



the Humber and Wash alternately blocked and allowed drainage to the North Sea. The large area of sand and gravel east of Woodhall Spa is thought to have been deposited by the River Bain as an outwash plain or delta in Lake Fenland and consists of material carried down from the Wolds. Today it supports a landscape of 'moors' and pine plantations, including the largest area of unreclaimed heathland in Lincolnshire at Kirkby Moor.

After the glaciers finally retreated and their lakes drained away, windblown Coversands were deposited extensively across the Vale and accumulated beneath the escarpment of the Wolds. Subsequent erosion has removed these deposits from many areas but they survive around Elsham and in a large tract stretching from Grasby to Market Rasen. As elsewhere in Lincolnshire, much of the Coversands heathland has been lost over the past two centuries and the surviving fragments are now protected and managed mainly for nature conservation.

The northern section of the Vale is occupied by the flatlands of the Ancholme valley. Here, Devensian glacial ice blocking the Humber Gap created another lake that gradually silted up leaving the lacustrine deposits

FACING PAGE & TOP RIGHT: **Kirkby Moor Nature Reserve.** Sands and gravels near Woodhall Spa support extensive heathlands of heather and acid grassland that are now protected for wildlife. Kirkby Moor's ecology is similar to that of the Coversands further north but its flora also includes southern species found in the Breckland of East Anglia. Notable fauna recorded on the reserve include woodlark, hobby, nightjar, adder and slow worm as well as 175 species of moth.

RIGHT: **Devil's-bit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Moor Farm**

