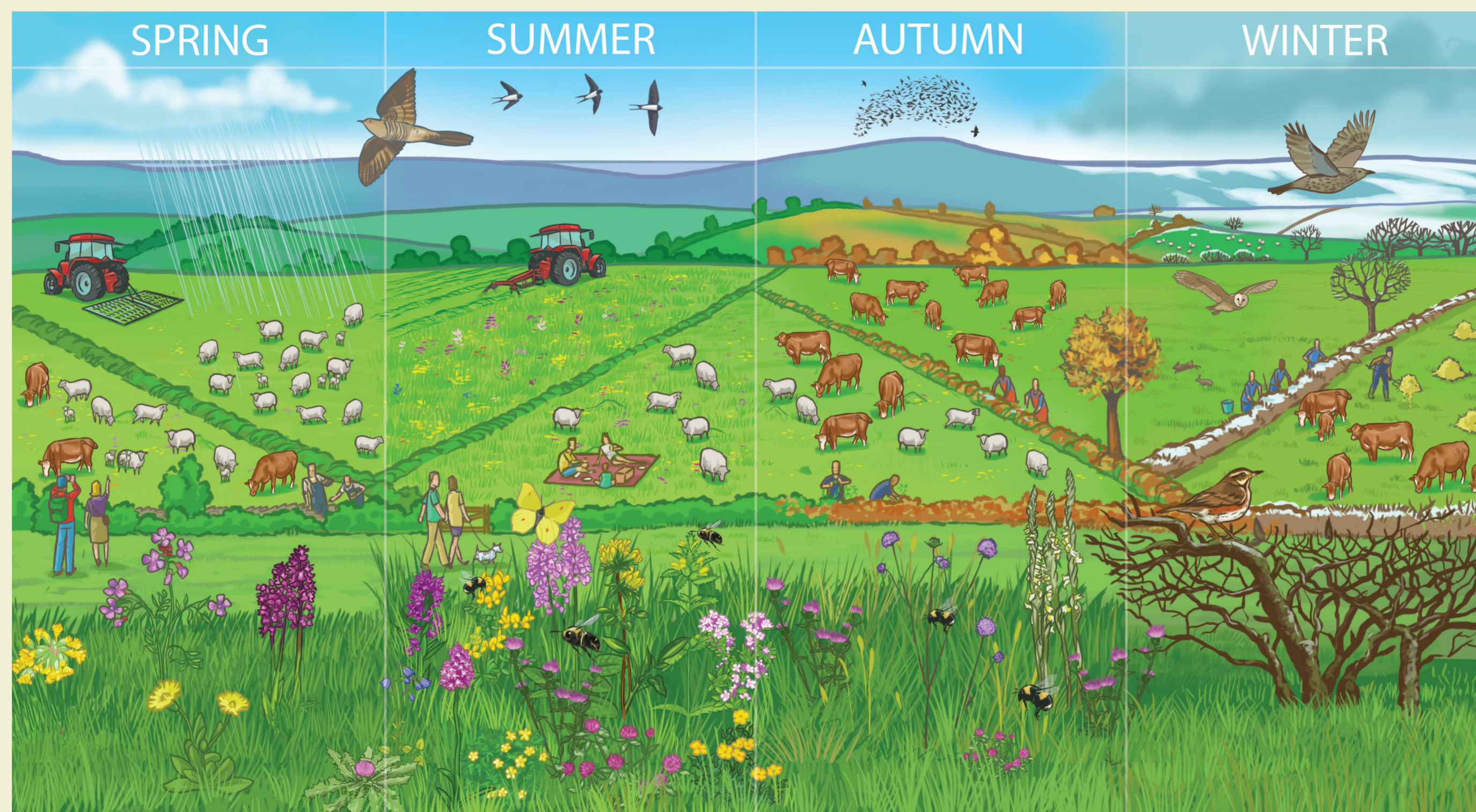
Draycott Sleights Nature Reserve is owned and managed by Somerset Wildlife Trust. The site is a fantastic place for nature, with limestone grassland that supports over 200 species of flowering plant as well as butterflies, bees, birds, mammals and a wealth of other wildlife. This value is recognised by the reserve being a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Grasslands through the seasons

Grasslands look different throughout the year due to the way they are managed. Pastures are managed with grazing, with different levels and types of stock used to allow plants to flower over the summer and ensure land is not damaged in wet conditions in the winter. Meadows are managed differently, with grazing stock removed in late spring, allowing flowers and grasses to grow tall, flower and set seed before a hay cut is taken in mid-late summer. This is followed by grazing with cattle or sheep to help bed in the seeds and keep the grass low, aiding germination, with the summer's hay providing valuable winter fodder where needed.

