

WINTER

Explorer's Trail



Welcome to Watchtree Nature Reserve's nature trails. On the Explorer's Trail, you'll discover Watchtree's wide range of habitats and have the chance to see for yourself the birds, plants, mammals and insects that live here.

the PLAQUES

Have fun taking rubbings from the decorative plaques located on 9 of the waymarkers. Paper and crayons are available from the Visitor Centre. When you've identified each motif, put its initial letter in the grid on your paper, then unscramble all 9 letters to find the hidden word.

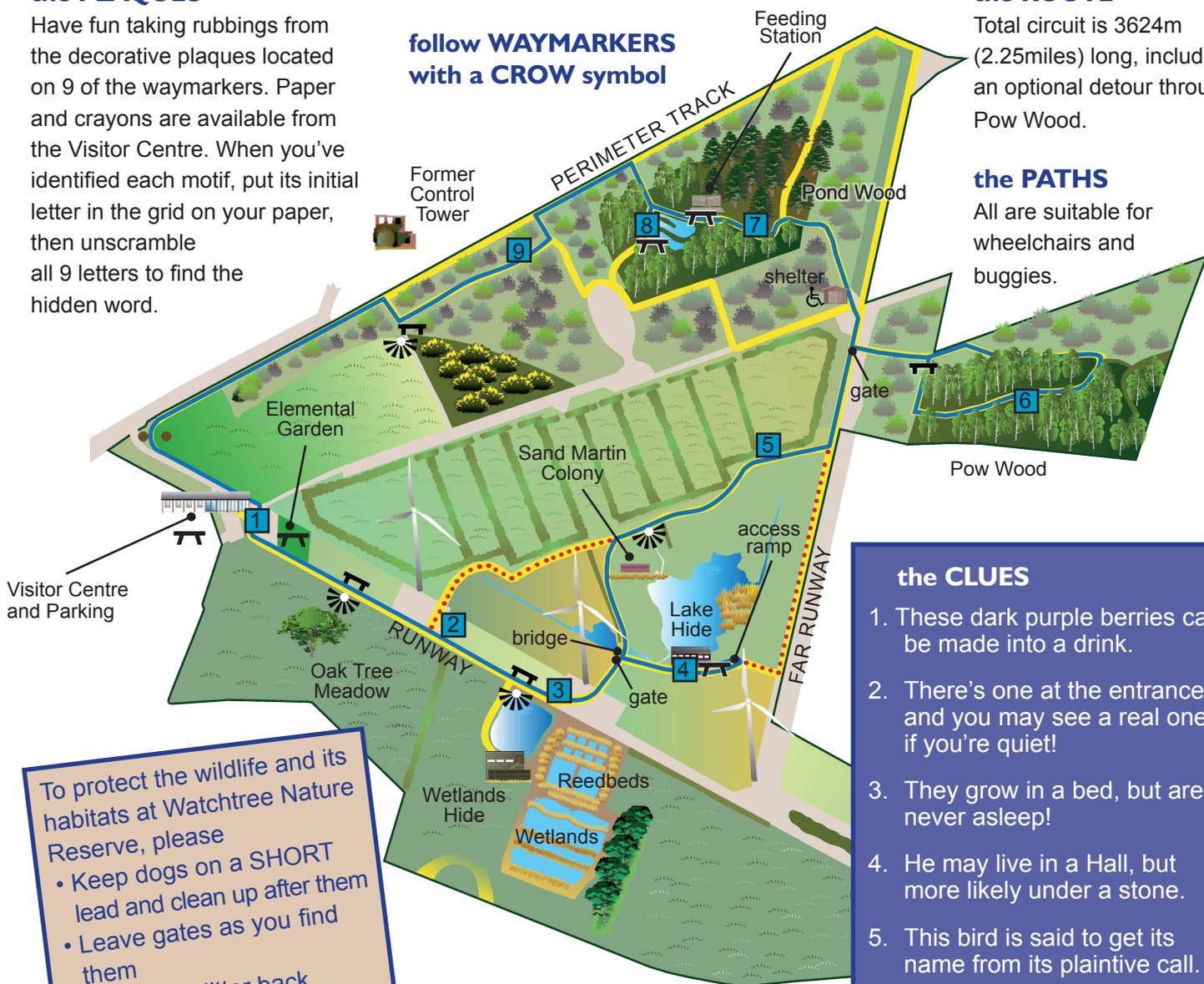
follow WAYMARKERS with a CROW symbol

the ROUTE

Total circuit is 3624m (2.25miles) long, including an optional detour through Pow Wood.

