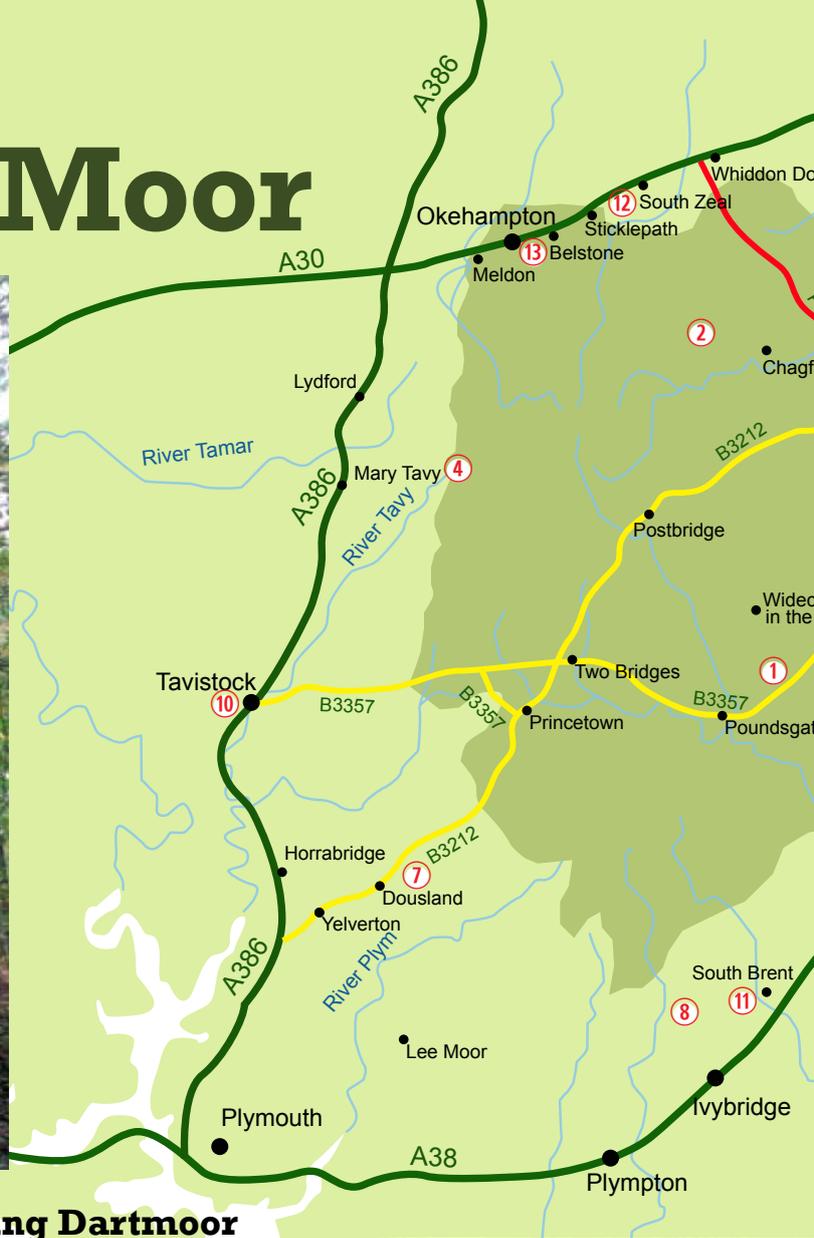


Trust in the Moor



Matt Parkins shares his love of exploring Dartmoor woodlands and offers a round-up of Woodland Trust sites in the area that are open to the public

Do you have a favourite wild place? Where the view stirs the imagination or where the squeaks, rustles and smells give you hints about what's going on around you? Maybe the atmosphere relaxes your mind. These places might draw you back again and again. I have many of these special spots around Dartmoor and, depending on my mood, I might want to be on top of a granite tor, facing into the wind and staring out to the distant coast, or perhaps I'll sit by a moorland stream. The therapeutic sounds of the tumbling water soothe me as the sun makes rainbows where the droplets bounce off boulders. I peer into the brown depths to look for trout but get distracted by life in miniature; insects skating on the surface or dazzling neon

dragonflies, damselfly, chasers and darters. I like to take my insect identification book in my pack wherever I go.

The high moor is always dramatic but, more and more, I find myself walking, sitting and contemplating life in the woodlands around Dartmoor. In contrast to the exposed wide open spaces, a mixed deciduous woodland offers protection, and not just for me. I'm never alone in the woods with birds, mammals and insects foraging, calling and going into battle to protect their little piece of territory. It's exciting; just sit still and enjoy the free show.

I'm surprised how many pockets of woodland are available; open for access. The Woodland Trust manages a number of these and my local one is Tramlines Wood. Just a short stroll from my door I can immerse myself in calm or go for

a family adventure; with a clean river bubbling by, an open glade welcomes you in. What a break from a busy life.