Getting to know Draycott Sleights Nature Reserve

Here are just a few of the flower species you may be able to spot as you explore the reserve:



Conservation

Species-rich grasslands such as these used to be a common sight in the landscape. This changed following World War II, when a push for productivity combined with increasing agricultural mechanisation led to over 97% of species rich meadows and pastures being lost. Somerset Wildlife Trust is helping to conserve the remaining grasslands such as this on our reserves, as well as restoring a diversity of flowers to grasslands throughout the landscape.

A Living Landscape

Somerset Wildlife Trust rely on your support to manage such outstanding places for wildlife and people. In the Mendip Hills we are aiming to create a Living Landscape by working with farmers to connect up vital nature reserves with other areas of wildlife habitat, helping the landscape to function for wildlife, agriculture and people. To find out ways to support our work, including becoming a member and volunteering, please go to somersetwildlife.org. Contact Somerset Wildlife Trust at enquiries@somersetwildlife.org

Save Our Magnificent Meadows

This interpretation panel has been produced as part of Save Our Magnificent Meadows, a UK-wide partnership project to transform the fortunes of our vanishing wildflower meadows, grasslands and wildlife, primarily funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

magnificentmeadows.org.uk

Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet, to find out more about Draycott Sleights Nature Reserve



Cowslip

When to see it: Late spring to early summer

What to look for: Wrinkled, toothed leaves, with nodding flowers that are narrower than those of the closely related primrose

Size: 5 to 30 cm

Did you know?: Cowslips are visited by insects with long tongues such as bees and moths, which can collect the nectar from the bottom of the petal tube



Eyebright

When to see it: Summer

What to look for: Glossy green leaves with small, white flowers with an egg-yolk coloured blotch and thin purple lines on the lower lip

Size: 10 to 20 cm

Did you know?: Eyebright is so-called because of the resemblance of the flowers to bright eyes. It was used in the 18th century to help cure poor eyesight and is still used in eye treatments today



Wild marjoram

When to see it: Summer to early autumn

What to look for: Tall, stiff, upright plant with leaves in opposite pairs and purply-pink flowers

Size: Up to 80 cm

Did you know?: Be sure to smell the sweetly-scented leaves; which kitchen herb do they remind you of?



Wild thyme

When to see it: Late spring to summer

What to look out for: Often found growing on rock outcrops and as part of dense turf, where it forms mats of fragrant leaves, woody stalks and pink flowers

Size: Low-growing (less than 10 cm), but far-creeping

Did you know?: The leaves contain thymol, an aromatic oil that has antiseptic and preservative qualities



Agrimony

When to see it: Summer to early autumn

What to look out for: Frond-like leaves made up of pairs of large leaves with pairs of smaller leaves in between, with tall spikes of flowers and fruits

Size: Up to 100 cm

Did you know?: The fruit, which forms after flowering, has hooked spines that catch on the fur of passing animals or the clothes of walkers, dispersing the seed



Horseshoe vetch

When to see it: Late spring to summer

What to look out for: Whorls of yellow flowers with trailing stems of leaves made up of 4 to 5 pairs of little leaves and one at the end

Size: 5 to 20 cm

Did you know?: When the seed pods ripen they break up into several horseshoe-shaped segments, which give the plant its name



Bee orchid

When to see it: Summer

What to look out for: Pink flowers with a lower lip that resembles a bumblebee

Size: 10 to 40 cm

Did you know?: This fascinating plant attracts male bumblebees that see the lower lip of the flower as a female bumblebee and try to mate with it, which causes pollen to collect on their bodies that is transferred to other plants as they try again