

Walborough Explorers Pack

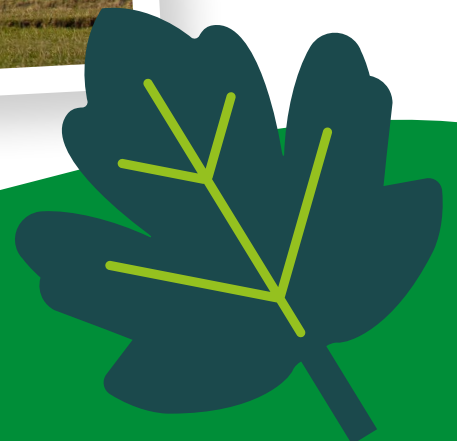


Avon
Wildlife Trust

A pack of information, resources and guides to help you get the most out of your visit with your family, school or group!



Greenfinch



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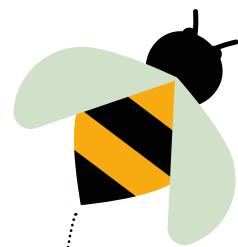


Introduction to **Walborough**

Welcome to Walborough, a beautiful local nature reserve just outside the village of Uphill and south of Weston-super-Mare. This is a coastal 21 hectare site and part of the Severn Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) offering lots to see and explore for families, schools and groups !

The nature reserve is a mixture of different habitats including limestone grassland, scrub and saltmarsh providing food for a wide variety of different species including wading birds, butterflies and nationally scarce plants such as somerset hair-grass and honewort. The varied landscape provides lots to offer and explore for naturalists and families who want to enjoy a stroll along the River Axe with stunning views. The Brean Down way, part of the National Cycle trail also runs through the middle of the reserve, allowing the site be accessible and visited by cyclists each year.

The reserve is managed by Avon Wildlife Trust and was purchased thanks to a combined effort from the Heritage Lottery fund, Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust, Woodspring District Council, Avon County Council and public donations.



Grayling











Grayling by John Bridges



Walborough Nature Reserve



Key

-  gate
-  Tree
-  unpaved footpath
-  wildflower area
-  steps
-  paved footpath
-  Saltmarsh
-  Bus stop
-  Public toilets
-  Car parking

Planning **your** visit

How to get there



By foot: Walborough Nature reserve is located just a short 15 minute walk from Uphill Village, a civil parish south of Weston-super-Mare.



By train: After catching the train to Weston-super-Mare, Walborough is 2.5 mile south of the station which would take you about 45 minute walk or a 10 minute cycle.



By bus: From Weston-super-Mare you can also catch the number 50 bus from town which stops just outside the entrance to Uphill nature reserve (shown on the map).



By bike: The reserve is very accessible by bike as the National Cycle route 33 runs right through it.



By car: If travelling by car, there is a car park to the entrance to the Uphill Nature Reserve. The surrounding streets would also be best for minibus or coach drop off as turning around will be difficult in the car park area.

There is also an extra car park area just by the Boathouse Café but the surface is very uneven so might not be suitable for all vehicles.

What Three Words

Lunch.boat.learn

This is the what three words for the car park at the entrance the Uphill Nature Reserve.

What to bring

Good footwear – Sometimes the paths especially along the river and saltmarsh can be wet and muddy.



Wildlife at Walborough

The mix of different habitats on site attracts different species of wildlife that you can try and spot throughout the year at Walborough. Below is a rough guide to just some of the different species you might be able to enjoy as you explore!

Birds

When visiting Walborough you can enjoy seeing different bird species at different times of the year. In the spring and summer, chiff chaffs sing their name out from the tops of the hedgerows '*chiff chaff chiff chaff*' and swallows and swifts soar over the wildflowers catching insects as they go. Whitethroats sing their scratchy songs from the scrub and charms of goldfinch chatter whilst feeding on flower seeds. The summer sky over Walborough is filled with the magic melody of the skylark (more information about skylarks on page 10)

In the winter as you walk around the saltmarsh and the along the banks of the River Axe, keep an eye out for birds such as the bright white little egret with its amusing yellow feet. You might also get to spot mallards or teal ducks sat on the water. Many birds are drawn to feast on the berry banquet within the winter hedgerow such as redwings and blackbirds.

