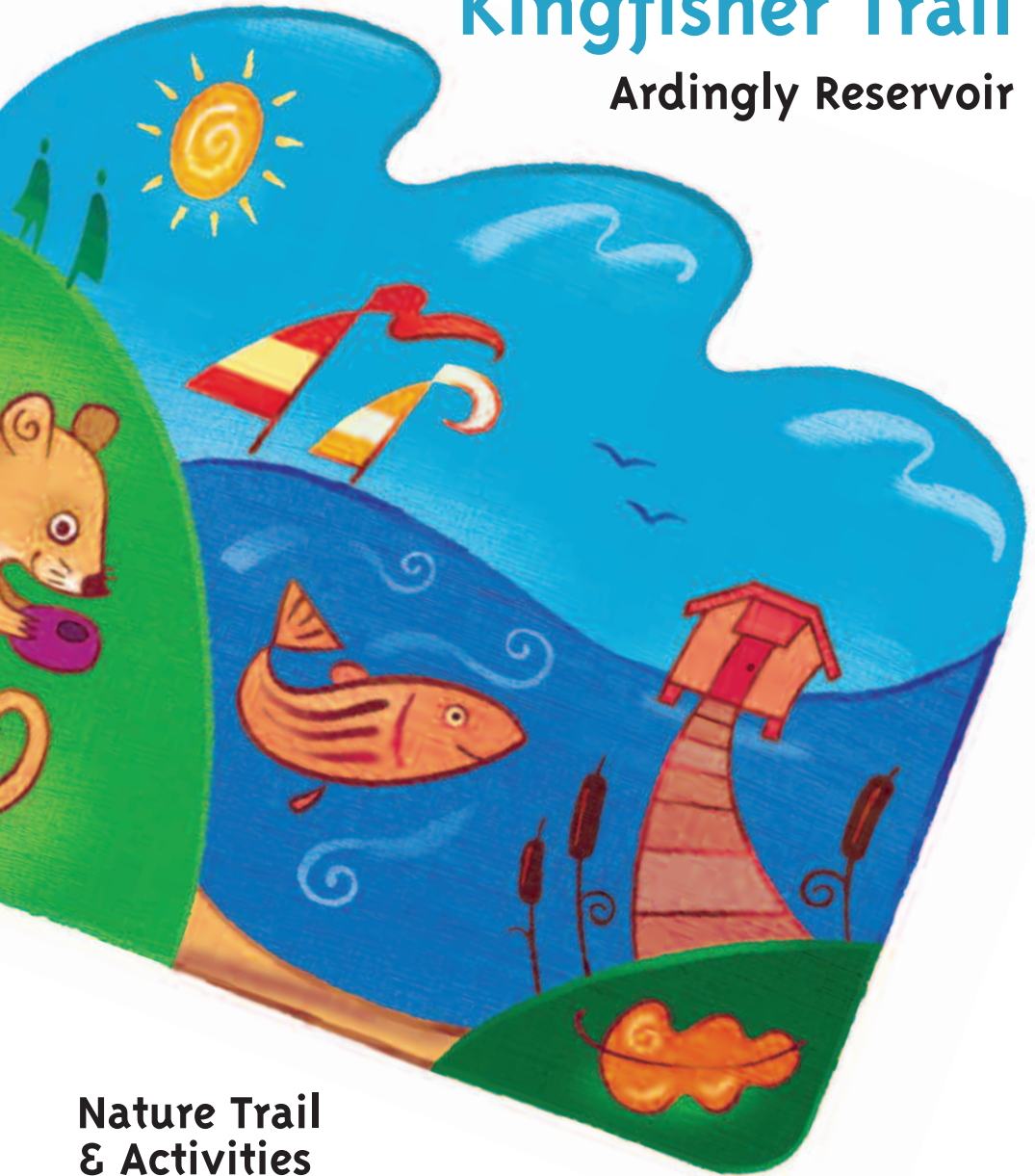


south east water

Kingfisher Trail

Ardingly Reservoir



**Nature Trail
& Activities**

Kingfisher Trail

Ardingly Reservoir



The Kingfisher Trail was originally created in 1996 and is approximately four kilometres in length, taking three hours to complete at a leisurely pace. Unfortunately, there isn't a circular walk around the reservoir, but the neighbouring area can be explored using the local network of footpaths and bridleways, and a shorter 1½ kilometre walk is also shown on this leaflet.

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Kingfisher Trail

Route guide

key



Stop points



Old course of rivers



Shellbrook treatment works



Life belts



Bird hides



Valve tower



Activity centre



Woodland



Bridleway



Footpath



Car park



Disabled car park



This map is not to scale



West Hill Lane

Scrubs Shaw

Furzeffield Wood

Ardingly Reservoir

Fullingmill Wood

H

H

A

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2

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5

4

10

11

12

3





Stop 6

The woodland you are now entering is called Great Burrow Wood. Before the reservoir was flooded, it was this woodland which occupied the majority of the valley. To make way for the reservoir, a section of this wood was felled and removed. During very dry periods of weather the water logged stumps of these trees can be seen in the area in front of you.