Another real favourite is Blackaton Copse near Gidleigh. It's magical and ancient atmosphere takes you on a trip back into the mists of time. You can be at peace on the bench by the stream or on hands and knees among the crispy leaves admiring the beautiful detail, colours and textures of autumn fungus. A bit further south you can find Pullabrook Wood and Hisley Wood along the Bovey valley. From day to day and season to season these woods change character and reveal new interest. Try visiting Pullabrook in early summer and you'll probably find some fabulous butterflies in the wildflower glades.

Climb up through Hisley Wood in the winter and you can delve into the past. The medieval



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packhorse bridge takes you up to the ruins of a farmstead, nestling in the trees and unoccupied for nearly a hundred years. Keep on going through twisted oaks along Lustleigh Cleave and a sparkling frosty view opens up from Raven's Tor; it's worth the wait. The air might be cold but your body will be glowing warm after the steady climb.



WOODLAND TRUST

Woods in the Dartmoor Area



Matt Parkins is self-employed as Raven Quest; an adventurous Dartmoor inhabitant with an inquisitive spirit. He works in woodland management and teaches environmental education to community groups, school children and adults. His passion for the woodlands and wide open spaces of the moor is spread by writing about the interesting stories he finds where people and wildlife meet.



If you have a Woodland Trust site near your home, go there; get to know it and its inhabitants. It's free, but you can become a member and find out more, then get involved in protecting your little piece of territory. If you're a visitor to Dartmoor, find a site to go to for a good day out. From Littlewood in the west and Penstave Copse in the south, the

largest wood of them all is Fingle with miles of tracks to explore and, if you're lucky, you could even get to meet the wild otters of the river Teign.

Woodlands can activate your heart and soul and the minds and bodies of children too. There's a lot to do and see and it's your choice. Maybe you'll find a new favourite place.

1 Grey Park Wood - Ashburton

Grid ref: SX72172715
16 ha (37.46 acres)



This pretty wood, famed for lichens, is dominated by oak high forest dating back to the early 1800s. Ruddyleave Water, a fast-flowing stream which descends through massive granite boulders, creates an impressive feature.

2 Blackaton Copse - Gidleigh

Grid ref: SX678886
4.86 ha (12.01 acres)



A small, rocky woodland on the uplands of Dartmoor; this ancient woodland has lichen communities alongside oak and birch trees. The Blackaton Brook is important for spawning trout and salmon and old stone field boundaries traverse the site.

3 Bovey Valley Woods - Lustleigh

Grid ref: SX778803
86.19 ha (212.98 acres)



Walk among ancient woodland and explore a wealth of wildlife, at this large collection of woods on the edge of the National Park.

4 Creason Wood - Horndon

Grid ref: SX529800
6.37 ha (15.74 acres)



This wood lies on a steep slope of the banks of the River Tavy. Getting into the wood is not easy but once access has been achieved (via a ladder) it will repay a visit particularly for people with a nature conservation

interest. The limited access to manage the wood means that it is regenerating itself naturally and offers a 'wild' experience compared with walking on the nearby open moor.

5 Shaptor Woods - Bovey Tracey

Grid ref: SX811805
78.58 ha (194.18 acres)



This is a large expanse of woodland made up of a series of semi-natural ancient woodland sites. There are two public rights of way and a permissive path leading onto Shaptor Rocks where the visitor can enjoy magnificent views across the local landscape.

6 Fingle Woods - Drewsteignton

Grid ref: SX762895
169.65 ha (419.21 acres)



Fingle Wood runs from the Drogo Estate Woodlands at Fingle Bridge east to Clifford Bridge. The woodland is continuous on the southern side of the steep Teign Valley extending to some 10km of accessible woodland.

7 Littlewood - Dousland

Grid ref: SX538684
0.32 ha (0.79 acres)



A small linear wood that is well used by local people and appreciated for its amenity value. It provides a safe walking route along the road as there is no footpath. The local community has a keen interest in the wood and looking after it.



WOODLAND TRUST

8 Hall Farm Estate - Harford

Grid ref: SX629601
102.66 ha (253.68 acres)



This wood sits alongside a working farm and consists of several individual woods that join together to form a wonderful mixed environment. There is a mixture of ancient broadleaf trees, conifers and some recently replanted areas but it is gradually being planted with more native trees. A good place to see traditional Devon hedge banks.

9 Higher Knowle Wood - Lustleigh

Grid ref: SX792808
10.15 ha (25.08 acres)



This prominent ancient semi-natural woodland is conspicuous from much of the local area. Set on a small hill the wood slopes west downhill from a plateau. The eastern section of wood along the public footpath is well used by local people.

10 Crowndale Wood - Tavistock

Grid ref: SX474730
1.05 ha (2.59 acres)



Crowndale Wood is a popular local attraction, which is bordered on one side by the towpath to Drake's Leat.