Redwing



Butterflies

The wildflowers on Walborough hill in the summer provide a fantastic habitat and food source for lots of beautiful butterflies. Red admirals, peacocks, commas and meadow browns are likely to be spotted and also some more unusual species such as the chalkhill blue, small heath and grizzled skipper!

For more information on citizen science and how to help survey wildlife at Walborough see page 18



Comma

Why not take part in some citizen science as you explore the site by taking part in Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count by recording the butterflies you see on your summer walk?

Plants

The fields at Walborough are a great place to walk in the summer, a wash of beautiful colours as the wildflowers bloom. Meadows like this are now a nationally scarce habitat and we have lost over 97% of wildflower meadows. Cowslips are abundant on the hill and also some much rarer plants such as the Somerset hair-grass and honewort. Splashes of purple might catch your eye in spring as orchids sprout from the hill including green-winged and early purple.

History of Walborough

Walborough and the surrounding reserves are steeped in a long and rich history which adds another layer of magic to the area.

Limestone, gathered from Uphill and used for buildings, roads and railways, was burned in lime kilns to create quicklime. You can still see the remains of these two lime kilns near the entrance to the Uphill reserve.

This early quarrying was able to discover evidence, such as flint tools and marks on bones, that indicate people have been here for over 40,000 years. As you walk over the top of the hill at Walborough and admire the views over the river and out towards Brean, consider how the landscape might have looked all those years ago to our Bronze Age ancestors, some of who were laid to rest beneath your feet at the top of the hillock.

This Bronze Age burial ground at Walborough was cleared of trees over 5,000 years ago and has been grazed ever since. Some of the surrounding fields were fertilised during the second world war but the

hill was spared resulting in some really species rich grasslands that we enjoy today. Wildflowers prefer poorer quality soil so the lack of fertiliser use in the past has helped them grow.

Looking out from Walborough you can see the Old Church of Saint Nicholas on top of the hill. The door and the central tower of the church date back to the 12th century! It is estimated the church was founded around 1080 and still has many of its original features such as the gargoyles.

The cliffs beneath the ancient church contain caves that are thought to have been used since the stone age!

In 1996, the site became a nature reserve when it was purchased by Avon Wildlife Trust with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund and has continued to be a thriving place for nature and people ever since.



Looking after **Walborough**

Walborough is enjoyed by many visitors each year and for many different reasons, to exercise, go birdwatching, enjoy the views, spend time in the peace and quiet of nature or walk their dog. However, the number of dogs on nature reserves can cause problems.

Britain is a nation of animals lovers with over 8 million dogs across the country. Dogs make lovely companions and can be a fun addition to a walk in nature and help keep us happy and active. However they can also bring with them a series of problems including:

- Disturbing birds that are nesting on the ground
- Hurting or killing wild animals
- Scaring cows and other grazing animals
- Leaving dog mess

Over 1,000 tonnes of dog mess is created every single day according to 'Keep Britain Tidy'. In addition to being an unpleasant sight, dog mess can be dangerous due to the risk of *Toxocariasis*, an infection caused by small worms that can be found in dog poo which can lead to nausea, asthma and even blindness or seizures.

One thing we can all do whilst enjoying these beautiful natural places is to pick up after our pets, which will keep them clean and safe for other visitors. Bag your dogs mess up and take it away with you or use one of the bins on site. To protect your dog from the grazing cattle, adders and to prevent disturbance to wildlife and in particular ground nesting birds, please keep your dog on a lead whilst enjoying Walborough. Picking up and taking your litter home is another way to make sure the site stays nice for all wildlife and visitors.

Ground nesting birds

Birds in particular can be prone to dog disturbance. Too much and it can cause the birds to abandon their nests or chicks. Some birds build their nests on the ground which makes them extra susceptible to dogs. Some birds build their nests on the ground which makes them extra susceptible to disturbance including the skylark and the curlew, both of which can be found at Walborough.



How to identify a **skylark**

Walborough is home to an endangered, red-listed bird, the skylark. Here is how to identify these birds by sight and by sound!

A skylark is slightly larger than a sparrow, with a streaky brown breast and a crest on its head which it can raise when excited or alarmed. When they take off, you might also be able to spot their white-edged tail.

However what makes the Skylark stand out from other brown birds is its song. A song that has inspired countless poems, songs and works of literature. Just as described in Shelley's poem, the skylark springs from the ground and erupts into song, flying almost vertically upwards into the clouds.

They will pour out a continuous melodic song without pausing, as if the bird isn't stopping for breath and will continue to do so for minutes of end!