the PATHS

All are suitable for wheelchairs and buggies.



the CLUES

1. These dark purple berries can be made into a drink.
2. There's one at the entrance and you may see a real one if you're quiet!
3. They grow in a bed, but are never asleep!
4. He may live in a Hall, but more likely under a stone.
5. This bird is said to get its name from its plaintive call.
6. They use their strong beak to make holes in trees and telegraph poles
7. This tree thrives in wet ground
8. In spring, there are thousands of these in the pond.
9. They're sometimes made of chocolate – but not at Watchtree!

LOOK OUT FOR

Explorer's Trail	Rubbing plaque
Cycle option	Toilet
a Breath of Fresh Hare Trail	Viewpoint
Picnic table	Seat

- To protect the wildlife and its habitats at Watchtree Nature Reserve, please
- Keep dogs on a SHORT lead and clean up after them
 - Leave gates as you find them
 - Bring your litter back to the Visitor Centre for recycling or disposal
 - Admire the wildlife you find, but leave it in its natural home

THANK YOU
ENJOY YOUR VISIT!

You'd be wrong if you thought there was nothing to discover at Watchtree Nature Reserve in winter. The trees may be bare, but can you identify them from their bark and their shape? There's always the chance of spotting winter visitors, too, such as the Golden Plover.

down the RUNWAY

Resident bird populations have to work hard to survive in winter and feeding-stations like the one in the Elemental Garden attract lots of hungry Tree Sparrows, Greenfinches, Chaffinches and tits. A flock of geese may pass overhead, on their way to the Solway coast for the winter.



Greenfinch



Fieldfare



Reed Bunting



Chaffinch

in the HEDGEROWS

We manage our hedges in winter, laying some each spring to keep them thick and strong. Fieldfare are attracted to the berries of Hawthorn and Dog Rose. Blackbirds and thrushes hunt for grubs and worms in the undergrowth. Empty nests are visible among the bare twigs.

among the REEDS

Reedbeds play an important role in Watchtree's water treatment processes. During the winter, the thicket of stems provides shelter for small mammals and birds, including the Reed Bunting.

Fox and tracks



in and around the WATER

Mute Swan, Tufted Duck, Mallard and Teal may be joined by wintering Goldeneye. Snipe take cover on the margins. If the water ices over, however, most birds will seek open water elsewhere. If there's snow or frost on the ground, you may be able to pick out bird or animal tracks. Do you know what the footprint of a fox looks like?



Snipe

in the MEADOWS

The grasses, herbs and flowers of the meadows are dormant until the spring. The short grass makes it easier to spot Brown Hares – don't be startled if one suddenly runs off as you approach!



Tufted Duck



Goldeneye



Brown Hare and tracks

Scots Pine



through the WOODS

As you go through Pow and Pond Woods, see how many trees you can identify from their shape or the colour and markings of their bark. Birch, for example, has smooth, silvery bark, whereas the oak's bark is deeply ridged. Mixed planting of conifers and broadleaves is designed to attract Red Squirrels – please tell us if you see one!

Red Squirrel



beside the BRIDGE

The ditch is home to Great Crested Newts, which leave the water to hibernate. Can you see the mound of logs and stones made for them on the bank?



Great Crested Newt

Toad



in the POND

Some amphibians survive the winter by leaving the water to hibernate; others seek refuge in the mud at the bottom of the pond. Waterfowl such as Teal and Mallard overwinter in the rushes and sedges at the water's edge.

on the HOME STRAIGHT

The ruined building to your right as you head down the perimeter track was the control tower when Watchtree was an airfield, during the Second World War. The big stone at the entrance to the Reserve is a 'Criffel' granite boulder, left behind when a glacier retreated, thousands of years ago.

what other wildlife did YOU SEE or HEAR?