

University of East Anglia Wildlife Trail

Welcome to the UEA Wildlife Trail! Whether you are walking the dog, going for a jog, or taking a break from work, we hope you enjoy the walk. The habitats along the Trail are home to a large variety of fauna and flora. Follow the Trail through woodland, along river banks, across grass meadows and around UEA Broad. We hope that, wherever you join the Trail, there is something new for you to discover.

See map on reverse

Trail 1: Fen and Wet Woodland

Trail 1 sees the River Yare winding through the lush expanse of wet woodland to the south. There are a host of different species making their home in the boggy marshland and the willow trees. The marshland is coppiced regularly and



highland cattle will be grazing here from 2012 to maintain the habitat. Traditional reed cutting has been carried out on a rotational basis. The Trail on the west side of the river is open all year round offering a view over the UEA playing fields. For centuries the higher ground was used for livestock grazing. On the lower ground by the river there are ongoing problems with bank erosion. As the east bank is swampy you are advised to access this part of the Trail during the summer only. The route is

marked by a dotted line on the map. It is a beautiful and secluded walk. You will see many colourful dragonflies hum over the river and hear some of our visiting warbler species, such as the willow warbler, sing out from the trees. Otters have recently been spotted frisking in the river.

At dusk during the summer, keep an eye open for the flitting of bats. The warm air buzzes with insect activity, attracting the bats out of the woods at night, thus forming a bat roost run. A total of 6 species of bats have been recorded in this area, the most common being the Soprano Pipistrelle.

Earlham Park is to the north - a large area of open grassland owned by Norwich City Council. Earlham Hall dates back to the 16th century. It was the home of some illustrious residents, including the Gurney family, co-founders of Barclays Bank in the late 18th century and Elizabeth Fry, the famous social philanthropist and prison reformer. Norwich City Council acquired the building in 1925. It served as a maternity hospital during the war. The University now owns both the house and gardens.

Trail 2: Woodland and Grass Meadow

As you walk through the woodland, many creatures stir unseen, foraging for food - long tailed tits dart between the branches above, whilst grey squirrels hop about collecting acorns in autumn. Visit the woodland in April-May when the upper slopes become a stunning carpet of English bluebells. The woodland is left to develop naturally, but checked regularly for any invasive species. There are traces of human activity here too;



you may discover a large fallen tree on the lower slopes of the wood, carved with Maori symbolism at the time of the "Pacific Encounters" exhibition (Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, 2006). As you emerge from the woods, look out for the ancient sessile oak tree on the right-hand side, which is about 350 years old, dating back to the time when this was farmland! Sessile oak is hard, durable and water resistant, used in the past for barrels, casks and ship building.

The view from the edge of the woodland takes in the grass meadow, where rabbits graze amongst the wild flowers. As you walk through the meadow, you may notice mounds and hollows in the form of the land. These are the last traces of Earlham Golf Course, bequeathed by Norwich City Council as the site for the University in 1962, on the condition that it remains open parkland for the public. The grass meadows are mown in rotation to encourage flowers, bees, insects and birds.



From the grass meadow, the view is dominated by the iconic Ziggurats, modelled on ancient Mesopotamian pyramid-shaped towers. These form part of the original concrete buildings on campus, designed by architect Sir Denys Lasdun in the 1960s.

Subsequent generations of architects have all left their distinctive mark. Another striking building, to the left of the Ziggurats, is the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (SCVA). Designed by Norman Foster and opened in 1978, it houses the art collection of Sir Robert Sainsbury. Look out for the open air sculptures : two Henry Moore bronze sculptures and an abstract steel sculpture by Ian Tyson in front of the Ziggurats.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Trail 3: UEA Broad

Wherever you happen to join the Trail, the UEA Broad is most outstanding for its sheer size and situation on campus. It has become a site of great beauty and biodiversity over the years. The Broad teems with many different species of fish, which makes it a prime spot for fishing; there have been some brilliant catches in recent years, including a carp weighing 36lbs! The large quantity of fish also attracts a number of birds, including black-headed gulls, grey herons and the magnificent great crested grebes, which perform a unique mating dance in the spring. Some birds are seasonal visitors whilst others make their homes here.

