

# The Wildgrounds

The Wildgrounds represents one of the few remaining unspoilt woodland pastures in Hampshire. The 67 acres were acquired by the Borough of Gosport in 1966. In 1978 it was designated a Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1984 to protect its unique character.

## Visiting the Wildgrounds

The sensitive nature of the site means that access is by permit only.

Monthly permits are available from Gosport and Fareham Tourist Information Centres and the Gosport Town Hall.

Day permits are available at the Reserve Entrance.

Open Tuesday to Saturday 10am - 4pm  
From March - October



Fox

Much of the Wildgrounds is shrouded by woodland some of which contains magnificent ancient oaks over 400 years old. The woods are home to hole-nesting birds such as woodpecker, nuthatch and owl.

Take your time to explore quietly, look carefully and you might be rewarded with views of these birds, plus many plants, animals and insects that thrive in this naturally beautiful place.

Enjoy your visit, but you are asked to observe the following rules, in order to maintain the Wildgrounds as a unique wildlife sanctuary.

**PLEASE**

Show your permits on entry or on demand  
Children must be accompanied by an adult  
Keep to the marked paths  
Take your litter home  
Do NOT start fires  
Do NOT pick wild flowers  
No picnicking  
No dogs allowed with the exception of assistance dogs by the wardens discretion

Gosport Borough Council is committed to equal opportunities for all.

Please ask, if you need this document in large print, on CD or tape, in Braille or in other languages.

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Alver Valley  
Country Park

# the Wildgrounds

Gosport's wildlife haven



**GOSPORT**  
Borough Council

# Finding your way around the Wildgrounds



- 1 Burden's Heath
- 2 Rhododendron Dell
- 3 Woodland Pond
- 4 Village Pond
- 5 1987
- 6 The 'Old Man'

- 7 River Alver viewpoint
- 8 Scrape Hide
- 9 Dragon Scrape
- 10 Meadow Viewpoint
- 11 Butterfly Meadows



Greenfinch

Goldcrest & Long-tailed Tit

Woodland Pond

Small Tortoiseshell

Female - Broad-bodied Chaser

Middle Barn Cottage (private)

Grange Lane

Bluebell Grove

Veteran Oak Trail

Butterfly Meadows

Burden's Heath Trail

Reserve Entrance

17th Century Village

Warden's Base

Car Park

Grange Farm

Little Woodham Lane

River Alver

River Alver

River Alver

from Stubbington Rowner Rd

A32 Fareham

from Gosport

Grange Lane

Nimrod Grove

Howe Rd

Grange Farm

Little Woodham Lane

Privett Rd

from Stokes Bay

from Lee-on-the-Solent

The Wildgrounds

Entrance Grange Farm  
Satnav PO13 8AB

# Explore The Wildgrounds

Entering the reserve the trail takes you through areas of heath, birch and pine originally called Burden's Heath. **1** During the summer months this area is alive with the song of grasshoppers and crickets. Speckled Wood butterflies are commonly seen and Foxgloves decorate the path edges.



Kingfisher

Woodland Pond. **3** Best viewed from the hide, the lake was constructed in 1980 and holds a variety of fish species which in turn attracts Kingfishers and Herons looking for a meal. A good place to relax with a pair of binoculars!

At the Village Pond **4** the path splits. In May it is worth taking the right fork to see the extent of the bluebell carpet amongst the coppiced hazel stretching up to Middle Barn Cottage. Take the left fork to follow the Veteran Oak Trail.



Bluebell

**5** A good place to observe the aftermath of the 1987 hurricane that felled many of the UK's large trees. Here in the Wildgrounds many of these were left in situ and continued to grow even though much of the root plate was exposed. This area forms an excellent habitat for both invertebrates and fungi.



Puffball - fungus

The old man **6** an ancient oak monolith probably over 500 years old.

The viewing point **7** is a good place to take in the River Alver and if you are lucky spot one of our elusive water voles swimming across the water. The golf course can be seen opposite across the extensive growth of sedge.

Follow the footpath around and down to the scrape hide. **8** The interface between open water and reed is always a good place to spot warblers in summer. Dragonflies are common in the floodplain of the Alver Valley and a hunting Emperor Dragonfly is an exciting spot!



Emperor Dragonfly

The trail now loops back through holly and oak woodland and returns eventually to the Burden's Heath Trail. On the return journey spend a little time at the small scrape **9** where you can access the watery edge of the flood plain. Watch for Damselflies such as the Large Red, one of the earliest to hatch, and the Blue-tailed daintily skipping across the sedge tops looking for food.

Now take the left fork to the flood meadow viewpoint. **10** An excellent vista over the Alver Valley and across one of the largest reed beds on the South Coast where Cetti's Warbler can often be heard, but rarely seen due to its habit of skulking in the willow scrub.

At **11** enter the gate in to the reclaimed land that makes up the butterfly meadows. This area is grazed, managed for invertebrates and supports a variety of meadow plants and butterflies. Most commonly seen are Large and Small Skippers, Gatekeeper, Orange Tip, Meadow Brown and Common Blue.



Large Skipper



Parasol Fungus,  
Blue Tit  
& Chaffinch

A plantation of hybrid Rhododendron was planted in old gravel workings. **2** These shrubs are not of the invasive type and are tolerated because of their colourful impact each May. Look for some of the veteran oaks in this area, interesting and odd shaped trees caused by damaging weather and/or human impact in their past.