

The Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership

In 2005, the Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership was established to help deliver landscape scale conservation and restoration throughout a 95km² area of the Tame Valley between Birmingham and Tamworth.

The vision is to create **a wetland landscape rich in wildlife and accessible to all**, by working with organisations, landowners and local communities.

The Partnership is led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and supported by the following partner organisations:



Get Involved!

If you would like more information on how you can help care for the environment or would like details on practical volunteering, please contact Warwickshire Wildlife Trust at the address below:

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The Wildlife Landscape of the Tame Valley



Creating a **Living Landscape**

The Tame Valley

The River Tame is 100km long and the largest tributary of the River Trent. It starts in the Black Country and continues eastwards through Birmingham, before changing direction at Water Orton and flowing north through Tamworth. It has a number of important tributaries, the most significant of which are the rivers Rea, Cole, Blythe and Anker. This leaflet focuses on the River Tame between Birmingham and Tamworth, in north-west Warwickshire.

Before the industrial revolution, the River Tame meandered slowly through broad landscapes of wildlife-rich marshes, reeds and pastures. The area was known for its breeding wildfowl and large over-wintering populations of migrating birds and waders.

During the industrial revolution, the Tame Valley changed completely – natural floodplain and woodland was replaced by agriculture, industry and housing. Gravel extraction occurred along much of the River Tame and by the 1980s the river was polluted, engineered and cut-off from its floodplain.



Today, there is a very different landscape to be enjoyed by nearly two million people who live close to the River Tame. Despite the historical damage, the river is now cleaner and the old gravel working sites, which once blighted the landscape, now help to form the largest series of interconnected wetlands in the county.

The Tame Valley has a wide variety of habitats that host a rich diversity of wildlife and rare species. Home to several of the most important wildlife sites in the Midlands, this regionally important river corridor is also a vital north-south migration route, providing essential resting and feeding places for hundreds of migrating birds.

Due to the area's existing value and the potential to further improve this through wetland restoration and creation, the Tame Valley is recognised as a key place for large area conservation and partnership working, and part of a 'Living Landscape'.

www.warwickshire-wildlife-trust.org.uk

A Focus on Whitacre Heath Nature Reserve

Whitacre Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a key site within the Tame Valley. Lying on the floodplain, the reserve comprises a mosaic of habitats including shallow pools, wet grassland and wet woodland.

Interesting plants include the southern marsh orchid, blue fleabane and pink purslane, but the reason for the site's SSSI status is for its breeding water birds, including little grebe, tufted duck and teal, which can be spotted from Scrape Hide and Main Pool Hide. Waders such as lapwing, redshank, and both common and jack snipe also visit and can sometimes be seen from Flashes Hide. Other frequently seen birds include great spotted woodpeckers and kingfishers, as well as a variety of warblers, finches, tits and thrushes.

Over one thousand species of invertebrate have been recorded on the reserve. These include locally important butterflies such as small heath and white-letter hairstreak, and dazzling damselflies and dragonflies such as the emperor dragonfly and broad-bodied chaser.