To a Sky lark by Percy Byssge Shelley

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever signest.

....

Teacher me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen as I am listening now.

Skylark



If you hear a continuous song from a bird high up in the sky, its likely you are listening to the skylark.

Birds to spot

Spring/summer

☐ Greenfinch



☐ Bluetit



☐ Chiffchaff



☐ Blackbird



☐ Goldfinch



☐ Skylark



☐ Whitethroat



☐ Swift



☐ Kestrel



☐ Buzzard



☐ Great tit



☐ Swallow



Birds to spot

Autumn/winter

☐ Robin



☐ Wood pigeon



☐ Jackdaw



☐ Chaffinch



☐ Long-tailed tit



☐ Crow



☐ Mallard



☐ Starling



☐ Dunnock



☐ Magpie



☐ Teal



☐ Redwing

Wellbeing at Walborough

Spending time outside and in nature is both good for our physical health, as we move around and breathe fresh air, and our mental health.

Even just short periods of time in nature can enhance our mood, reduce stress levels, lower blood pressure, improve our sleep quality, boost our immune system and even make us more creative and empathetic! Below are some ideas of activities you can try whilst visiting Walborough to further improve your wellbeing.

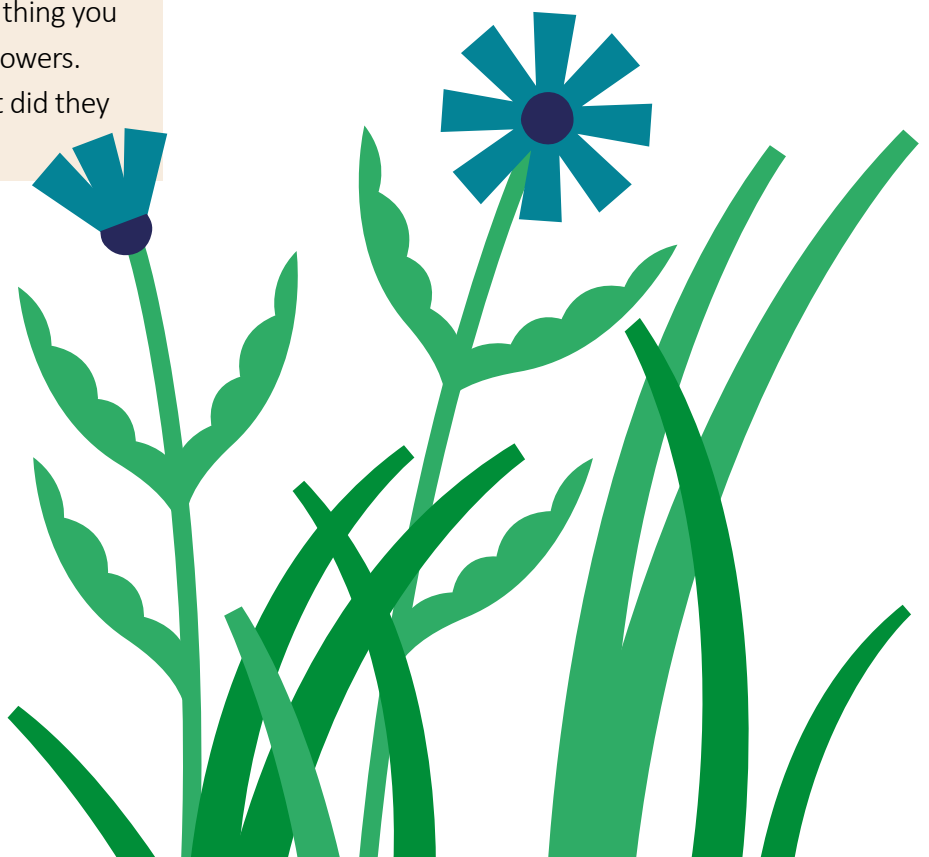


Nature-based mindfulness

- Gather in a circle and introduce idea that being outside in nature can help people relax.
- Ask everyone to close their eyes and take a deep breath in through their nose and out through their mouth.
- Tell them to spend a moment becoming aware of their sense of touch, the feeling of the ground beneath them, the wind or sun on their face or the grass on their fingers.
- Ask them to switch focus to the sounds of nature. Spend a moment listening to the wind in the trees, the singing birds or the flowing water of the river.
- To finish, tell students to take a few more deep breaths and open their eyes. Notice one thing you can now see, the clouds, the trees, the flowers.
- Ask the group how they found it, what did they notice and how did they feel?