11 Penstave Copse - Aish, South Brent

Grid ref: SX691611
8.56 ha (21.15 acres)



Comprising mature oak, ash, hazel coppice and alder; this site is popular with local dormice.

12 Dishcombe Wood - South Tawton

Grid ref: SX661931
1.82 ha (4.5 acres)



This is a small wood on the northern fringe of the National Park. There is a circular path through the wood and some springs forming a stream. The wood is situated just outside the village of South Zeal along the road towards Whiddon Down.

13 Tramlines Wood - Okehampton

Grid ref: SX596945
5.69 ha (14.06 acres)



Tramlines is a long, linear wood with a river on the northern boundary, likely to have had its origins in a 12th Century Deer Park. Public access is via a public bridleway running through the site from Station Road along the old tramway.

14 Westcott Wood - Moretonhampstead

Grid ref: SX785871
5.72 ha (14.13 acres)



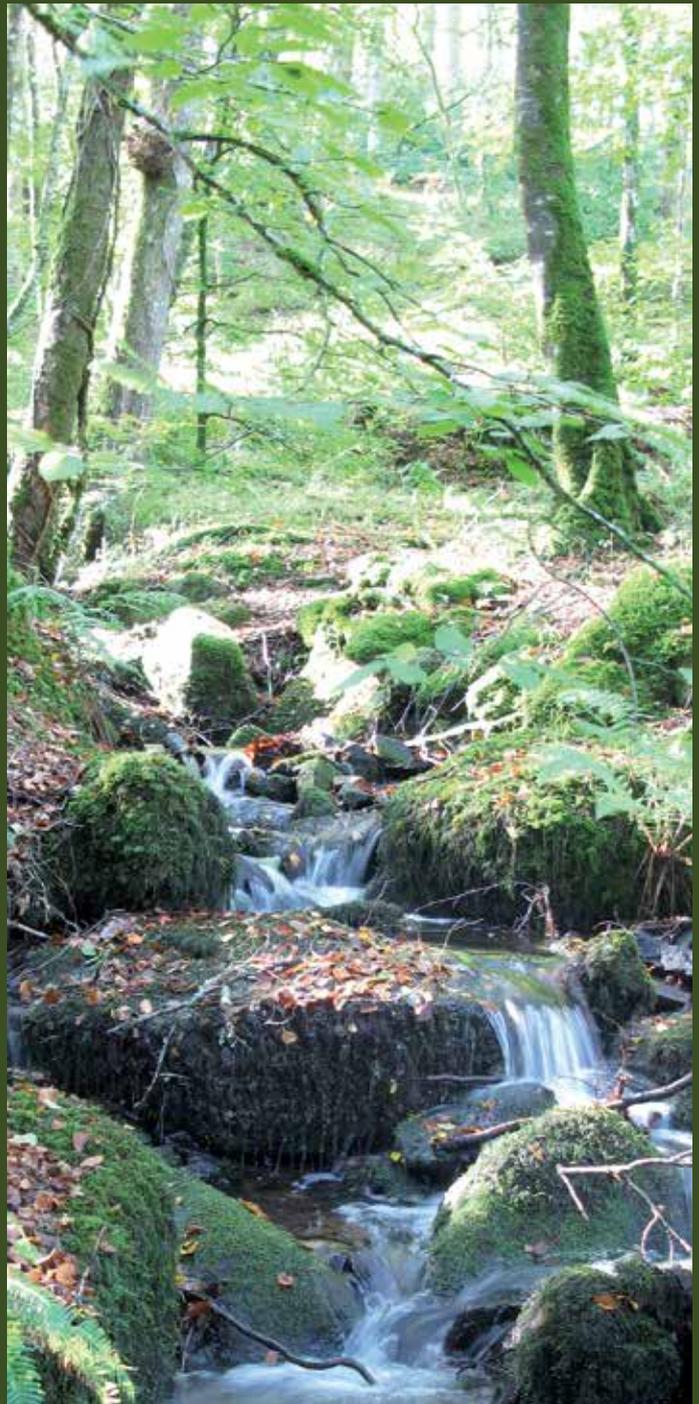
Part of the Teign Valley Ancient Woodland complex, this is a popular wood among local people. It rises quite steeply up from the road so you will need to be quite fit to explore it.

15 East Wrey Cleave - Lustleigh

Grid ref: SX784828
23.5 ha (58.07 acres)



East Wrey Cleave is noticeable for its clusters of conifers in a predominantly broadleaf area. This shady wood is home to some elusive wildlife, from dormice and wood ants to many species of bird nesting in the larch trees.



PHOTOGRAPH © MATT PARKINS

- Good views
- Autumn colour
- Ancient woodland – more than 400 years old
- Free parking less than 500m away
- Bluebells
- Moorland
- Spring colour
- Local parking difficult
- Well worth a visit
- Ancient trees on site
- Special wildlife interest
- Free car parking at site

INFO

There are many more sites around Dartmoor and Devon. You can find them easily at www.woodlandtrust.org.uk.