

Wychwood CTAs

The CTAs within the Wychwood are generally indicative of the open countryside in west Oxfordshire and are more rural in character. The Northern Evenlode Valleys CTA is representative of a series of



limestone valleys and slopes cutting into the Cotswolds plateau. Highlights here include two sites managed by the Wychwood Project. Wigwell Valley (pictured below) to the north of Charlbury supports wonderful limestone grasslands, tufa springs and spectacular veteran ash trees. The valley is an important site for the very rare meadow clary, and recent conservation work has included the installation of several enclosures to control grazing pressure and encourage the plant to spread further. Between Charlbury and Chadlington is the remote and tranquil Dean Common. A former sand quarry abandoned 20 years ago, the site is

a near-perfect example of what managed rewilding can achieve in a CTA. The site now supports a mosaic of low nutrient habitats and is home to numerous orchid species, large populations of toads and great crested newts, and an impressive bird assemblage.



Further south, the Wychwood and Lower Evenlode CTA is within more rolling countryside where the limestone habitats of the Cotswold edge begin to give way to the Oxford clay vales. Managed by local volunteers, North Leigh Common is an interesting mosaic of woodlands, ponds and meadows. The site also supports areas of acid grassland, a very uncommon habitat in Oxfordshire. Other recent conservation activity in this CTA includes the acquisition of Singe Wood (pictured below) by the Wychwood Project. Just north of Hailey, this woodland is a good example of almost a century of natural regeneration on undisturbed ancient woodland soils and has some unusual oak coppice and spectacular carpets of native bluebells. The woodland will be managed as a biodiversity hotspot, and represents a valuable building block for habitat restoration and an opportunity for increased ecological connectivity within the CTA.

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