River Bourne Riverside Walk
Virginia Water

A twenty-minute stroll around a tranquil area of Cabrera Trust Woodland starting from Beechmont Avenue.
With a Nature Detective Family Trail!
Runnymede Borough Council as Trustee of the Cabrera Trust own and manage this 51 acre site with the help of the Cabrera Trust Management Committee for the enjoyment of local residents.

Please help keep this site special by following these guidelines:

- Always pick up after your dog and take the waste home with you.
- Please take your litter home with you and recycle what you can.
- Please observe any notices posted by the site manager.
- Please leave any bikes or motorbikes at home.
- No camping, fires or organised games are permitted.

Follow the trail........

Follow the numbered markers described below. Keep a look out for plants and animals along the way!
Follow the path to the right of the large oak framed information board.
Follow the path downhill through the woods.

As you walk downhill towards the river, can you spot the tree on the left of the path with the hole all the way through the trunk?!?
Welcome to the Riverside Walk. This woodland contains many native species and is unusual in this area of Surrey as some areas are wet and even boggy in places.

Can you see how the plants and trees change along the route? The river is called the River Bourne.

The River Bourne flows from west to east across the site. The Bourne rises in Windsor Great Park, leaves Virginia Water Lake via the Cascade and flows past the edge of Wentworth Golf Course before it passes through the narrow corridor of the Riverside Walk before finally joining the Thames at Chertsey.

At this site, the Bourne has created an alder and willow swamp habitat that is rare in Surrey. Oak and birch grow in the drier areas.

Turn left along the path keeping the river on your right.

Can you find the low wooden bench with the plaque?
This special area of woodland is a Local Nature Reserve. The Riverside Walk was declared a Local Nature Reserve in 2009. This means it is important for wildlife. Over 250 types of plants live in these woods.

Can you find an Alder tree?
A small finch called a Siskin feast on the cones in winter

The woodland includes Alder and Willow species in the wetter areas. The Alders along the riverbank are occasionally coppiced (cut to ground level) to allow light to reach the river and woodland floor. This encourages a wider diversity of plant, insect, bird and animal life.
There are lots of flowers to spot here at the Riverside Walk, especially in Spring and Summer. Depending when you visit, you may see Bluebells, or bright yellow Marsh Marigolds.

Can you smell garlic? During Summer time there are patches of wild garlic.

Can you spot either of these flowers?

In the wetter areas, look out for columns of Greater Tussock Sedge. Some are over 100 years old! These tufty-topped plants grow from the top and lift their growing points further and further from the water. A tussock is a bit like a block of flats with different creatures living on different ‘floors’. Lots of different spiders live higher up and then down in the ‘basement’, underwater, live dragonfly nymphs and water stick insects ready to pounce on smaller creatures to eat.

Greater Tussock Sedge columns create a warm sheltered environment where many animals, some rare, can over-winter. The range of animals using the shelter provided stretches from small mammals, amphibians and reptiles to beetles, spiders and insect larvae. Other flowers to look for include the white flowers and clover-like leaves of the Wood Sorrel or Oxalis in Spring and the delicate blue flowers of the Skullcap when it flowers in August.
Look at the narrow drainage ditches running under the boardwalks and into the River. Does the soil lining the channels look a slightly orange colour? This is caused by iron deposits being washed out of the soil.

The animals that live in the woodlands can be tricky to spot. If you’re very lucky, you may see a deer. Look in the soft soil close to the drainage channels.

**Can you see any animal footprints?**

![Deer Footprint](image1.png) approx. 3cm to 9cm long depending on species

![American Mink](image2.png) approx. 3cm wide

Foxes, badgers, three species of deer, bank and field voles, moles, mink, brown rats, grey squirrels and wood mice have all been spotted in these woods.

At this peaceful spot, stop and listen for birdsong.

**How many different birds can you hear?** Tick your answers below.

- [ ] 1
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3
- [ ] 4
- [ ] 5

You may be lucky and hear a tapping on a tree trunk – it could be a Greater Spotted Woodpecker.

