

## Eridge Rocks

### A majestic sandstone rock outcrop among mixed woodland

It comes as a surprise to many that there are substantial cliffs tucked away in the woodlands of the High Weald of East Sussex. Giant boulders some ten metres high greet the visitor to Eridge Rocks. These rocks are designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the community of plants growing on them, but they have their own 135 million year old interest owing to a variety of weathering effects upon the crust that encloses a soft moist core. Explore a little further and you will find that this stony projection extends for some 600 metres, its shady nooks, deep fissures, and giant bastions are topped with ancient and gnarled beech, yew and holly. There is an extraordinary, almost secretive atmosphere here, perhaps best appreciated on cold winter days when a frosty rime covers the vegetation and icicles droop down from the overhangs.



#### Highlights

Cretaceous sandstone outcrop, rare mosses, liverworts and ferns, bluebells and woodland birds.

hard fern

Mark Monk-Terry

When the Trust bought the reserve in 1997 the rocks were almost invisible, entirely enclosed by the non-native rhododendron that was threatening plants growing on the rocks themselves, as well as throughout the surrounding woodland. Now that the rhododendron has largely been removed the collection of rare lower plants — the mosses, liverworts, and ferns including the tunbridge filmy fern, have taken on a new lease of life, having been exposed once more to dappled light, and their miniature world can now be easily appreciated.

The woods, a mixture of chestnut coppice and oak, are also enchanting; bluebells carpet the ground, alder trees line the woodland streams, and ponds abound with life. Thanks to the diversity of structure within the wood, and several dead trees that provide nesting sites, there are always plenty of woodland birds such as tits, nuthatches and woodpeckers.



Clockwise tunbridge filmy fern, long-tailed tit, nuthatch