

Educational Visitor Guide



Valley Park

Local Nature Reserve

Contents

Welcome to Valley Park Nature Reserve.....	3
Reserve Management.....	5
Getting to the reserve and parking.....	6
Location.....	7
About this Educational Visitor Guide.....	8
Activity sheets to accompany this guide.....	9
When visiting Valley Park Nature Reserve.....	10
Health and Safety.....	10
Further learning opportunities.....	11

Welcome to Valley Park Local Nature Reserve

About Valley Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

Valley Park Woodlands are located north of Chilworth and east of Chandlers Ford in the south of the Borough of Test Valley. Flexford Road borders the site to the north, Great Covey to the east, Knightwood Road to the west and Castle Lane to the south. The five separate woods surround a large housing development built on former agricultural land.

History

Extensive prehistoric archaeological features have been discovered in Valley Park. The existence of possible Bronze Age (1700 to 600 BC) and Iron Age (600 BC to 43 AD) features within the woods suggests that the site was farmed by extended families and the resulting landscape would typically have been areas of woodland with large clearings for arable crops. These field systems have been disturbed by Roman ploughing after the invasion of Britain in 43 AD. Intensive farming systems were introduced, coupled with technical advances in agriculture (e.g. curved blade of plough), led to widespread woodland clearance all over Britain. This intensive agricultural system and close proximity of the Roman road to the east of Zionshill suggests that the majority of the site was historically agriculture and not woodland.

By 1588, Ralph Treswell's map of Hursley shows the area of Valley Park as being part of Baddesley Common, an expanse of rough grassland and heathland. By 1802 the first Ordnance Survey shows the woodland boundaries as seen today, but by 1826 a survey

by Thomas Chamberlayne estates which include Valley Park, showed the woodland boundaries to Tredgoulds Copse, Sky's Wood, Clothiers Copse and Zionshill Copse.

The 1867 Enclosure map and 1872 Ordnance Survey map shows changes had occurred since 1826, the most noticeable being that Clothiers Copse and Knightwood had been established on an area of former pasture.

As the woods were part of the Baddesley Common complex, they were probably used as woodland pasture for foraging pigs and the like until the two former farms on the site (Zionshill and Knightwood), claimed the area for themselves during the enclosures.

Historic woodland activities are also in evidence including hazel coppice in Zionshill Copse, Knightwood and Clothiers Copse and alder coppice in Tredgoulds Copse and Little Covert. More recent activity can be seen from the stumps of felled mature oak trees throughout the site, probably carried out during the Second World War (1939 – 1945) as the demand for home produced war materials rapidly increased with the threat of blockade by German U-boats.

There was more recently a sporting interest in the area, and remnants of this can be seen in some of the woodlands with release pens, areas cleared for game crops and shooting rides. In 1988, an area of 0.8 hectares of Zionshill Copse was cleared of mature oaks (with the aim of increasing the sporting potential of the wood), and is now regenerating with heather which could be a historic link to when the area was part of the Baddesley Common complex.

Key features of Valley Park LNR

As with any large countryside space, educational opportunities are limited only by the imagination.

The combination of woodland, open water and grassland habitats provide opportunities for studies into plants and animals and comparisons can be made between communities and adaptations.

All habitats can provide a great deal of inspiration for visits by younger children, or offer opportunities to measure changes in physical and biotic environment factors brought about changes in the underlying geology to topography. Land use issues are also a key feature, with modern housing developments bordering the woodlands.

Local history studies can make reference to evidence dating back to the Bronze and Iron Age settlements, as well as the changes brought about by the Roman invasion. The use of timber during World War Two can also be discussed.

Plenty of inspiration can be found for language, literature and arts projects, and maths projects can be independent of the environmental studies or be used to analyse the data that is collected. The role of the reserve within the leisure facilities of the Borough and how the community utilises the facility can be part of the citizenship education.

Local community groups are also encouraged to use the site for educational visits.