It is not unusual for the reservoir to reach only 40% of its full capacity in the summer months, although in recent years, this percentage seems to be dropping. You can play your part in conserving our precious water resources by following the water efficiency tips on the back of this leaflet.

Stop 7

On your left is an outcrop of Ardingly Sandstone. Outcrops such as these are a distinctive local feature of the High Weald, supporting a rare community of ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens. The rock is formed of sand grains weakly held together, the outside of which hardens on exposure to form a protective crust. These rocks were formed during the early Cretaceous period, when dinosaurs once roamed the earth.

This area is also a good spot to see kingfishers, which frequent the edges of the reservoir, using tree branches near the water as a perch from which they watch the water for small fish. The best time to see kingfishers is first thing in the morning, when they are feeding and defending their territory.

The bridleway continues for a few hundred metres more before meeting the road.

The Kingfisher Trail continues back along the trail you have just walked.

Alternatively, you may continue your walk using the local network of footpaths and bridleways which cross the reservoir.

Stop 8

This is the second bird hide located on the reservoir. Its position allows bird watchers a fantastic view of the numerous bird species which inhabit the opposite bank. The woodland on the other side of the reservoir is not open to the public, providing a refuge for birds and other wildlife.

The bird hide also provides excellent views of osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) during the months of August and September when the birds migrate from Scotland to West Africa, using Ardingly Reservoir as an excellent feeding and resting site before commencing their long flight back to their overwintering site in Africa.



History of the reservoir

Increasing demand for water in the early 1970s meant that new sources were needed. Concern about potential flooding of the local area, and the need for the regulation of water flow in the River Ouse resulted in the decision for an impounding reservoir to be built at Ardingly.

Before the reservoir was built, the land surrounding the reservoir was farmland, with two small brooks flowing through a valley. The former path of the two brooks can be seen in the present characteristic 'forked stick' shape of the reservoir. The left hand fork of the reservoir roughly follows the old course of Shell Brook, whilst the right hand fork follows the now flooded path of Ardingly Brook.

The reservoir was created by the construction of a 17 metre high earth dam across the southern section of the Shell Brook, resulting in the flooding of the Shell and Ardingly Brooks into the reservoir we see today.

What happens at Ardingly Reservoir?

Ardingly Reservoir is an important water storage reservoir, providing drinking water for thousands of South East Water's customers.

Water is stored here in times of surplus and released into the River Ouse at times of shortage. The River Ouse acts as a transport system for water released from the reservoir, which travels along the length of the river, until it reaches Barcombe Mills, near Ringmer, where it is abstracted and stored in Barcombe Reservoir. Water is then treated at South East Water's Barcombe Treatment Works and pumped into the distribution network to supply drinking water to our customers as far afield as Crowborough and Hailsham, as well as the surrounding area of mid-Sussex.

Water is also treated directly from the reservoir at the neighbouring Shellbrook Treatment Works, adjacent to the reservoir.



Kingfisher Trail

what to look out for

Stop 1

This is the start of the Kingfisher Trail, feel free to sit on one of our locally crafted benches to take in the wonderful views that Ardingly has to offer.

Directly in front of you is the valve tower and overflow bell mouth. The valve tower is used to release water from the reservoir either directly into our treatment works at Shell Brook or into the River Ouse.

The release of water into the river has an important environmental role too. During times of low river flow, water is released from the reservoir to ensure that there is enough water in the River Ouse to protect the aquatic wildlife. This is of particular importance during early Autumn when sea trout rely on an adequate river flow to allow them to reach their breeding grounds.

The valve tower helps to aerate the reservoir water. This function ensures that the water is easier to treat and has the added benefit of reducing the occurrence of algal blooms and aids fish survival. The smaller tower, or overflow bellmouth, allows storm water to overflow into the Shell Brook and stops the reservoir from flooding.



Stop 2

This small copse is called Fullingmill Wood. This name is perhaps an indication of the work that used to occur nearby and at many sites throughout Sussex from the late 12th Century to the late 1800's. In the textile industry, fulling is the process which follows weaving, during which cloth is cleansed, shrunk and thickened by moisture, heat and pressure. Evidence of fulling mills at two other locations within the Ardingly Parish and an additional site in Balcombe have been found.

Today, the wood has a diverse structure and is home to many different species. The copse varies in age and structure, with tree species including oak, ash and beech. During the 1987 storms, many of the trees were damaged, and the resulting areas of dead wood have been left to encourage mosses, lichens, fungi, and insects (particularly beetles).

Dead trees are a very important habitat feature as they provide food and shelter for many species including owls, woodpeckers and bats. A number of wildlife boxes have been erected within the woodland in order to encourage these animals to thrive.




In the spring and autumn, the floor of the copse is awash with brightly coloured wildflowers, including primroses, wood anemones, bluebells and common spotted orchids. In autumn, a variety of fungi may be seen.

Stop 3



This is one of two bird hides located on the reservoir. The bird hide is there for you to get a closer look at many of the bird species which live at the reservoir.