The UEA Broad appears to be a natural habitat, but it is in fact entirely man-made! Formerly wet marshland, it was dug out for gravel and sand extraction in the construction of the University from 1973-78. Over time it filled with water. The uneven underwater profile shelves to a depth of 10 meters in places, filled with entangled plants and pockets of cold water. Because of these dangers swimming is strictly prohibited.



If you are walking alongside the River Yare from Trail 2 - Fen and Wet Woodland, you may cross the 'Mathematical Bridge' over to UEA Broad. This is a copy of the bridge over the River Cam at Queen's College, Cambridge. If you pass the west end of UEA Broad, make sure you have a peek at the water's edge, you may spot one of the two non-native terrapins that live here. In the summer months, you can see these colourful reptiles basking in the sun

on an old log. We suspect that they were unwanted or escaped pets! At the east end of UEA Broad there is a path uphill to Eaton Park where the **Friends of Eaton Park** community group work to maintain the biodiversity of the park and woodland.

The management of UEA Broad includes monitoring the water quality, maintaining the edges and cutting back tree growth to enhance the vistas. The UEA Broad provides an ever changing visual environment; it is a mirror for the clouds overhead and reflects surrounding trees. The water captures the bright colours of autumn leaves, and the blossoms of spring. As you walk around the Broad, observe the tall buildings behind the Ziggurats. The wide grassy area in front is known as "The Harbour" because the buildings and chimneys give the impression of a large ocean liner with smoking funnels!

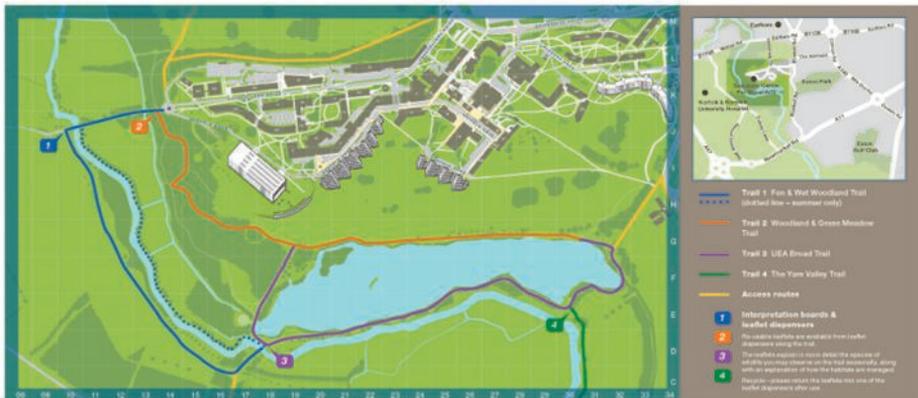


Trail 4: The Yare Valley

As you walk around the south edge of the Broad, the Yare Valley boardwalk leads off the UEA Trail. Spend a few minutes on the viewing platform over the Water Soldier Pond, immediately to the right. The water soldier is a native plant with long pointed leaves. It rises to float on the surface during the summer and sinks to the bottom in winter. UEA Volunteers have cleared the pond and cut back trees to prevent leaf and twig fall. This allows sunlight to penetrate, encouraging the water soldier to rise again each summer.



The boardwalk continues towards Cringleford. In summer the Yare Valley blooms with abundant flora and fauna; the air is thick with insects and you can hear the song of sedge and reed warblers. You may catch the blue flash of a kingfisher zipping down the river. The pastures to the left were formerly strawberry fields and to the right the flood plain is criss-crossed with drainage ditches where cattle once grazed. There are also a number of rare plants along this section of the Trail, including the Spring Snowflake, a white winter flower that grows in the carr (woodland). The land and waterways on the south side of the river are privately owned. Walking here 100 years ago, you might have seen ladies and gentlemen in rowing boats or punts floating past enjoying a Sunday picnic! **The Yare Valley Society** are actively involved in the conservation of wildlife in this area.



Text: Annie Rhodes, 2012

Photos: Ros Dixon, Elaine Sherriffs and James Armes

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