Wellbeing crafts

Nature is full of beauty and patterns and noticing these has been shown to lower stress and help us feel more connected to nature. Creating art and crafts with nature is a fantastic way to take a deeper look at the natural world. Use the guides below for some ideas on how to make a group art piece such as a nature mandala or a natural loom, weaving in some beautiful nature treasures you have found around site. Avoid picking flowers as the bees and butterflies need these a lot more than we do!



Make a nature mandala

You will need

- Bags or baskets to collect natural materials

- Natural materials:



Sticks



Leaves



Pebbles



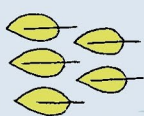
Flowers

Only pick from your own garden and leave plenty for pollinators!



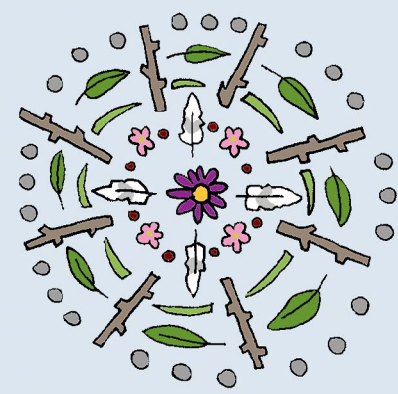
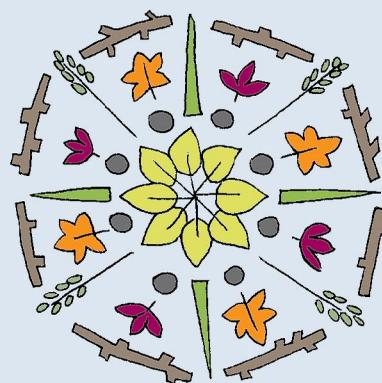
The word 'mandala' is Sanskrit for circle. The circular shape symbolises how nature doesn't begin or end, but is always connected.

- 1 Head outdoors and collect your natural materials. Try to find a few of the same thing as this will help with your shape (eg. five yellow leaves, four twigs of equal length).



- 2 Find a flat surface – maybe a table or even your lawn or yard outside. Place one of your finds down first to act as the middle of the mandala.

- 3 Use the rest of your finds to make a pattern coming out from the centre. Consider the symmetry of your pattern, making one side mirror the other. You can be as creative as you like.



- 4 Remember to take a photo of your finished mandala!

Activity: Natural looms

Natural looms are a great activity to focus your attention on what's around you. All you'll need is some string and a pair of scissors, everything else you will be able to find in nature.

You can create the look by either finding a 'Y' shaped stick or by tying 4 sticks together to create a square or rectangle.

You can try updating your loom each season to see how nature changes throughout the year.



Activity: Walking challenges

Can you answer these questions as you explore the site? Or print them out and hand them out to your family or group as you go?



 ***How many different shades of green can you see?***

 ***Can you walk without making any sound?***

 ***Can you see anything natural which starts with the same letter as your name?***

 ***Imagine you were here 100 years ago. What would be different?***

 ***How many different colours can you see?***

 ***Imagine you are an owl: what tree would you perch on and why?***

 ***Brush your hand through some leaves or grass. What does it feel like?***

 ***How many different shaped leaves can you collect?***

 ***Imagine you have to sleep here for the night? Where would you make your den?***

 ***What could we do to make this place better for wildlife?***

 ***Can you invent a rhyme or poem about Walborough ?***

Activity: reflect on the visit

Draw or write in the boxes below about what you experience during your visit to the nature reserve.



We saw...



We felt...



We heard...



We touched...



Walborough Nature Reserve



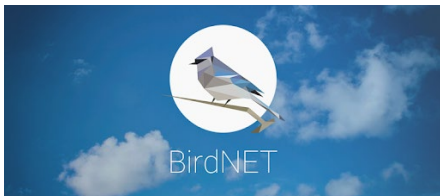
Survey Skills

One amazing way to help us look after the wildlife at Walborough is by helping us find out what animals and plants live here. The better we understand what lives here, the better we can understand how to help protect them. You can help us with this and improve your wildlife identification at the same time by surveying wildlife as you explore the site. Below are some free apps that you can use to become a citizen scientist and survey wildlife.



iNaturalist

iNaturalist is a free app that allows you to upload photographs of any plant, animal or fungi and the app will then try to help you identify what it is you have seen. If it can't work it out, it will give you some suggestions and then the community of users are able to comment and suggest an identification. iNaturalist will also then log your photo as an official wildlife recording so people can use your record when studying the species or location. Its also a fantastic way to quickly improve your naturalist skills.



