

Birds

A wide variety of birdlife can be seen (and heard) around the fields.

The thick boundary hedgerows are home to finches such as **Greenfinch**, **Bullfinch** and **Linnet**.

Yellowhammers breed in the hedgerows. These bright yellow birds are famous for their “a little bit of bread and no cheese” call. Sadly they, like the Linnet are decreasing in number nationally due to the lack of suitable weed seeds and winter stubble for food. Their even rarer relative, the Corn Bunting has also been seen here.



Yellowhammer
Photo Lee Evans

Song Thrushes and **Blackbirds** can be seen feeding on the meadows. In winter they are joined by other thrushes – including **Fieldfares** and **Redwings** which spend their summers in the arctic and their winters in Stewkley!

At dusk Barn Owls can be seen quartering the fields looking for mice and voles. If you stay out a bit later you may also see **Pipistrelle Bats** hunting along the hedgerows for insects.

Butterflies

The fields are home to large numbers of **Meadow Brown** butterflies. One surveyor counted 1,760 in 2 hours in 2005, along with 400 **Ringlets**. Other butterfly species using the fields include **Gatekeepers** (so named because their chosen habitat is gaps in hedges – often filled with gates – and they are highly territorial), **Brimstone**, **Comma** and **Marbled White**, a species more often associated with chalk grasslands.



Marbled White Photo AVDC



‘Supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, Aylesbury Vale District Council’ and Stewkley Parish Council



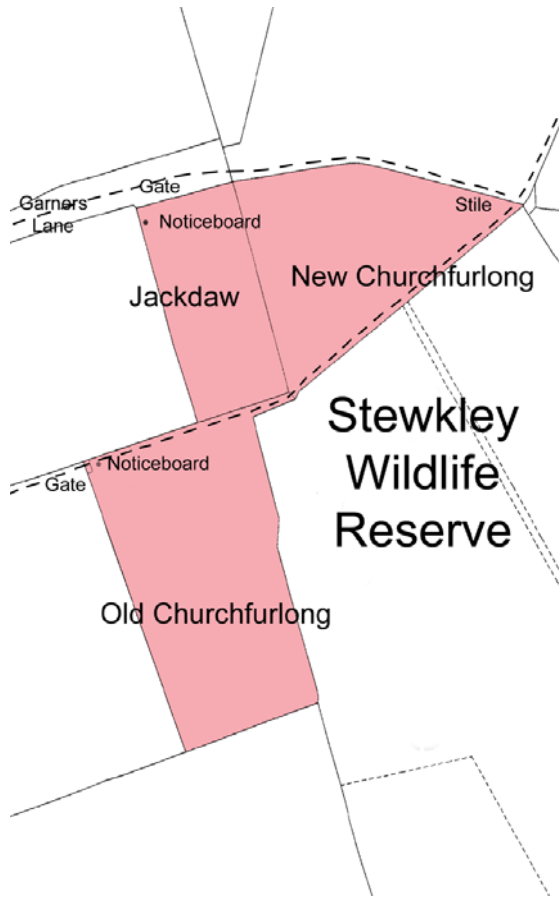
These 3 fields are a valuable wildlife resource and are some of the only remaining unimproved meadows in the parish.

Two of the fields are designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

The fields are a good example of species rich meadows, which have remained relatively unchanged for many years. The ridges that can be seen crossing the Old Churchfurlong field are ridge and furrow – which show that the land was ploughed in mediaeval times but has remained unploughed since. Additionally the land has not been ‘improved’ with fertilisers – which means that a wide variety of wildflowers continue to flourish – flowers that have sadly been lost from most of the fields in the area.

The fields were bought by Stewkley Parish Council in 2008, which will continue to manage them for the benefit of biodiversity.

It is proposed to increase the wildlife attracted to Stewkley Wildlife Reserve by installing a pond in New Churchfurlong and by bringing the copse into management.



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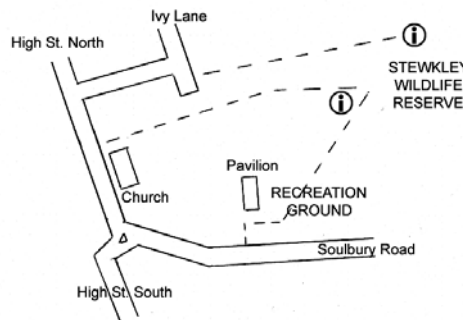
Wildflowers

This delicate pink **Ladysmock** can be found in the damper parts of the fields. It flowers early in the year – usually at the time of the first call of the Cuckoo – which has led to another name **Cuckooflower**

The beautiful purple 'thistle-like' heads of **Lesser Knapweed** can be seen in all 3 fields. It flowers between June and August. Alternative names for it include **Black Knapweed** and **Hardheads** (because of the shape of the seedheads in the autumn)

The large daisies seen in the fields throughout the summer are **Ox-eye** or **Moon Daisies**, so called because they appear to be the size of an Ox's eye.

A lower growing plant is **Bird's Foot Trefoil**, which has small yellow and red flowers (leading to another name of Bacon & Eggs). The Jackdaw Field also contains it's much less common relative, **Greater Bird's Foot Trefoil**, which as the name suggests is larger and prefers marshy ground



Ladysmock Photo Mike Draycott

Lady's Bedstraw used to be used as a pillow and mattress stuffing. You may catch the sweet scent of its foliage and flowers as you explore the fields.



One of the rarest (and most unusual) plants in the fields is the **Adder's Tongue Fern**. This plant is classed as uncommon in Bucks, and it has not been recorded elsewhere locally. For that reason

it has been chosen as the emblem for the Stewkley Wildlife Reserve.

It doesn't look like a fern as the frond forms a single spike with a single leaf shaped frond wrapped around it. It only grows in damp unimproved pastures like those here.

There are many other species of wild plants growing in these fields. Please visit the notice boards on site which will give you more information about them.