

Hallington

Site designations

Local Wildlife Site.

Location

Just off the A68 main road from Corbridge to Jedburgh, adjacent to the B6342 minor road to Rothbury.

Access & facilities

The fishing rights are leased to the Westwater Angling Club. Fishing is by permit only, available from the angling club. The reservoir is stocked annually with rainbow trout. There is a car park at this site.

Site

Hallington lies at an altitude of 140 metres and was constructed towards the end of the nineteenth century. There are two reservoirs; Hallington reservoir west and Hallington reservoir east, which are separated by a dam. An aqueduct enters the site in the north western corner and follows the northern boundary, flowing into both reservoirs. The surrounding farmland comprises mainly enclosed sheep grazed pasture. Both reservoirs form a Local Wildlife Site.

Habitat

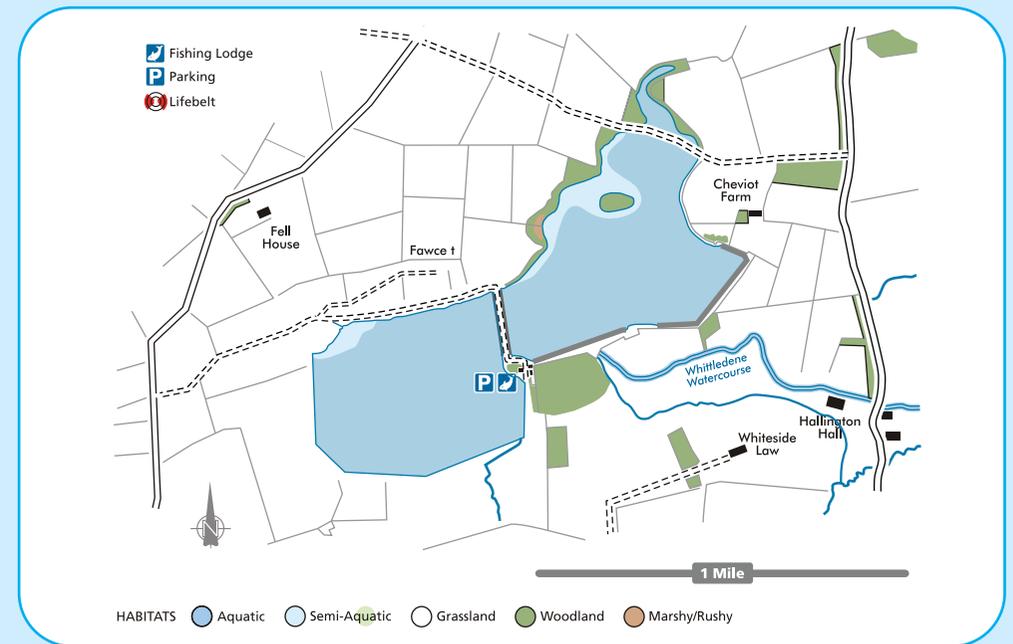
The reservoir is one of a series of large water bodies, in this part of Northumberland, which are connected by streams and aqueducts. Hallington Reservoir West is surrounded by an embankment on three sides along which a shelter belt has been planted. This is dominated by Scots pine with a mixture of other trees such as beech, sycamore, norway maple, silver birch, alder, ash, oak and wych elm. The field layer is generally poor consisting mainly of coarse grasses and ruderal (quick growing) species. Typical woodland species are scarce, although enchanter's nightshade and wood avens do occur.

The woodland on the north western corner is co-dominated by Scots pine and larch with beech, willow and sycamore. The under storey of this woodland is poor, comprising primarily young sycamore. The field layer is also poor and contains mainly

rosebay willow herb, bramble and stinging nettles, though numerous fungi such as tawny grisette, shaggy ink cap, saffron milk cap and blackening russula may be found in the summer and autumn.

In the north western corner of this site there are large stands of both reed canary grass, lesser pond sedge and amphibious bistort with some bottle sedge nearer the water. Willows dominate the small promontory on the northern shore and characteristic swamp species occur here such as intermediate starwort and shoreweed. The latter only occurs in very localised areas in Northumberland. As a consequence it is a regionally important species. Water plantain and marsh yellow cress also grow here. The very rare and scarce small-fruited yellow sedge also occurs near the dam between the two reservoirs.