BirdNet

BirdNet is a fantastic app that allows you to record bird noises and will try to work out what species of bird it is. As long as you have an internet connection the app will try to give you a prediction and will also log the sound as a wildlife recording just like iNaturalist.

Citizen Science projects to get involved with:

The RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch

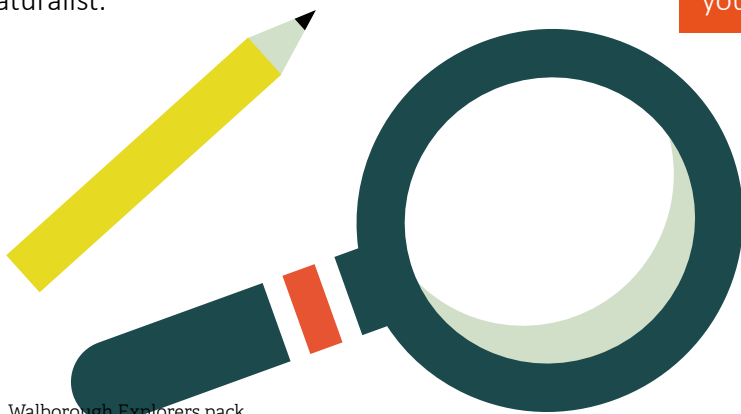
Every year, over the course of weekend in late January, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds organises the Big Garden Birdwatch. Spend an hour in your garden, park or at Walborough nature reserve, counting the birds that you see. There is lots of information on the RSPB website on how to get involved and how to identify the birds you might spot.

City Nature Challenge

The City Nature Challenge is a global competition that takes place every year between cities all over the world to see who can record the most wildlife using the iNaturalist app. Just download the app and and start taking taking photos!

The Big Butterfly Count

Every July and August, Butterfly Conservation run a large butterfly monitoring project called the Big Butterfly Count. Download their free app or print off your own survey sheets from the website and spend just 15 minutes counting the butterflies you see.



Risks on site

To enjoy Walborough safely or if you are considering visiting the site with a group you will want to know about the potential risks on site and how control for them. You could use the below list to help you when creating your own risk assessments ahead of visits.

Risk	Description	Control measures
Slips, trips or falls	Uneven, muddy or slippery ground can lead to potential falls and injury.	Wear appropriate clothing including footwear and take care when exploring especially in wet or icy conditions. Point out any particularly hazardous spots to others.
Dogs	There will likely be dogs at Walborough and therefore there will also, unfortunately, likely be dog mess.	Do not approach any dogs and watch out for dog mess. Carry water to wash any mess off shoes or clothes.
Insects and plants	There will be some plants or insects that live on site that could lead to stings, bites or irritation.	Be aware of any severe allergies ahead of the visit and bring any sting relief with you. Wearing long trousers and staying on the path can help avoid nettles and other plants that may cause irritation.
Livestock	Walborough and surrounding nature reserves are often grazed by cattle.	Be aware of where the livestock are and don't enter field with livestock if you have concerns in your group. Make sure you give all livestock a wide berth and control volume levels. As always, close the gates behind you.
Weather	Hot, cold, wet or windy weather can all potentially lead to some discomfort.	Check the forecast before hand and wear appropriate clothing. Have plenty of water and sunscreen with you if sunny and avoid working under tree cover in extreme winds.
Vehicles	There is potential of agricultural vehicles on site and cars nearer the entrance to Uphill and near the Boathouse café.	Be aware of surroundings and keep eyes and ears open for vehicles.
Open water	There are areas of open water at Walborough including the River Axe, a pond and areas that could be flooded.	Be aware of these areas of open water and inform the group not to go close to the edge. Carry a throw line if you are walking near water.
Wildlife	Some species of wildlife that might be found at Walborough could potentially lead to harm if bitten, such as adders.	Never approach or attempt to handle a snake. Take care when walking through long grass or when lifting up potential refugias such as logs or stones.