

## Nature Trail

**\*See if you can work out what the letters spell as you see them in order on each marker post.\***

The path is unfortunately not suitable for wheelchairs or push chairs at the moment.

It is a bit bumpy in places so please take care and stay on the higher ground.

(Information about the sculptures is on the notice board by the till. )

1. This wildlife pond is now well established after its construction in 1993. It supports populations of dragonflies, frogs, toads, and great crested newts to name a few. The plants around the marginal shelf, along the edge of the pond offer shelter and enable them to walk in and out easily. There have been sightings of one newt 40 cm long!!



Great Crested Newts

Muntjac Deer

2. These two Oak trees are well over 100 years old, they help take up the water which runs off the plant area, drinking at least 50 gallons each a day! They create a habitat for many insects and birds. They would have been growing here when the Finstock Military Hospital was operational on Ramsden Heath during the Second World War. (More information is available about the hospital on the History Wall in the coffee shop).

3. The hedgerows of mainly Hawthorn and Blackthorn bordering this field, offer a home and food to many small mammals, birds and insects. Which in turn provide food to Hawks, Buzzards and Owls in the form of mice. Occasionally we mow the brambles and bracken to prevent them from becoming too invasive.

4. This dip in the field where the brambles grow well is home to dozens of rabbits. They were originally introduced by the Romans over 2000 years ago, but have made themselves at home. We have a fence around the plant sales area to keep them out, the garden centre cats also help to scare them away. In the evening sometimes foxes can be seen here looking for their tea!

5. In 1997, 2,500 native trees were planted around these fields including Oak, Beech Hazel and Field Maple. Many were eaten by Roe deer which are native to England, Muntjac deer which were introduced from Asia and rabbits. The ones here are growing quite well and if left will become dense woodland in time.

6. This pond has been re-shaped; it was dug with an excavator in 1989 but the sides were too steep for plants to establish and it was too deep in the middle. It now offers a

much more diverse habitat. The deer fence to your right keeps deer from entering the plant area and having a feast.

7. These sheets of metal and walling blocks have been left here deliberately as they make an ideal home, creating warm caves, for lizards and grass snakes. Also in this field where the grass is shorter can be found orchids flowering in the Summer among masses of Oxeye Daisies.

8. This pile of subsoil which has been deposited after the last garden centre development is an ideal home for foxes. Glow bugs can also be seen around here at night time from June to August. They are relatively rare and are usually found on meadows and heathland. The wingless females glow like a bright green LED to attract a mate before laying their eggs. Yellow flowering Ragwort is often removed from here as it is an invasive weed and poisonous to horses and cattle.

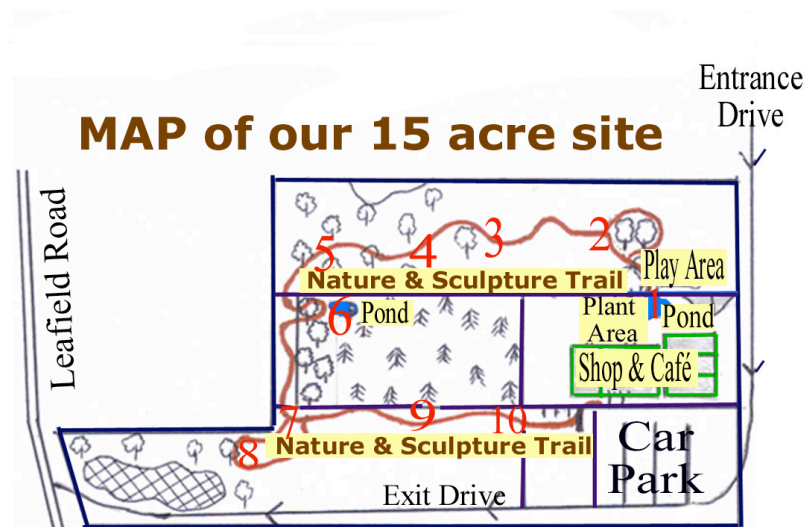


A Glow Bug

A Hedgehog

9. This Hedgehog box makes a cosy place to hide when it's cold and windy. You can make one at home from old wooden boxes and piles of dry leaves if you want to encourage hedgehogs in your garden, they will help to keep down the slugs. We also have a bee box in the hedge here to encourage their numbers to grow.

10. This pile of wood and logs is called a habitat pile, similar to a hedge it creates a habitat for several creatures. In time as the wood rots it will become a good home for fungi, mosses and lichen. When we prune branches off the trees they will be put here too.



**\*We hope you have enjoyed exploring this trail and doing the activities on the attached sheet. Did you work out what the letters spell?\***