

## Following the Trail



Follow the leaf signs and you will be able to discover an array of animals, birds, bugs, flowers and trees.

Why not make a list of the things that you recognise along the way and share these with your friends – did you see the same things? Try walking the route at a different time of year or in the opposite direction and see what's changed.



Do your bit for nature by planting trees, putting out bird, bat or bee houses and growing native wildflowers in your garden or window boxes. Put holes in your fences and leave piles of sticks and leaves to encourage hedgehogs to build their homes in your garden.



Dog agility balance beam



This Nature Trail includes the Local Nature Reserve at Mowbray Fields, which is managed by Earth Trust. We have added some dog agility equipment here so that your dog can enjoy being fit and active as much as you do. The route also takes in the Sustrans Cycle path along the disused Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway Line, which opened in the early 1880s and was closed around 1961.

These trails have been devised by the Active Communities team at South Oxfordshire District Council. Please take a look at our website for information about other Community walks, which offer friendly group walks, designed to keep residents active within their local community, in a number of different locations throughout the district.

[southoxon.gov.uk/activecommunities](http://southoxon.gov.uk/activecommunities)

### Accessibility

We have tried to make this walk accessible to all, but there are some pavements without dropped kerbs. Some areas have grass paths which may be muddy and slippery at certain times of the year. Please take care when crossing roads.



THIS MAP IS PRINTED ON FSC CERTIFIED CARBON BALANCED PAPER

# DIDCOT Nature Trail



**The Didcot Nature Trail is for everyone to enjoy and explore our local area, become more active and learn more about the diverse natural world around us**



# DIDCOT Nature Trail

## Did you know?

Wildflowers that grow in meadows, fields, verges and hedgerows are a valuable source of food and shelter for insects and other wildlife.



The Common spotted orchid is one of Europe's most common wild orchids and can be seen at Mowbray Fields. The flowers are pollinated by insects including butterflies, bees and moths.



Bees, butterflies, moths, flies, wasps and more rely on wildflowers as a vital source of food. Insects that feed on wildflowers also provide a food source for other animals and help to reduce the numbers of pests like aphids that attack crops.

The name 'daisy' comes from the 'day's eye' - the flower opens when the sun comes out and closes when the sun goes down.

For the Romans, wood anemones were considered a 'lucky charm' to ward off fever.

During the Second World War, when coffee was almost unobtainable, a substitute was made from the roasted and ground roots of dandelions.

### Look out for:

- |           |                          |             |                          |
|-----------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| mice      | <input type="checkbox"/> | blue tits   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| squirrels | <input type="checkbox"/> | red kites   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| hares     | <input type="checkbox"/> | robins      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| rabbits   | <input type="checkbox"/> | blackbirds  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| foxes     | <input type="checkbox"/> | butterflies | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| deer      | <input type="checkbox"/> | bumblebees  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### KEY

- Hopscotch
- Dog agility
- Accessible bench
- Pavement games



Fallen tree at Fleet Meadow

### Insect homes

A tree can be a home for hundreds of insect species. We can help nature by building our own bug hotels. Using materials such as straw, dry grass and hollow plant stems you can create a place for ladybirds, bees, spiders and woodlice. These minibeasts use the bug hotel as a safe space to shelter, lay their eggs, raise their young, and seek refuge from predators.

### Other wildlife homes on our route

We have put in bird boxes of various sizes to encourage small birds, such as wrens, and to attract larger birds like owls.



Tawny Owl

### Bat boxes

Bat boxes differ from bird boxes in design, with the larger opening on the underside of the box. Some threatened bat species such as Pipistrelles can be locally supported with the provision of appropriately placed bat-boxes. Choosing a suitable place for the bat box is important; bat boxes that are too shaded will not heat up enough to attract a maternity colony of bats.



### Look out for:

- |              |                          |                        |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| silver birch | <input type="checkbox"/> | common spotted orchids | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| oak          | <input type="checkbox"/> | daisies                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| chestnut     | <input type="checkbox"/> | blackberries           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| sycamore     | <input type="checkbox"/> | cowslips               | <input type="checkbox"/> |





## Keeping active along the trail

This trail is 3.1 miles (5km)... as well as somewhere for both you and your dog to play and be active.

The trail is the perfect length for anyone wanting to train for a couch to 5k and there are apps that you can download to help you build up your activity and to motivate you along the way.

Look out for the children's pavement play near the fallen tree, close to Sandringham Road. Here you will spot bees, ladybirds and frogs all encouraging active play along the route.



For those looking for more of a workout, head over to Fleet Way and enjoy the activity path which encourages you to stretch, hop, jump, skip and sprint your way along the path.

If you are looking for a more sedate way to be active, relax with a gentle stroll along the route, looking out for all the wildlife, trees and flowers. We have included a 'look out for' list so that you can record all the lovely things you see along the way.

Follow Active Communities on Facebook to discover more ways to be active in your local community

**facebook.com/  
SouthAndValeActiveCommunities**

## Did you know?

A dendrophile is the name given to a person who loves trees.

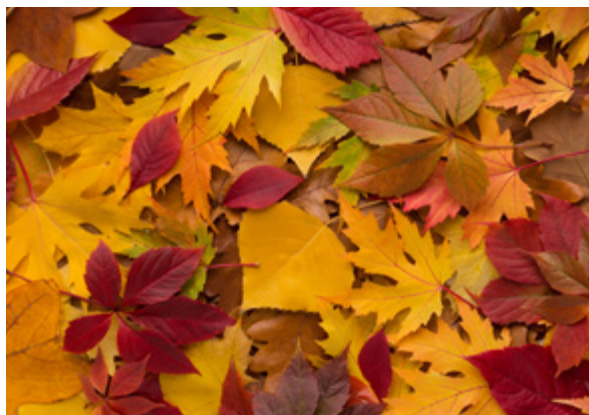


Didcot's oldest tree is the yew tree in the churchyard of All Saints' Church, believed to be over 1000 years old.

The UK has at least fifty species of native trees and shrubs and has had many more species introduced from other countries.

Research has shown that trees release chemicals that can reduce blood pressure and lower anxiety when we breathe them in. Trees can make us happier, more relaxed and more creative.

Tree leaves aren't naturally always green. A chemical called chlorophyll makes them green and during the autumn, less sunlight means less chlorophyll is produced. That's why leaves turn red, yellow, orange and even purple during the colder months.



## Leaf rubbing

Try making a leaf rubbing by following these simple steps:

- 1 Place a leaf under a light piece of paper.
- 2 Using the flat side of a wax crayon, rub it over the paper so that the leaf makes an impression on the paper.
- 3 Watch your rubbing appear on the paper.

You could also try bark rubbing and see how the different trees create different images on the paper.

Along the trail you will also see rubbing plates on some of our marker posts. Look out for the different plates including a blackbird, a fox, a buttercup, an acorn and a bumblebee, to name just a few.



If you are feeling artistic, why not colour in our butterfly and bee which can be found on the path at St. Hilda's Close.

We have provided some chinks for you to use to create your masterpiece, but please return these to the box for others to enjoy when you have finished.

We would love to see your pictures so please share them with us on our Facebook page

**facebook.com/  
SouthAndValeActiveCommunities**