



## **Guided educational activities at the Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park**

We can offer a range of informal learning activities for schools and other groups. These are led by the Ranger team at the Millennium Country Park. The Park has many opportunities for children to get outside and get close to nature. Our activities, which range from pond dipping to bug hunting, bring nature to life and provide children with a real hands on experience that many have never had.

## **The Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park**

The Millennium Country Park lies at the heart of The Forest of Marston Vale and borders the villages of Stewartby and Marston Moretaine. It covers 225 hectares and comprises a mosaic of woodland, wetland, grassland, open water and large areas of reed bed, (a national priority habitat). The Park is a thriving, attractive and multifunctional green space providing benefits for both people and wildlife. The range of habitats enables wildlife to flourish whilst providing all ages and abilities of visitors with the opportunity to experience and understand nature. The Park provides a range of leisure activities, from energetic outdoor recreation (e.g. water sports, cycling and running) to more gentle leisure pursuits (e.g. walking and bird watching) The Millennium Country Park is a sustainable and multifunctional green space and flagship site within the Forest of Marston Vale and wider Bedfordshire.

## Ranger led activities

- **Pond dipping**

Pond dipping with nets and identification sheets in our Bog garden situated next to the Forest Centre.

Children will hunt for pond creatures which they can catch, examine and identify close up. The depths of the pond will yield a range of pond life from whirligig beetles to mayfly nymphs, dragonfly larvae to water scorpions. We can touch on life cycles, adaptations and the use of identification sheets.



- **Guided nature walk**

What better way to find out all about nature than a fun walk on the Wetlands Nature Reserve looking at the wide range of wildlife to be found in the Park.



Children learn the best way to spot wildlife around them, to use all of their senses to look, listen and feel for nature.

Nature walks change with the season, with the weather and with different habitats. A chance of a close encounter with flowers, insects, birds and trees to name a few.



- **Mini beast safari**

Children hunt for invertebrates using sweep nets and pooters. They can catch, closely examine and identify a whole range of invertebrate life in the grassland, in woodland and under stones and logs. We look at why certain creatures are found in certain places, how different invertebrates feed and the use of colouring in camouflage and warning. A wide range of invertebrates could be found from spiders and slugs to froghoppers to crickets.



A great chance to enter the world of the minibeast.

- **Bird watching with binoculars**



A walk into The Wetlands Nature Reserve with their own binoculars will reveal a whole host of different birds the children may never have seen before. The fun game of Birdie bingo helps children to identify birds in

different habitats and explore the reasons they may live there. The walk ends with a visit to our bird watching hide on the edge of The Pillinge Lake.

- **Scavenger Hunt**

The challenge is for children to locate all the items on the Scavenger Hunt list within a set time.



This adventure encourages children to really observe what's around them, and to touch and feel different items. An oak leaf, a smooth stone, something green, a seed or something that doesn't belong in nature are just a few of the items they may need to hunt for.

- **Leaf hunting**



This activity gives children a basic introduction to tree identification.

Leaf identification sheets are given to the children who can explore The Forest

Centre Meadow to collect and identify leaves and trees from the wide range of species growing there.



- **Nature's palette**

An opportunity for children to explore the colours that occur in nature. Each child is given a sticky colour card and must collect as many different colours in nature by sticking small parts of plants and flowers to their card. This could tie in with an art project back at school.

## Visit information

- All Rangers are First Aid trained
- We usually limit groups to 30 children and require a minimum ratio of at least one adult to six children. If you wish to bring more than 30 children, the group can be split up with one group being led by the Ranger, the other led by the teacher. Groups would then swap. Responsibility for the children is with the school throughout the visit.
- You will need to compile your own risk assessments for the activities you are participating in. We would recommend you make a pre- visit and can provide copies of our own activity and site risk assessments to assist you in doing this. Helpful risk assessment guidance can be found at <http://www.education.gov.uk/>
- There is no indoor classroom space available in the event of inclement weather. If the weather is poor, there is limited shelter available. Usually our school visits take place in spring and summer for this reason. If schools come for the whole day, they often keep the coach on site so it is available for shelter/eating lunch.
- There are a range of rooms available for hire should you wish to have classroom space available for your visit.
- We can currently access funding via Natural England for a limited amount of school visits per year for children aged from 4-16 if the visit is at least 2 hours and is for 6 or more students. If your school falls into this category then you will be able to visit free of charge. We will require you to fill in a feedback form to allow us to claim funding for your visit.
- If you do not fall into this category then charges are £3 per child for half a day or less and £6 per child for a full day. We require a minimum of 15 children in a group.

If you are interested in booking a Ranger led school visit, please contact Anna Charles, Head Ranger on [anna.charles@marstonvale.org](mailto:anna.charles@marstonvale.org) or 01234762614 for a booking form.

Our  
future is  
growing

