



Danbury Ridge nature reserves

nature trail map





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nature trail directions

Start

From the main entrance in Runsell Lane, enter **Scrubs Wood**. Bear right and then left to walk down the main path.

Scrubs Wood is a beautiful, 10-acre woodland with some rare wild service trees, old oak standards and chestnut and hornbeam coppice.



Follow the main path north-eastwards where it bends sharp left after about 160m. The path then turns right. You have now entered **Little Baddow Heath**. Take the path forking left downhill to reach a boardwalk.

Notice the sloping coppiced woodland to your right.



Turn left and cross the boardwalk. You have now entered **Poors Piece**. Here you will find an interpretation board **(1)**.

Follow the path uphill where it bears right and then left before descending downhill to a gate and kissing gate. Go through the kissing gate and climb uphill for about 120m to another gate. You are now heading north.

On the left you will see coppiced woodland and some old oak pollards. In summertime there is a fine display of lily-of-the-valley.



Pass through the gate and you are now on a bridleway. You will see **Little Baddow Heath** to your right. On your left is **Fir Tree Wood**, the most recent addition to the Danbury Ridge complex of nature reserves. Continue on the bridleway for another 120m and you will come to another interpretation board **(2)** at a crossroad of tracks.

Continue north for another 80m and then turn right through the kissing gate to enter **Pheasanthouse Wood**. Take the left fork heading downhill.

The coppiced trees you see around you are sweet chestnut. Note the regrowth occurring from the stumps. Lily-of-the-valley is abundant here in late Spring.



After about 160m you will see a fence post immediately in front of you. Turn right and after another 10m you will find an interpretation board **(3)**.

Re-trace your steps back to the fence post and then follow the path straight ahead for about 100m. Go through the kissing gate and turn right to re-join the bridleway heading north-west.

Continue downhill and cross the stream at the conduit. The bridleway then ascends with the southern meadows of **Pheasanthouse Farm** to your right

Towards the top of the hill there is a lovely display of bluebells on the bridleway in Spring.



After about 300m, turn right at the top of the hill and enter Pheasanthouse Farm through the kissing gate. Follow the public footpath between the parallel hedgerows and you will find an interpretation board on your right **(4)**. Follow the path between the farm buildings and take the smaller path to the left immediately after the pond. Head downhill and pass around the metal gate to enter **Birch Wood** where you will find an interpretation board (5) on your right.

Continue down the path a short distance and, at the end of the fencing on the left, turn sharp right to take the small path.

You are now passing through an area of coppice. In Birch Wood this is mainly hornbeam, and you can see the stems re-growing from the coppiced stools. In Spring there is a fine display of wood anemone to your right.



Leave Birch Wood by the first bridge and turn immediately left onto the second bridge to cross the stream and enter **Woodham Walter Common**.

The two bridges mark the meeting of 4 different reserves – Birch Wood, Pheasanthouse Farm, Pheasanthouse Wood and Woodham Walter Common.



Follow the path straight ahead, keeping the stream to your left. After about 150m you will find an interpretation board (6). Continue along the path with the stream to your left and after another 75m turn sharp right to head uphill in a south-easterly direction.

The path continues uphill for about 200m to meet a broad bridleway. Turn right onto the bridleway. After another 120m take the path forking to the left. Continue for another 80m to the next interpretation board (7) at Rowan Hollow.

Stay on this path which starts to descend downhill. After about 400m the path meets a winding stream with a conduit bridge to your left. Turn sharp right here and follow the narrow path with the stream on your left.

After about 200m you will meet a fence at the crossroads of another bridleway. Go straight over the bridleway to re-enter **Little Baddow Heath**.

This valley with slopes on either side and the stream winding between them is a rare habitat supporting many species of wild plants including ancient ferns and mare's tail. These in turn support many varieties of butterfly and dragonfly in Summer.



You will find an interpretation board (8) on your left. Continue to follow this path with the stream on your left and then turn left over the boardwalk at the end. Bear left and climb the steep hill to meet a track at the top. Turn right onto the track.

Ignore the first two paths that fork to the right but after 100m take the third one. As the path curves round to the right you will be near the end of a wide cutting between the woodlands.

This area was once a World War II logging track that was restored in 1988-90.



Cross the logging track diagonally and follow the path heading south-west back into **Scrubs Wood**. Follow this path for about 200m and turn left at the end to return to the Runsell Lane entrance.

