

Post 12

RABBIT BURROW

Just off the path to the right there is a rabbit burrow which was originally dug by a badger and then taken over by a fox, before rabbits



Rabbit © Stephen Slaughter

occupied it during the 1970's. The site has therefore been a badger's sett, a fox's earth and a rabbit burrow.

Rabbits are increasing in numbers again after the onslaught of myxomatosis, the viral disease transmitted by the rabbit flea. The first outbreak ever recorded in Britain was in the autumn of 1953 at Bough Beech, near Edenbridge, only fifteen miles away.

Rabbits, or 'conies' (their original name) were introduced to Britain by the Normans to provide fresh meat in the winter. Rabbit warrens or 'coney garths' were established by the larger land-owners under the supervision of a 'warrener'.

It is unusual to find an isolated burrow like this, as rabbits are generally gregarious and live in a warren made up of many such burrows.

One female, or doe, can produce up to 700 young during her life but, because rabbits have so many predators and are susceptible to severe winters, their population is kept down. Being timid animals, rabbits usually leave their burrow to eat at dawn and dusk. Although generally easy prey, they have been known to turn on a pursuing stoat and overpower it using their powerful hind legs as weapons.

Continue down the path to post 13 (see map below).

NATURE TRAIL MAP