Geology

The geology of Hampshire is comprised of mostly Upper, Middle and Lower chalk ridges overlain with chalk and flints. The geology of Valley Park Woodlands is Bracklesham Beds (glauconitic sand and clay), overlaying Upper Chalk (soft chalk with flint nodules), with inroads of alluvium to the north of the site. In the south of the site the soils are acidic to neutral clay (pH

5.0 – 6.0), which is poorly to well drained. To the north east of the site the soils are more typically of a poorly drained Wickham 3 profile, which are slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loams over dry clay and coarser clay soils (pH 5.5 – 6.5).

Hydrology

The site is low-lying with poorly draining soils. The average precipitation is around 800 millimetres a year leading to water logging after heavy rainfall. There are seasonal ponds in the north of Skys Wood and in the west of Clothiers Copse. Through Little Covert a small stream flows which originates in the north-west of Great Covert, which leads to the waterlogged soil and the alder Carr habitat to be found within Little Covert. Alder Carr also exists in the south of Tredgoulds Copse. To the east and the North of Zionshill Copse there are three balancing ponds to collect storm water from the new housing development and the surrounding roads.

Importance to wildlife

The most prominent habitats are Oak and Ash forests, hazel coppice interspersed with oak and ash standards, alder Carr and areas of heathland. Beech, birch and yew are also present but less common. Most standards are of similar ages and suffer from invasion by sycamore. The woodlands also play host to a variety of ground flora including common solomon's-seal, bracken, wood-sorrel, wood anemone, bluebells, common figwort, violets and cowslips. The early purple and common spotted orchids are also found within the north-east corner of Zionshill Copse. The heathland, cleared in the late 1980's, also contains a wider variety of flora from Heathers, speedwell, sedges, heath bedstraw and blinks.

Five of the six woodlands that make up Valley Park are on the English Nature Register of Ancient Woodlands in Hampshire and contain an above average number of Woodland Indicator Species which show both the age of the woodland and its importance to wildlife.

Reserve Management

Habitat maintenance

Most of the habitat management tasks are carried out during the winter months when it will cause fewer disturbances to the animal life and less damage to the plants. In winter birds will not be nesting and many of the smaller animals are in their dormant state. Many plants will die back to ground level or leave seeds to start the new season growth, so this is a good time to be working on the site. Without management, the whole reserve would soon become degraded, with little age structure. This would benefit some species of plant and animal, but a lot of biodiversity would be lost. The habitat maintenance programme will preserve the mosaic of different habitats and age structures that exist on the reserve and provide the right conditions for a wide range of plants and animals to flourish. The tasks carried out in winter include tree felling, tree planting, coppicing and ephemeral (seasonal) pond creation. Major fencing work and path building or repairing would also tend to be done at this time of year.

Monitoring

In order to know if the management of the reserve is successful, it is necessary to carry out regular surveys of the plants and animals. This process is called monitoring. The vegetation is used regularly and butterflies are monitored every year. Moths, bats, birds and freshwater invertebrates are also used as indicators of the reserves status.

Public Access and Education

Local people use the reserve regularly as a place to exercise themselves and/or their dogs or enjoy the wildlife. A network of paths are maintained across the reserve. Most visitors have little impact on the site, but some leave litter that has to be cleared and cause damage to fences, signs and life-preservers which has to be put right by the Countryside Officers. Educational visits by schools and other groups are an important part of the reserves function and besides discovering the wildlife, it is hoped that these visits will increase the understanding about the management of the reserve and create a greater appreciation for this valuable resource.

Getting to the reserve and parking

Green travel

When visiting this precious reserve, it is important to think about the environmental impact of your travel choices.

