

Wildlife walk... 2 miles

Staple Plain, Somerset


 THE NATIONAL TRUST

Wander down through broadleaf woodland, into a bracken filled combe and up to the top of Beacon Hill to savour fantastic panoramic views across the Quantock Hills and beyond. Continue through lowland heathland, listening and looking out for red deer, skylark and Dartford warbler in this wildlife-rich environment.

Start: Staple Plain car park – grid ref: ST116410 – OS Explorer 140/Landranger 181

How to get here

By bike: bridleways pass through Weacombe Combe at point 2 on map and up Staple Lane from West Quantoxhead along the track to the car park

By bus: service 14 from Bridgwater (passing close to ) , alight West Quantoxhead bus shelter. Then 1ml by road into village and up Staple Lane, a steep hill on left, to Staple Plain car park

By train: Bridgwater  14ml

By car: 13ml from Bridgwater on A39 and 18ml from Taunton on A358. Car park at Staple Plain (NT, no charge)

Pub in West Quantoxhead village and stores selling light refreshments in Kilve village

Things to look out for...

Burial Cairns

Staple Plain is part of a larger Site of Special Scientific Interest (areas requiring protection on account of its rare wildlife or geological features) which covers all of the Quantock Common. On most of the hilltops you will find large piles of stone; these are Bronze Age burial cairns, which were assembled here by Bronze Age communities as tributes to their tribal leaders.

Wildlife

Staple Plain is important for its lowland heathland and is a fantastic haven for a diverse range of wildlife. This walk takes you through a range of different habitats, where you could be lucky enough to spot a range of animals, including red deer, common lizards, adders and dung beetles.

The Nightjar

Staple Plain is an ideal habitat for the protected nightjar, which favours heathland, open scrub and young conifer plantations. On a warm summer evening, listen out for their eerie, churring song reverberating across the heath.



Heather burning, known as swaling, creates a patchwork landscape, fantastic for wildlife. The heathland is in 15 year rotations, allowing the heather to go through a complete lifecycle before being swaled to encourage re-growth. During the early stages many other species grow alongside the heather, such as grasses and bilberry.

© NT / Nigel Garnsworthy



During the day skylarks give their musical aerial display, whilst Dartford warblers (pictured here) skulk in the gorse, with stonechats acting as sentries. In the summer months, Silver washed fritillary and green hairstreak butterflies can be found in woodland glades and scrubby edges.

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Red deer are a common sight on the Quantock Hills. The best chance of seeing them is through binoculars; they can be found in large numbers within the combes and surrounding hills.

