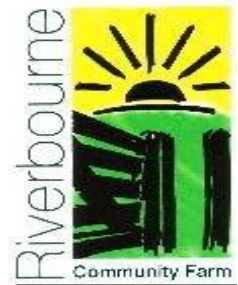


More Things To See on the Farm & Whitebridge Spinney Trail Laverstock, Wiltshire



Birdlife - There is a wide range of birds seen in this locality all year round – Buzzards, Crows and Rooks are common and there are Wrens, Robins, Goldcrests and Tree Creepers. Summer visitors include Swallows that nest in the big barn in the Farmyard – they usually return from their migration by the end of May. The river has it's own residents – Mallards and Moorhens and on daily visits to feed on fish you can see the little Egret (left) and Grey Heron. We do have Kingfishers, too – but they travel so fast you will be lucky to see one.

In 2013 Swans nested on the Spinney stretch of the River Bourne for the first time. Seven cygnets were seen, but we don't know yet how many have grown to full size. The parents may use the same nest again, but they do like to be quiet, so we need to respect them.

Butterflies and Moths - One of the best places to see butterflies on this trail is along the Victorian railway embankment, in the northern part of the Farm trail, but there are also plenty in the meadows and along the river margins due to the plants on which they choose to lay their eggs. The Orange Tip is particularly pretty and easy to see (right, top), it is also usual to see Brimstones (right, middle) and Large White and Marbled White butterflies during the warm and sunny parts of the year.



Other insects – many insects of all sizes are present in the area of the Farm & Spinney – the natural way of life in the 'food chain' means that there are very small bugs and grubs which live in tree bark or on certain plants, then there are larger insects which use the tiny ones as a food source. We often see lots of Ladybirds in the summer, Burnet Moths (right, bottom) and there are some larger black Beetles, too. There are Mayfly, Lacewings, Stoneflies and midges of different types across most of the year, too – the river fish feed on them.

On the Farm there are beehives, which is an ancient use of the production of honey by the Bees.



Wildlife plaques at Whitebridge Spinney

In May 2013 - 32 ceramic plaques were installed on timber stumps along the trail, the plaques celebrate and illustrate the diversity of wildlife that lives in the Spinney area. The plaques were designed and created by children at the Leehurst Swan School, Salisbury. There are also colourful interpretation signs on the Boardwalk designed by another class at the same school.





Mammals – this locality has resident Water Voles (left, upper) and a pair of Otters in the river, they are shy creatures so are not often seen, but you can spot the vole holes in the banks when the river levels are low. There are also Wood Mice, Moles, Rabbits and the farm animals of course. The other mammals seen around here are the bats. We are lucky to have a native bat that swoops over the river surface to catch it's supper of insects, this is the Daubenton's Bat (left, lower). The bat you see flying at dusk around houses or between the Cow Lane trees and hedges is the Pipistrelle – a tiny bat common in the U.K.

Fish – the river supports Brown Trout, Bullheads and Sticklebacks, native Crayfish and other invertebrate aquatic creatures, along with tadpoles and adult Frogs. These are best seen on a River Dipping session at the Farm

Wild Flowers and Plants -

There is a huge variety of these; Southern Marsh Orchids in early summer (near the dipping platform is a good spot) and also the most primitive wild plant – the Horsetail. Elsewhere, with their roots in the river we see the yellow Monkey Flower, wild Watercress and Water Mint – the leaves of the last two are aromatic. On the banks beside the river you can see Meadowsweet (right, upper), Wild Carrot and Purple Loosestrife – most of these are marginal plants, as they like to live where the soil is wet for most of the year. There are also lots of different grasses and sedges, lichens and mosses – these are seen in particular habitats; damp or rotting wood, low growing below the main grasses in the farm pastures, on tree trunks and stones – almost anywhere you can think of there will be something growing, like the Honey Fungus seen on rotting tree roots in autumn.



Trees – There are large numbers of different trees on this trail, some of which are quite old. The Alders and Willows are typical of wet ground, they like to grow along riverbanks. The Crack Willow has a habit of breaking and the broken branches then take root – spreading the single tree into a group – see these in the meadows at the northern part of the Farm section of the trail – including the music tree. The Walnut tree on the railway embankment is a particular feature and Alders dominate in the Spinney (Alder cones; left), but there are also dark leaved Beech and a few old Pines, these are probably planted by man rather than naturally occurring – they are still beautiful and the birds use them for perches and to find food on the craggy bark.

Pond at the Spinney

Here the water table is high and the Parish Council agreed that, as part of the 'Million Ponds' project across the U.K. in 2012, a pond could be formed in an area to the north of the Boardwalk. Now the wildlife has become established to bring another interesting habitat to this locality.

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Contact us to become a friend or volunteer and for more information