Welcome to the Tame Valley

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Broad Meadow
What to do & see: This island between the River Tame and the flood relief channel is an ideal habitat for herons, terns, skylarks and lapwings. It also has a population of the rare snake's head fritillary.
Access: From Oxbridge Way, via the bridge over the weir to the west of the site.
Contact: www.tamworth.gov.uk.
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Egg Meadow
What to do & see: Situated in the centre of Tamworth. In spring, look out for the displays of snake's head fritillary and the other wildflowers in the meadow. You can also enjoy the circular cycle route which runs around the outside of the site.
Access: From the Snow Dome car park.
Contact: www.tamworth.gov.uk.
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Borrowpit Lake
What to do & see: Enjoy a walk around the lake and see Tamworth's famous swans and many other wetland birds.
Access: From the Snow Dome car park.
Contact: www.tamworth.gov.uk.
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Tameside Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
What to do & see: With the River Tame to the east and the Coventry Canal to the south, take a circular walk around the reserve and watch lapwings, cormorants and terns on the islands. Dragonflies, frogs and grass snakes may also be spotted. The LNR is managed by Tameside Wildlife Conservation Group through the 'Wild about Tamworth' project, a joint initiative between Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Tamworth Borough Council.
Access: From Fazeley Road – no on-site parking available.
Contact: www.tamworth.gov.uk.
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Dosthill Park and Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
What to do & see: Take a walk through the park and down to the River Tame. Here you will be rewarded with a wonderful view of the river and Dosthill Quarries beyond. The LNR is managed by Dosthill Park Wildlife Group through the 'Wild about Tamworth' project.
Access: From Blackwood Road, 3km to the south of Tamworth town centre, between the A51 (Tamworth Road) and the River Tame.
Contact: www.tamworth.gov.uk.
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Birmingham and Fazeley Canal
What to do & see: The canal provides an enjoyable walking, cycling or boating route between Tamworth and Curdworth (which then heads into the heart of Birmingham). Its route runs adjacent to the River Tame and marks the west side of the wetland sites within the Tame Valley. It also provides a linear habitat for creatures such as the water vole.
Access: Towpaths open to the public – visit the website for more details.
Contact: www.waterscape.com.
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Middleton Lakes
What to do & see: This 160ha reserve was a gravel quarry until 2007. Situated adjacent to Middleton Hall (owned by Middleton Hall Trust with a craft centre and tea room) and between the River Tame and the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal, the site now contains lakes, pools, reedbeds, meadows and woodland and is a haven for wading and woodland birds, otters, dragonflies and butterflies. There are footpaths, viewpoints and an events programme.
Access: Open to members of the public. To find out more about access and opening times, as well as the events programme and volunteering, visit the website.
Contact: www.rspb.org.uk/reserves.
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Kingsbury Water Park
What to do & see: 250ha of country park comprising of 30 lakes, including fishing lakes, pools, streams, marshes, woodland, meadows and the River Tame, with way-marked trails, bike hire, bird hides and a visitor / education centre.
Access: Visitor centre and main car park (pay on entry) on Bodymoor Heath Lane, Bodymoor Heath, B76 0DY. Toilet facilities (baby changing and disabled) are available. See the website for more information.
Contact: www.warwickshire.gov.uk.
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Lea Marston Lakes
What to do & see: The lakes, now with large areas of reedbed, are former settling lagoons and are of regional significance for winter wildfowl populations. There is a bird hide and walks around the lakes.
Access: The car park entrance is on Coton Road, and gates to this car park are shut at 18:30 in winter and 20:30 in summer. Access on foot can be obtained at anytime.
Contact: www.environment-agency.gov.uk.
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Whitacre Heath Nature Reserve (SSSI)
What to do & see: The 44ha former gravel working site is on the floodplain of the River Tame. The reserve has fairly flat informal paths (after an initial steep slope up from the car park) with a way-marked route to 5 bird hides. Paths are prone to flooding and are muddy in winter. See overleaf for more details.
Access: Open to members of the Trust only, with good car parking facilities on the Birmingham Road, 0.5km south-east of Lea Marston.
Contact: www.wkwt.org.uk.
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Ladywalk Nature Reserve
What to do & see: Approx. 50ha of wet grassland, reedbed and woodland with the River Tame meandering around 3 sides of the reserve. A range of pools and pasture create a habitat attractive to a wide variety of birdlife - over 200 species of birds have been recorded, including wintering Bittern.
Access: Open to members of West Midland Bird Club only, but there is a public bird hide which can be visited by contacting the club via the website.
Contact: www.westmidlandbirdclub.com.
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Shustoke Reservoir
What to do & see: There are opportunities for bird watching, fishing and sailing, and in the spring, the banks of the reservoir are covered by wildflowers. There are a variety of walks including a circular walk around the reservoir. It also links to the Heart of England Way and Centenary Way. The North Warwickshire Cycle Way also links to the site.
Access: Main car park can be accessed from the B4114, Coleshill - Nuneaton Road.
Contact: www.moretoexperience.co.uk.



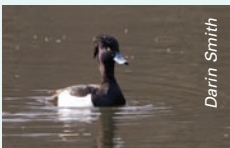
Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*).
Numbers of this long-billed wading bird are on the decline. It prefers the muddy edges of pools and wet grassland. It can be identified through its zigzag flight and unique 'drumming' display by the males in the spring.



Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*).
With iridescent plumage and a long wispy crest on its head, Lapwings are easily recognisable. They can be seen on reserves within the Tame Valley. They prefer wetlands with short vegetation and farmland.



Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*).
Can be seen on pools and wetlands. This excellent swimmer eats fish and aquatic invertebrates which it catches underwater. In spring the striped young are sometimes carried on the adult's back.



Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*).
A medium-sized black and white diving duck with a small crest and yellow eye. In flight it shows a white stripe across the back of the wing. It prefers reservoirs, gravel pits or lakes.



Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*).
Kingfishers are unmistakable small bright blue and orange birds that can be found along the river. They fly rapidly and low over slow-flowing or still water, and hunt fish from riverside perches, occasionally hovering above the water's surface.



Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*).
Now on the brink of extinction in Warwickshire, mainly due to habitat loss and predation from the non-native American mink. Important work to protect this rare mammal is taking place within the valley through the Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership.



Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*).
After a dramatic decline in numbers, both locally and nationally, otters returned to the Tame Valley in the late 1990s. These elusive native mammals live, feed and move around wetland sites along river and canal corridors.

- ## Help to protect the Tame Valley Wetlands by:

 - Staying on the paths
 - Keeping noise to a minimum
 - Keeping dogs (if permitted) on a lead and cleaning up their mess
 - Taking all litter home with you
 - Getting involved through volunteering
 - Joining local groups

Wetlands are wonderful places for both people and wildlife

Their conservation is vital for the protection of a vast number of species and for the enjoyment of future generations. They also play a significant role in helping to reduce the impacts of climate change and flooding.

- ## Please do your bit for wetlands by:

 - Reducing your water usage
 - Avoiding the use of harmful detergents
 - Creating a wildlife-friendly pond in your garden
 - Using peat-free compost
 - Joining conservation organisations
 - Making a donation