Of the 57 species of birds recorded at this site, four are listed on the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds’ Red List of Endangered Species; the Bullfinch, Reed Bunting, Song Thrush and Spotted Flycatcher.
This solidly built old girder bridge probably dates back to when cattle grazed in this valley. The Riverside Walk crosses the river here before turning right along the northern bank of the Bourne.

**If you are very lucky you may have the chance to spot a Kingfisher – look out for a flash of vibrant blue as he comes past.**

*Overhanging branches make ideal perches for Kingfishers to do a spot of fishing.*

The public is not encouraged into the western side of the Cabrera Trust land beyond the public access points to leave wildlife undisturbed. The site is an important local natural corridor, linking the open areas of Chobham and Sunningdale with the Wey Valley.

**The land on the northern side of the river is generally drier than on the southern side so you won’t find lots of boardwalks along this stretch.** Along the river there are many Oak trees. In the UK Oak trees provide a habitat for more creatures than any other tree.

Oak and Birch trees dominate the woodland in the drier areas of this site.

**There are many Holly bushes along the path in this area. It has tough, prickly, glossy, dark evergreen leaves and can grow into a relatively tall tree. Holly is commonly associated with Christmas but it’s also really important for lots of wildlife.**

Lots of different creatures benefit from the presence of the Holly at The Riverside Walk. Bees and bumblebees collect its nectar and pollen. Caterpillars of the Holly Blue Butterfly eat its buds and flowers. Many birds, such as Thrushes, Robins, Dunnocks, Finches and Goldcrests, use it for nesting as it provides excellent protection. Blackbirds, Fieldfares and Song Thrushes, among others, eat the berries.
If you peer carefully through the trees here, you will see an area of marsh.

There are more columns of Greater Tussock Sedge and you may spot a Yellow Skunk Cabbage. These plants have very smelly flowers in early Spring. But they aren’t a native plant in the UK and if there are too many growing in the marsh, other plants might not thrive.

The open marsh area in the north-east corner is particularly important as it provides a habitat for uncommon reptiles, birds and insects not likely to flourish elsewhere.

To maintain species variety on this site, there are periodic attempts to control some invasive species such as the Yellow Skunk Cabbage, Himalayan Balsam and Rhododendron.

Can you see a clearing with some logs arranged in a circle on the ground? Mini-beasts such as Beetles and Snails like dark damp places to hide. Please put the logs back carefully how you found them if you decide to look underneath.

"Mighty Adventurers Forest School" meets in this clearing. During the sessions children explore, discover and enjoy being in the woods, climbing trees, building dens and having adventures.

For further details please contact Vicki Balaam by emailing: mightyadventurers@gmail.com

Around the glade, ivy grows in some of the trees. Ivy is an essential part of the wildlife habitat. The flowers provide a source of pollen for bees and butterflies into the autumn. The berries provide native and migrant birds with an early year source of food. Finally, the stems provide safe haven, nesting and bat roosting places particularly during the winter months.
The second bridge is built in one of the places where the river flows fairly straight.

Why not try your luck on Pooh sticks on the bridge? Drop a small stick into the water and see whose stick comes under the bridge first!

This bridge sometimes provides a hiding place for Mandarin ducks. The colony in and around Virginia Water is now probably the largest in the country and the British population is of international significance due to its rapid decline in its native Asia. The Mandarin is an unusual duck due to its preference for perching and nesting in trees.

![Mandarin duck](image)

The bridge returns us to the south side of the river to a massive Oak with its many dead branches – dead wood is another fantastic habitat for many beasties who can munch away on this ancient tree. Moss grows on some of the branches.

Various mosses can grow on the trunks or branches of trees and shrubs. These mosses may form large, coarse, loose, green or yellowish-green tufts, densely matted tufts, or compact green cushions. Moss is found in damp places, as not only do they need moisture for growth but also for reproduction.

Runnymede Borough Council as Trustee of the Cabrera Trust thank you for visiting our site and help keep this site special by following the guidelines stated at the start of this leaflet.