The embankments are mown frequently though meadow buttercup, daisy, common mouse-ear, lady's mantle and tufted vetch may be found if you look closely at the mown sward. The stone faces of the embankments adjacent to the water have been colonised by numerous species, mostly towards the top of the walls. The grass verge alongside the aqueduct, which flows from Nine Wells along the northern site boundary and into Hallington reservoir east, is species rich with a mixture of grassland and marshy plants. The aqueduct itself is stone-lined with steep sides.



Hallington Reservoir East is fringed along its northern shore by a narrow Scots pine plantation and the grassy area here is most attractive. A rich diversity of marshy grassland plants grows where the aqueduct flows into the reservoir. Species include sneezewort, lesser spearwort, tufted vetch, greater burnet, bird's foot trefoil, common knapweed, ragwort, meadow sweet, betony, tormentil, self heal, pepper saxifrage, common valerian and jointed rush to name a few. Plants of most interest are betony, which is at its northern limit in Northumberland, and pepper saxifrage that is characteristic of old grasslands and is also at its northern limit in Northumberland.

Reed canary grass and lesser pond sedge grow along the shore and in places corn mint and silver weed are common. Willow and birch have colonised what used to be an island. The trackway next to Hallington Reservoir East is host to a rich diversity of grassland species including common knapweed, red clover, lady's mantle, yellow rattle, meadow sweet, common valerian, red bartsia, lesser stitchwort and eyebright. The inlet is fringed on the west by a young sitka spruce and scots pine plantation and is itself dominated by reed canary grass, lesser pond sedge, yellow flag iris with amphibious bistort in the water and on the silty mud.

The neutral grassland on the eastern and southern sides of the reservoir is species rich. Many of the species occurring elsewhere on the site are also to be found here, such as ribwort plantain, bird's foot trefoil, meadow buttercup, yarrow and lady's mantle.



Warblers, tits and redstarts breed in adjacent woodland and little owl and skylark on neighbouring farmland.

Other wildlife

Mammals of conservation interest occurring here include otter, red squirrel, badger and bats. Red squirrels are known to breed in the conifer plantations. The diversity of trees, especially scots pine and ash, are the main source of food for the red squirrels.

The large network of watercourses favours the otter, a species which requires this type of habitat for dispersal. Badgers utilise the wooded area which provides them with ideal cover for foraging. At dusk, during the summer months, the occasional pipistrelle bat may be seen feeding around the car park and along the shelter belt at the western end of the site. Historically, before the reservoir water level was regularly drawn down during the summer, numerous bats were to be seen regularly feeding above the water body. It was felt that both the bats and the brown trout within the reservoir disappeared at about this time; a fact that this could be linked to the loss of aquatic invertebrates due to the large fluctuations in water level.

Native white-clawed crayfish are reputed to be found next to the middle embankment but a breeding population has definitely been confirmed in the aqueduct that enters the reservoirs. The margins of the reservoir provide favourable conditions for common frog to spawn.

Butterflies which may be seen at Hallington include the green veined white, common blue, large skipper, small skipper and the meadow brown. Red Admiral may be seen from April onwards.



Birds

Hallington is one of a series of large water bodies in the area and is an important wintering site for wildfowl, particularly greylag geese, Canada geese, wigeon, teal and mallard. Scaup and long-tailed duck are occasionally recorded and smew is a regular winter visitor.

The autumn passage of waders varies in accordance with water levels at the reservoir; up to 70 dunlin may be present when conditions are favourable. There are also records of grey plover, little stint, curlew, common sandpiper, bar-tailed godwit and turnstone.

Black-headed and common gulls are common passage birds that roost at Hallington in large numbers. Gull numbers decline during the summer when the mature birds leave for their summer breeding grounds further north.

The roost site has also attracted other species including: Mediterranean gull, little gull, Icelandic gull and kittiwake. Sandwich, arctic, common and black terns have also been recorded.