



# Activity Sheets

## Habitats

Educational Visitor Activities

# Habitats

## Aim of the habitat activities

To recognise the range of habitats on the reserve. Having had an overview of the whole site while looking at the landscape, it is now time to zoom in on some of the different habitats that make up the rest of the reserve. Children will be asked to think about how the habitats might have been created, plus how they are being maintained at present and what the future may hold.

## Preparation/classroom activities

Make sure that children fully understand the term habitat. A habitat is an area with a particular group of plants and animals which exists under certain conditions.

Chalk grassland is a very special habitat found within LNRs. The gradient of the grassland in particular is very steep which means mechanical cultivation is very difficult. Therefore historically the area was grazed by sheep and cattle. As a result the meadows on the reserve have been unimproved (not cultivated). This has led to a diverse collection of different species and variety of wildlife. Many wildflower species grow very well in a low nutrient environment, as they are not in direct competition with more vigorous species, which tend to take over nutrient rich soils. Cattle still graze these grassland areas which maintains short grass where orchids flourish in spring and summer, and longer grass where wildflowers, moths and butterflies can be found.

# Activity: Somewhere to live



Bumble bee in convolvulus

All animals have a place where they like to live. Some build nests or dens, but many don't. They all need the right sort of things in the area where they live. People need a home, with shops, schools and roads nearby. What do the animals on the reserve need? Choose an animal that lives on the Reserve. It can be a bird, a mammal, a fish, an insect - any animal that you know is living on the reserve. If you can, watch the animal and see what features of the reserve it is using: trees, the water, flowers. Do some research to find out more about this animals life.

## Resources

Information about the reserve in the Educational Visitor Guide

Binoculars

Map of the reserve

Internet

Books from the library

Notebook

## Challenge

Make a poster display that shows everything that your chosen animal needs to make it feel at home, such as: what and where it eats, where does it find shelter, where does it raise a family, what routes does it travel around the reserve.

## Additional background information

This activity is best done after you have spent time watching an animal on the reserve. The information that you get from this will make your poster much more interesting as it will link the animal with the place. Mammals are hard to see, but there are lots of birds, insects and spiders that are easier to watch, especially when the weather is warm and sunny. Use a map and mark on where you see the animal. Try to identify any of the trees and plants that the animal uses, particularly if it is for food.

# Activity: The Moving Shadow



What is it like to live in the shade? What changes when the shadow moves? When is it good to be in the shade? How do plants and animals live with the changing pattern of shadows?

Explore the Reserve to find places that are in the shade for different lengths of time during the day. There will be some that never see direct sunlight and others that may be shaded only in the early morning or late afternoon. What is different about these places?

## Resources

Map of the Reserve  
Camera  
Digital thermometer  
Notebook and pencil  
Plant identification charts  
Light meters

## Challenge

Describe the differences that you find between places that are shaded and not shaded. Try to discover if it is just the amount of light that makes a difference to the plants and animals that live in these places or if there are other features that are altered by being in the shade.

## Additional background information

This is an open-ended investigation so you can take a good look at the places you have chosen and try to discover what is different about the environment there. What you are seeing is a change in the habitat for the plants and animals and you can try to measure what the differences are in light, temperature and anything else that your senses tell you might be different. If there is another group working on the same activity, you can get together to compare your ideas and your results.

# Activity: Dragons and Damsels



Common darter on rail

Some of the most spectacular insects that you see near water are the different types of dragonflies. The biggest of these can zoom past you with clattering wings and look like small helicopters. There are also the slim and dainty damselflies with bright blue or red bodies that flutter about at the water's edge.

You will need a dry and warm day to visit the reserve and look for dragonflies. They spend a lot of time flying and so are easy to spot, but the faster flyers can be hard to identify. You may have to follow them until they perch on a plant or fence. Don't just look for them near water, as they might be hunting for insects anywhere.

## Resources

Information about the reserve in the Educational Visitor Guide  
Notebook and pencil  
Identification charts  
Map of the Reserve  
Camera, binoculars

## Challenge

Find out which parts of the reserve are used by dragonflies. Are different types of dragonfly found in different places? Use a map of the Reserve to mark down the dragonfly hot spots used by red damselflies, blue damselflies, hawker dragonflies, chaser dragonflies and darter dragonflies.