Please enter the bird hide as quietly as possible. For the best views of wildlife and to avoid disturbing other people, please:

-  **Talk and move quietly**
-  **Do not lean or reach beyond the windows**
-  **Make room for newcomers**

Apart from its main water resource function, the beautiful tranquil setting of the reservoir makes it an important area for quiet informal activities such as walking, riding, angling and nature study. The reservoir has been designed to ensure that it enhances the surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Ardingly Reservoir itself is a haven for wildlife, this is demonstrated by its designation as a Local Nature Reserve.

There are displays inside to help you identify the birds and also a board for you to share all the birds you have spotted with other users.

Stop 4



The woodland you are now entering is Furze Field Wood, which is owned and managed by Kew Gardens at Wakehurst Place. Dormice (*Muscardinus arvellanarius*) are known to frequent pockets of woodland such as this one, around the reservoir. Dormice are rare, nocturnal creatures which spend most of their time high in the tree tops. The best indicator of their presence is opened hazel nut shells on the woodland floor. Dormice open these nuts by making a neat round hole on one side, leaving characteristic toothmarks around the edge of the hole. The nuts are eaten whilst green and still on the tree.

The Kingfisher Trail continues along the causeway on your left to the bridleway, which, continues along the Balcombe arm of the reservoir. Alternatively, you may wish to retrace your steps back to the car park whilst enjoying the tranquil beauty of the reservoir.

Stop 5

The area in front of you has recently been planted with reed (*Phragmites australis*). Reedbeds provide an important habitat for wildlife, as well as helping to protect the reservoir banks from erosion. This area suffers a great deal of wave action due to its prominent position in the middle of the two arms of the reservoir. Once established, the reedbed will provide a home for a number of animals, including harvest mice, reed warblers, and numerous insect species, as well as protecting the reservoir from further deterioration.

This position also offers a good view of the recreational facilities available at the Ardingly Activity Centre located near the dam wall. The Activity Centre uses the reservoir for dinghy sailing, windsurfing, canoeing and rowing as well as providing a top class coarse fishery. Details may be obtained by phoning 01444 892549.



Stop 9



The woodland on your right is Scrubs Shaw, a relict copse from the once larger stand of Austrian Pine which skirted Shell Brook before the reservoir was built. Few Austrian Pine remain on the site following the 1987 storm, and natural regeneration of the wood has resulted in the ash, sycamore and birch seen today. Work is currently being undertaken to remove the non-native sycamore trees, a highly invasive species, which casts a heavy shade on the woodland floor, blocking out the ground flora and slower growing native tree species. Recent works to celebrate the reservoir's 25th birthday have involved the planting of native trees such as ash and hazel, as well as hedgerow species, which lead the visitor through the wood, whilst providing important corridors for birds and small mammals.

Stop 10

The grassland areas of the reservoir are managed as wildflower meadows, cut on a two-year rotation during September and October, helping to improve the grassland habitat for wildlife. Excess water from the neighbouring farmland is encouraged to flow under the paths into the reservoir. This process has developed an excellent marginal marshland habitat, which provides shelter for wildlife including dragonflies, birds and small mammals.

Stop 11

On your right is an area of willow planted a few years ago as a test plot. Willow is widely used as a natural material for bank protection. The constant lapping of waves onto the reservoir's banks leads to bank erosion and destabilisation, resulting in the loss of footpaths, soil and vegetation. The use of 'soft engineering' using plants, instead of more rigid material such as concrete and steel, is highly beneficial to wildlife. Birds such as wagtails, warblers and wildfowl use this area for feeding and nesting. Moths, dragonflies, beetles and aphids are also attracted to this site. Following the success of this trial area, further planting of willow and reeds will take place around the reservoir.

Stop 12

The large ash tree in front of you blew down in high wind and is home for many fungi, lichen, mosses as well as insects. As part of the 1996 British Telecom Environment Week, South East Water, together with Sculpture at Goodwood, commissioned a local artist, Walter Bailey, to create a sculpture which reflected the area.

Use of local resources, such as this, is integral to the management of Ardingly Reservoir and all of our sites throughout Sussex, Kent, Hampshire, Surrey and Berkshire. Products harvested from the reservoir, such as woodland coppice materials, hay and willow stakes are used on site or at other South East Water sites, promoting sustainable use.

This is the last stop on the Kingfisher Trail we hope you have enjoyed your walk.



Use water wisely

There are so many ways in which we can all save water, they are almost too numerous to mention. Many are so simple you will wonder why we haven't all been doing them for years. If everyone followed our simple tips, it would make an enormous difference to the amount of water used every day.

For example: **take a shower** instead of a bath, **wash vegetables in a bowl** of water, rather than a running tap and **apply a mulch** to reduce evaporation from the soil.

For more water saving tips in the house and garden pick up a **Water Wise Ways** leaflet.

south east water

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www.southeastwater.co.uk

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KT/0108/-2



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Registered Office: Snodland, Kent, ME6 5AH