

# Rowhill Nature Reserve - Step by Step

A small nature reserve, now a SANGS with a variety of wildlife to be found in a short walk.

This 55 acre gem has been a nature reserve for many years cared for by a local volunteer group. The suggested route is very flexible because there is a web of paths and they will all get you to where you want in a short distance.

A walk of between 1 and 2 miles will allow you to see everything. Information boards can be found around the reserve.

Park at the Reserve Centre on Cranmore Lane (GU11 3BD) and follow the path in by the Norway Maple tree next to the garden fences. Follow this path and soon you will see a sign on the left indicating the source of the River Blackwater. Water leaches from a sphagnum bog on the hillside. In summer it's difficult to see! The river trickles down through the reserve and you will surely encounter it on your walk.

Continuing on the path with the sign you soon pass a pond on your right and a small clearing. Soon after the path goes slightly right and you keep right where any choice occurs. This new path was created when the reserve became a SANGS providing more walking options in the woodland. It will need a few years to reach its best. Keep heading right until you reach a junction and the right hand path leads out of the woodland. Here you go left.

Keep in this general direction slightly downhill and when faced with a crossroads go straight on. This should bring you out at the bottom of the grass field. Some of this is kept mown for a play area but much is wildflower meadow and worth checking for flowers in spring and summer. Around this field you can hear a lot of birdsong. It has held Lesser Whitethroat in the past but Common Whitethroat and Chiffchaff along with Dunnocks, Robins and Wrens will all be there and the loud, musical, repetitive song of the Song Thrush will be heard in spring and summer. At the bottom of the field is a tarmac path so follow that to the opposite side of the field to where you appeared.

Follow this path towards the housing at the end. The map shows you an area called Spreads also known as Kingfisher Carr. During WWII Canadian soldiers were stationed here and made bricks and a few small brick pits remain. These are now overgrown ponds and often get visited by Kingfishers, hence the Rowhill Nature Reserve Society emblem includes a Kingfisher. These are worth a quiet visit and the path is on the right at the end before the houses.

Return to the main path, turn left, away from the houses and first right to return to the start this way, much of it will be following the stream that is the Blackwater. On the way, you will see an area where the local volunteers undertake coppicing of Hazel. A sign gives you information on the subject, a traditional way to manage woodland that is good for nature. At the right time of year, late summer or autumn, hazel nuts will be hanging from the trees, assuming the squirrels didn't get there first!

This last part of the walk is uphill and can be quite muddy so in wet weather or winter you will need to wear the right footwear and take your time. Steps take you up to the path you came in on and you turn right to get back to the start.