Access

Local people use the reserve regularly as a place to exercise themselves, their dogs or enjoy the wildlife. A network of paths, many suitable for wheelchair access, is maintained across the reserve. Most visitors have little impact on the site, but some leave litter that has to be cleared and cause damage to fences and signs which has to be put right by the Countryside Officers. Educational visits by schools and other groups are an important part of the reserves function and besides discovering the wildlife, it is hoped that these visits will increase the understanding about the management of the reserve and create a greater appreciation for this valuable resource.

Parking

The only parking available for Valley Park is the Knightwood Leisure Centre car park accessed off Skys Wood Road (SO53 4SJ). There is pedestrian access to the whole of Valley Park through a variety of surrounding permissive paths. There are wooden benches around the meadows and ponds connected by a network of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant paths and bridges around the majority of the sites. Raised boardwalks have been constructed where water levels rise and create water logged areas.

If travelling by coach or mini bus the height barrier (2.2m) will need to be opened at Knightwood Leisure Centre by prior arrangement with the Countryside Officer.

On-site facilities

There are no toilet or hand washing facilities on site. However, the toilets in Knightwood Leisure Centre, adjacent from Zionshill West Copse can be used.

There are three interpretation boards situated at each entrance to the site. These contain information about the reserve and contact details for the Countryside Officer/TVBC.

Please note that there are no toilet facilities, shelters or hand washing facilities on site.

Location



About this Educational Visitor Guide

Site learning visits are completely free!

Educational visits to this site can meet the needs of a wide range of the curriculum or can be designed as a stimulating and enjoyable event for those engaged in less formal learning. The aim of this guide is to indicate what this site has to offer and to provide some suggestions for its use. It is hoped that creative users of the site will devise many schemes of their own and be prepared to offer these for display on the Test Valley Borough Council website for the benefit of others.

This guide and activity sheets cover key topics in the curriculum and offer ideas on preparation, site visits and follow up activities. Activity sheets for pupils are available to print out, but activities can also be easily completed without worksheets via discussion and teacher-led questioning.

Schools or other groups are welcome to use the site at any time, although it is advisable to contact the Countryside Officers so that two groups do not try to do the same thing at the same time. A site based risk assessment can be provided on request and your own risk assessment for your visit should be sent to our Countryside Officers two weeks prior to your visit. Visitors should also be advised to dress appropriately to guard against rain, cold or sun and to wear suitable footwear. The Countryside Officer can meet you on site during your pre-visit to advise you on these and other matters regarding your visit. You should take this opportunity to assess mobile phone network coverage in case it is needed in an emergency. First aid is also the responsibility of the group organiser. If an ambulance is called, use the site map to determine which access point is closest to the patient and advise the emergency services of the road adjacent to that access point.

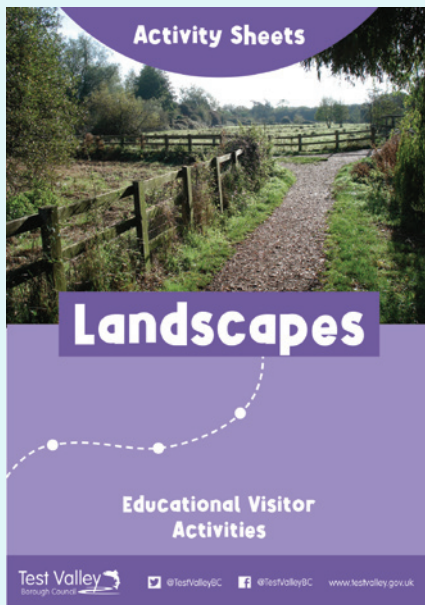
The Countryside Officer can be present during the visit to act as a guide or to describe the work that is done to manage the site, but the organisation of the visit and control of children or students remains with the group organiser, so the Countryside Officer should not be included in the adult ratio. Two weeks notice is required if you wish a Countryside Officer to be present during your visit.

There are no toilet or handwashing facilities on site. Due to this we recommend that children do not eat and drink while visiting. If teaching staff decide otherwise we highly recommend to bring anti-bacterial gel provided that there are no allergy issues and bottles of water. There is no roof shelter on the site or seating for groups. Good waterproof clothing is important if rain is forecast.

