

YARROW VALLEY PARK (FORMERLY BIRKACRE LODGES)

General information

Access to the site is off the B5251 Coppull New Road 2.5 mile to the south west of Chorley with the main car park at OS grid ref SD 571152. Access by bus is by service 362 Chorley to Wigan, and by Chorley Local Services 1, 2 and 2A. Alight at Birkacre Road and follow this to the site.

Google Maps: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@53.6278291,-2.64455,16z?hl=en>

Many years ago the lodges belonged to Birkacre Mill, Calico Printers and Bleachworks. The works closed down in the 1930's and the buildings were finally demolished during the 1960's. Today the site is a haven for wildlife. Owned by Chorley Borough Council, this lovely area for walking, birdwatching and angling has a ranger on duty, picnic areas, car parks. There is a café which has a room with information displays about local groups. There are also toilet facilities.

Habitat

Woodland, lodges and river surrounded by farmland. Top lodge is a designated nature reserve.

Birds

The most popular attraction is the resident pair of Mute Swans, which have delighted many visitors by rearing quite a number of cygnets over the past few years. Great Crested Grebe also breed, along with good numbers of Coot, Moorhen and Mallard. The lodges are host to several species of duck in winter including Goldeneye, Pochard and Tufted. The observant may also see Snipe in the reedbed. The woodland area is home to Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Great and Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker, and occasionally Green Woodpecker can be heard and seen.

Spring brings lots of migrant warblers including Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Willow and Garden Warblers, Grasshopper and Sedge Warblers. Skylarks and Reed Buntings also breed at the site. The River Yarrow supports breeding Dipper, Grey Wagtail and Kingfisher. Common Sandpiper are often seen on passage. In summer many Swift, Swallow, Sand and House Martin may be seen swooping low over the water.

The Society has helped in the construction and placement of rafts of Big Lodge. These have been successfully used for breeding by Common Terns. Look for them from May and through the summer months

Insects

Butterflies are in abundance with Orange Tip, Common Blue, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral being evident. Flying near the reeds Common Blue and Blue Tailed Damselflies may be spotted along with the Brown Hawker and Common Darter Dragonflies.

Fungi

In autumn, fungi in Burgh wood include Wood Woolly-Foot, Common Yellow Russula and Dead Man's Fingers. The uncommon White Helvella can sometimes be found. The birch and oak scrubby areas have the Brown and Orange Birch Boletes, Fly Agaric and Oak Milkcap, whilst the wood chippings on the car-park shrubbery have several unusual species including the Verdigris Agaric and Rose-Gilled Grisette.

Plants

An excellent wildflower list should enable you to find at least 90 species throughout the year. Some uncommon plants to be found are Round Leaved Wintergreen, Yellow Birds Nest, Opposite Leaved Saxifrage, Yellow Rattle and Enchanter's Nightshade. The wood also has good quantities of the lovely yellow Touch-Me-Not Balsam. Other plants include Broad leaved Helleborine, Eyebright, Cowslip, Common Twayblade, Common Centaury, Ragged Robin and Common Spotted Orchid.

Mammals

If you are fortunate you may catch sight of Fox, Roe Deer and Grey Squirrel, and come at dusk for species of Bat including Pipistrelle,