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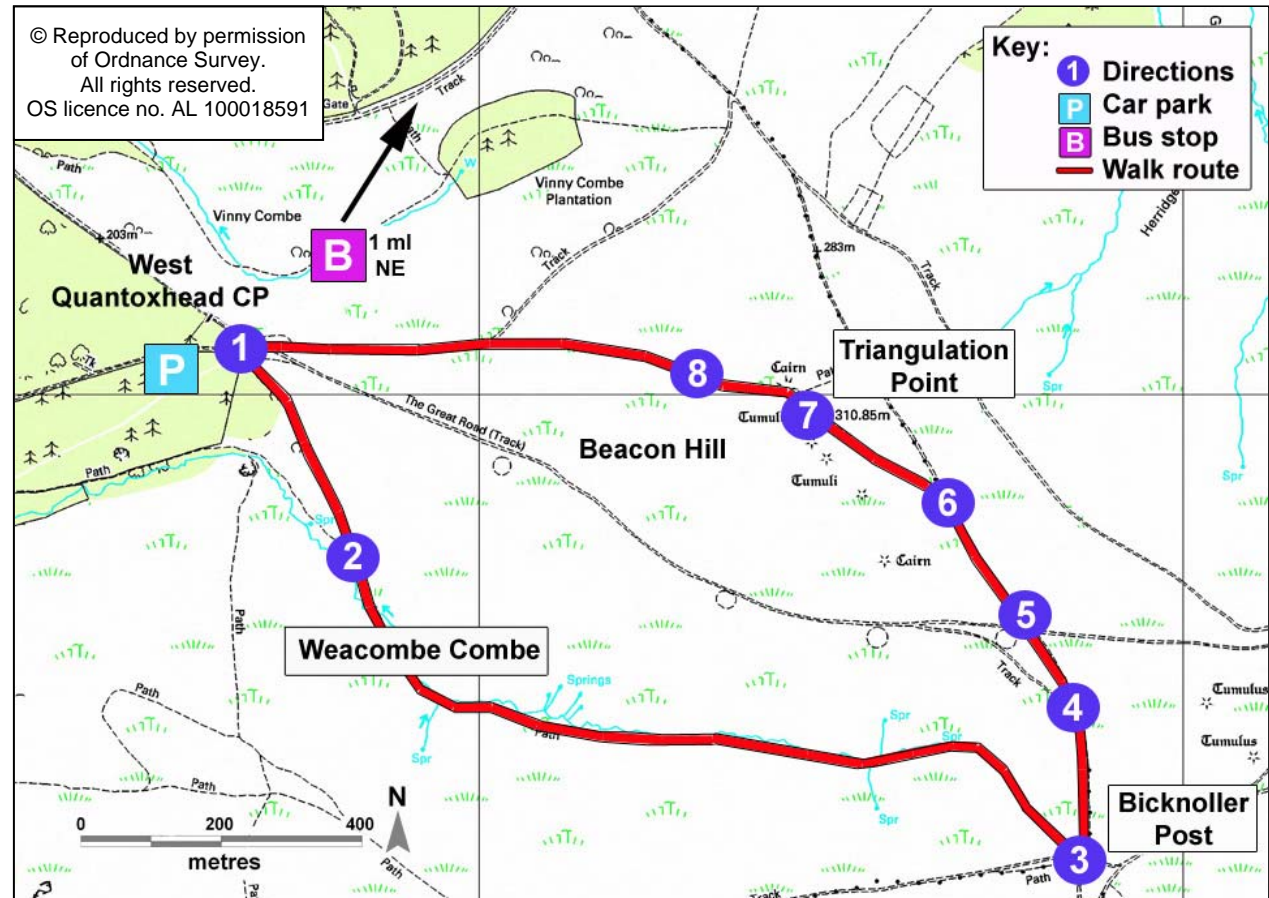
Directions

1. Head towards the car park entrance, then go left past a wooden gate and fence to a track in the corner of the car park which is waymarked down into Weacombe Combe. The track heads steeply down at first, alongside woodland.
2. Follow the track down until it joins a path running along the bottom of Weacombe Combe. Turn left and follow this path up the combe, keeping the stream on your right. About half of the way up, the path crosses the stream. Cross over and continue to follow the path up the combe.
3. At the top of the combe (on the opposite side where several tracks meet) is Bicknoller Post. From here, on a clear day, you can see over to Minehead and Dunkery Beacon in Exmoor. Turn left at these tracks and follow it away from the two hawthorn trees either side of the track, with Bicknoller Post behind you on the right.
4. When the track splits keep right and then continue walking straight on. Keep walking up the stony tracks in roughly a straight (northerly) direction.
5. Head over the crossroads and walk roughly 200m, where you will see a grassy track leading off to the left.
6. Follow this path up a gentle slope to the triangulation point; a concrete trig point.
7. Once at the trig point stop to take in the amazing views: Wales, Steep Holm in the Bristol Channel, Weston-Super-Mare, Brean Down, Bridgwater Bay, Quantock Common, Exmoor and Minehead can all be seen from here.
8. The trig point is sited on a mound of stones (a cairn) with another a few metres away and a path just to the left of it, head down this path until you reach the car park. While going down this path you will pass through heathland of varying different ages, which attracts a range of wildlife, and also some bracken covered areas.

Terrain and accessibility

2ml (3.2km) circular walk through different habitats, with varied terrain. Steep slope at start of walk, with some steps. Most of the trail is along wide stone or grass tracks, with a section passing through a few streams which can be muddy during wet weather.

Dogs welcome under close control or on a lead. Mar 1-31 Jul dogs must be on short leads.



Contact us: tel. 01823 451814

National Trust places nearby: Fyne Court, Dunster Castle, Holnicote Estate, Brean Down

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