This site takes approximately 1 hour to walk around

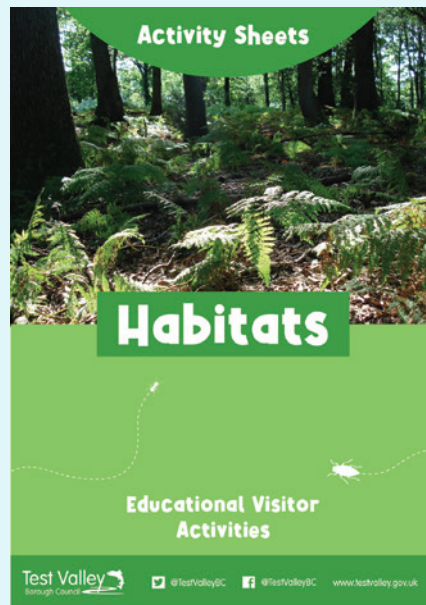
Activity sheets to accompany this guide

All of the activity sheets listed below are available to download from www.testvalley.gov.uk



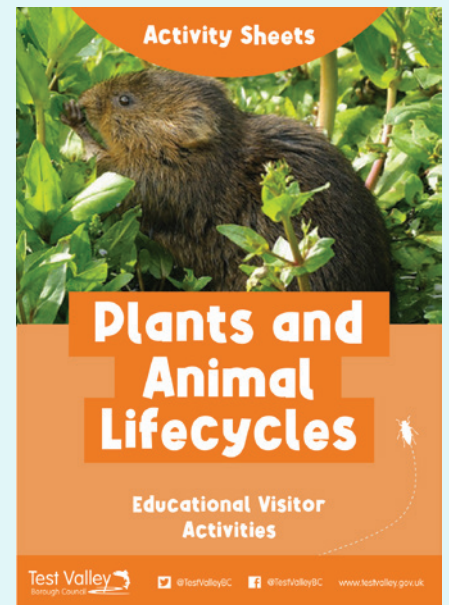
Landscapes

- If I were a Countryside Officer
- Write your own 'Discovery Trail'
- Warmer-warmer-cold!
- Nature's pattern
- A special tree
- Talking points
- Foreign plants – friend or foe?



Habitats

- Somewhere to live
- The moving shadow
- Spotting for points
- Something beginning with...



Plant and animal lifecycles

- Plant and animal tales
- As old as the trees
- What will I be where I grow up?

When visiting Valley Park Local Nature Reserve

please follow the Countryside Code!

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Health and Safety

Although there are minimal risks involved when visiting a Local Nature Reserve you should be aware of the following:

Lyme's Disease

This is caused by infected ticks which are found in grassy or wooded areas. Initial symptoms may include a red rash around the bite and fever. Consult a doctor if symptoms appear. Precautions include wearing long trousers tucked into socks and long sleeves.

Weil's Disease

This is caused by infected rats' urine being present near waterways. Symptoms may initially appear flu like. Consult a doctor if symptoms appear. Precautions include covering cuts if working in or near water and washing hands before eating and drinking.

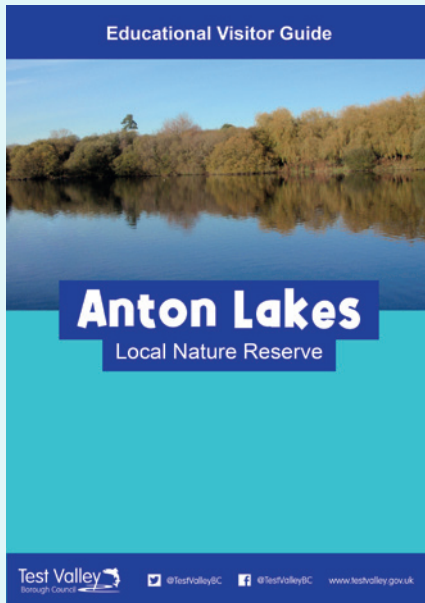
Toxocariasis

This is caused by a parasite in animal faeces. Humans can catch the disease from contact with grass, plants or soil where infected animals have been. Precautions include washing hands after touching soil or playing on grass.