## Additional background information

It is easy to tell the difference between damselflies and dragonflies: damselflies perch with the wings held along the body while dragonflies hold their wings at right angles to the body. The hawker dragonflies are typical dragonflies: large insects with long bodies and a strong flight. They are often green or green and blue. Chasers have shorter, wider bodies and the common ones are light blue if they are male and yellow if they are female. Darters are smaller dragonflies. They do not spend a lot of time flying and will soon settle on a perch or on the ground. The males are red and the females a dull, orangey brown. The reserve information will tell you which ones you are likely to see. This will change as the season progresses from spring to autumn.

# Activity: Spotting for points



Scarlet tiger

There are lots of animals and plants to see when you walk round a nature reserve. It is fun to have a list and tick off what you see. You can make it into a game by scoring points for each plant or animal. The points that are scored can be different for each plant or animal. How do you decide the points value of each one?

You need to get to know some of the plants and animals that live on the reserve. You can do this by looking at the reserve information pack or by going to the reserve. Make a list of plants and animals that it would be good to spot and put them into groups which score different numbers of points.

## Resource

Information about the reserve in the Educational Visitor Guide

Identification charts

Notebook and pencil

Binoculars

## Challenge

Make a game that you can play yourself or challenge your friends. Write a list of plants and animals and give each one a points value. Take your list out to the reserve and see how many points you can score by spotting as many plants and animals as you can.

## Additional background information

The plants and animals that you can see on the reserve will change during the year, so you will have to make sure that your list works at the time you are playing the game - it will be very difficult to spot butterflies in December! You can make the game easier by adding pictures to the list, and this could be done by visiting the reserve and taking photos. You can then make your list and send some of your friends out to try and spot what you saw. Think carefully about how you award the points. Will it be more points for the more difficult to find or for the plants or animals that you like the best?

## Activity: Something beginning with...



Do more animals and plants start with the letter R than the letter D? Which letter is the commonest starting letter? Pick a letter that you think will be a winner and try to spot as many animals as you can which starts with that letter.

Before you go to the reserve, decide whether you are going to work as teams or individuals. Each team (or person) will need to choose a letter that they think will be a winner. As you walk around the reserve, keep your eyes open for plants and animals and try to identify them.

### Resources

Information about the reserve in the Educational Visitor Guide  
Notebook and pencil  
Identification charts

### Challenge

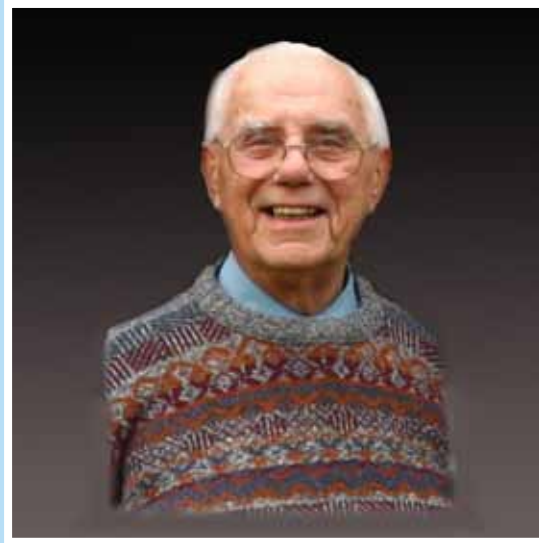
Choose a letter of the alphabet that you think will be the winner in a race to spot as many different plants and animals that begin with that letter. Keep a record of what you see.

### Additional background information

You can do some research before you go to the reserve using the Environmental Visitor Guide and Identification Charts. You will get a fairly good idea of which letters are the most likely winners. Some of the animals and plants are difficult to spot and some can not be seen during the whole year so you need to think about the time of your visit. If you have a Countryside Officer with you on your visit, you will be told a lot of the names of the plants and animals so you will just need to listen carefully to be able to add them to your list.

This publication is dedicated to the memory of:

**Len Weatherly**



Head Teacher  
Shepherd's Spring Infant and Junior School, Andover  
1967 - 1984

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](http://www.testvalley.gov.uk)

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