

The largest area of habitat at Mereway is bramble scrub. The dense brambles provide excellent shelter for breeding birds, a rich source of nectar for insects and an abundant berry harvest in the late summer.

Dewberry is a close relative of bramble, which also grows in small patches of Mereway.

Can you spot the difference?



Brambles (black ones yumm, red ones yuck!)



Dewberry - like a bramble but the same colour as a blueberry

Who lives here?

Long-tailed Tits weave their delicate nests, lined with spider webs, amidst the thickest brambles. They are often seen in small family groups.



Looks like a ping-pong ball with a long tail



Weird scratchy song from the top of a bush (not very tuneful!)

Whitethroats arrive in late April from sub Saharan Africa. They nest in the safe cover of the brambles. Mereway is the best place along the Crane to see them.

Left alone, the whole of Mereway will eventually return to woodland. This small woodland patch consists mainly of Blackthorn, which produces early creamy blossom in March. You can also see many emergent trees poking out through the scrub in Mereway. Most of these are either Sycamore or Oak trees.



Oak leaves are EASY to identify



Blackthorn is often the first shrub to produce blossom in spring

Who lives here?

The loud song of the **Song Thrush** can often be heard on Mereway. They eat worms, slugs and snails, so do them a big favour by avoiding using poisons such as slug pellets in your garden.



Song Thrushes REPEAT REPEAT REPEAT everything at least TWICE TWICE...



Often hunting for bugs around the streetlights

Common and Soprano Pipistrelles are the mouse-sized bats you are most likely to see around dusk flying over Mereway. They roost in nearby buildings.



Sycamore has 'helicopter' seeds

There are many patches of nettles on Mereway, particularly on the edges of the meadow and along the roadside verges. These hardy plants are a very important food source for invertebrates such as caterpillars and beetles. However, many of the plants that look like nettles are in fact dead-nettles. These have more attractive flowers than the Common Nettle and they don't sting. so it's a good idea to learn the difference.



Common Nettle (or Stinging Nettle)



White Dead-nettle (top right) and Red Dead-nettle (bottom right) have leaves like nettles - NOT OUCH!

Who lives here?

Nursery Web

Spiders often sit out on nettle leaves on sunny days waiting to ambush passing prey. They only build webs as a nursery to protect their young, not to catch food.



Stripy body, long legs, very fast



Count the spots (the Harlequin is top right)

The 2-spot, 7-spot and tiny 14-spot (yellow) Ladybird are often seen on the leaves of nettles. The larger Harlequin Ladybird is an invasive species that threatens our native ladybirds.

Many of the open areas on Mereway are thickly covered in lush green knee-high vegetation by mid-summer. These areas of rank grassland consists of fast growing plants that prefer rich soils. Some of the rank grassland plants at Mereway are species left over from the allotment gardens that used to be here.



Comfrey (this is an old allotment species - see if you can find any others...)

Green Alkanet - but it's got BLUE flowers! (who named this species?)



Who lives here?

Shieldbugs are distinctive beetles that you should be able to find here if you look carefully. They are normally sitting out on leaves

Green Sheildbug



Crucifer Sheildbugs making friends



Dock Bug (or is it an alien?)



Blue-tailed Damselfly



Azure Damselfly



Banded Demoiselle

Several species of damselfly can be seen from late May until the end of the summer. Damselflies rest with their wings folded (unlike dragonflies, who rest with wings spread).

There are several small grassland meadows on Mereway. In order to keep these open, the brambles have to be cut back around the edges each year. Grassland is an important habitat for insects, many of whom shelter in the long grass. The wild flowers attract bees and butterflies. Relax in one of the meadows and watch life buzz and flutter by...



You'll have to crawl on your hands and knees to see the Common Field Speedwell



Cocksfoot - a native grass with a very silly name

Who lives here?

Queen bumblebees emerge in late February and can be seen seeking small holes in the ground in which to establish their nests.



Buff-tailed Bumblebee



The Common Carder Bumblebee has a distinctive cinnamon back

Comma's ragged wing pattern makes it easy to recognise



Comma and Peacock are two of the species of butterfly whose caterpillars thrive in patches of nettles. They can be seen in the meadows on the Mereway from March onwards.



Peacock