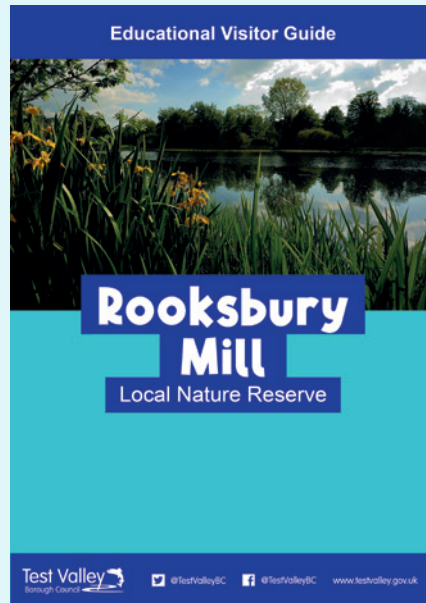
Further learning opportunities

As well as Valley Park LNR, educational packs are also available for three other reserves within Test Valley: Anton Lakes LNR; Rooksbury Mill LNR and Tadburn Meadows LNR. Together these sites provide children with an enhanced opportunity for learning and a rich personal experience of nature.

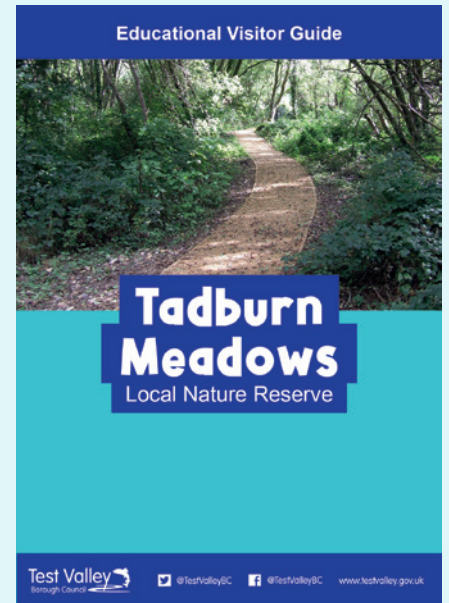
To obtain further information regarding the sites please visit the web address on the back cover of this education pack.



Anton Lakes LNR is a site where the natural landscape combines with the aftermath of industrial activity to create a diverse range of habitats, from chalk grassland and fen meadows, to lakes and rivers and watercress beds and scrub. Providing ideal opportunities to study the natural environment as well as the effect of cultural and land use issues on a sensitive site.



Rooksbury Mill LNR provides a mosaic of chalk grassland, ponds and lakes on the southern outskirts of Andover. The reserves past history as a mill and trout fishery have shaped the areas we see there today, providing children with examples how humans have shaped the natural world.



Tadburn Meadows LNR provides a combination of running water and terrestrial habitats offering opportunities for studies into plants and animals and comparisons can be made between communities and adaptations.

This guide contains a series of National Curriculum linked activities suitable for Key Stage 2 pupils. Some activities are adaptable for younger or older age groups, if necessary. The activities are suitable for use in the classroom or at a Test Valley Borough Council Local Nature Reserve. A detailed map of the site is included in the Educational Visitor Guide to help you find your way around the site.

The Educational Visitor Guides and activity sheets are available from our website: www.testvalley.gov.uk

For further information contact:

**Countryside Officers
Community and Leisure Service
Beech Hurst
Weyhill Road
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 3AJ
01264 368000**

Community&Leisure@testvalley.gov.uk