

Post 11

HAPPY VALLEY VIEWPOINT & ORCHID FIELD

This hillside was traditionally grazed by sheep, and only grasses and plants which grew close to the ground or were



unpalatable to them could survive. This resulted in a very specialised range of plants growing in these fields. Rabbits also helped to keep these areas open by nibbling the bark of small shrubs and so preventing them from maturing. With the decline of sheep farming in the 1930's and the spread of myxomatosis in the 1950's there was nothing to prevent

the regeneration of scrub, which began to take over large areas of this valley. Three orchids which flower in this area between June and August are shown below. See how many of these plants you spot in this field. Be careful not to trample the plants. Most should be visible from the path.

Twayblade

Two broad oval green leaves.
The name means 'two leaves'.
Flowers are green, each with
a hood and a forked yellow-
green tongue hanging down.

Flowers June-August.

5 points





**Common spotted
orchid**

Long leaves with purple dots
elongated from side to side.
Flowers pale pink with purple
streaks and spots (sometimes
pure white). Flowers
June-August.

10 points

Pyramidal orchid

A dome-shaped spike of pure
pink flowers, with a musky
smell. Each flower has a long,
thread-like spur at the rear.

Flowers June-August.

5 points



Orchids will not grow unless there is a
special fungus in the soil around them,
and it is for this reason that people

who sometimes dig up orchids to put in their gardens are never successful.

Orchids produce vast quantities of seed. A bee orchid, for example, can have as many as 10,000 seeds in a single pod. It is not surprising that this seed, which is as fine as dust, takes a long time to grow and mature. A good seed-setting year will be reflected many years later in a productive year for flowers. This partly explains the great fluctuations in the numbers of orchids seen from year to year.

How many points did you score?

**Continue down main path to post 12
(see map below)**

NATURE TRAIL MAP

