

Rockwell Nature Reserve

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Stroll

Urban Green/Distance: 1.3 miles (2.1km) Grade: easy Time: allow 1 hour



Explore a 22 hectare, local nature reserve, on an easy to navigate, circular route. Despite its urban location, it is a refuge for wildlife, including the endangered water vole.

The River Skerne, restored in 1998 with new meanders, lies at the heart of the reserve. The site is accessible to disabled users and has informal stone seats at 8 regular intervals along the route.

Recommended route:

- 1 Start from Hutton Avenue footbridge and head downstream along the fairly straight wide tarmac path on the north side of the river. Continue in a westerly direction noticing the River Skerne on your left and the water features created during the restoration. These include a riffle, (easy to hear), and side groynes on the riverbank for vegetation to colonise.
- 2 About 330 yards (300m) from the start notice wildflower meadows within the meanders and backwater areas, branching from the river itself, forming wildlife shelters.
- 3 After 550 yards (500m) the path continues to gently bend to the left, towards an area of habitat with trees and ponds on the right, formerly known as Rockwell Pastures, home to many dragonflies.
- 4 Approx 110 yards (100m) further you near a small, ornate bridge with a chimney, representing Darlington's railway heritage. In the distance also see the historic main rail line bridge, known as the Five Arch Bridge. Cross a small footbridge to the left and take a left after crossing the bridge. Head east on the south side of the river on a sealed concrete surface footpath.
- 5 For the next 220 yards (200m) the path bends left and right: notice wildflower areas on both sides of the footpath. Continue on, past a wild uncut area managed for water voles. A short length of footpath leading to your left provides seating and a view of the river.
- 6 For the last 330-440 yards (300-400m) the path passes the last of the re-instated meanders and leads back to the footbridge starting point, providing some of the best and most frequent views of water voles anywhere in Darlington.



Start & finish: Hutton Avenue Footbridge, off Riverside Way

Map Key



How to get there: From Darlington town centre, follow the B6279 towards Haughton Village and the A66 for about 1 mile. After traffic lights take the next left into Salters Lane South (St Andrew's Church is on your left). Take the second left into Salters Avenue, proceed until you reach the track on your left, which leads to the start point at Hutton Avenue Footbridge

- S Start & finish:** Hutton Avenue Footbridge, off Riverside Way
- P Parking:** Limited roadside parking off nearby Riverside Way
- Public Transport:** Public transport information **0871 200 2233** (calls cost 10p per minute plus network extras) **www.traveline.info Text 84268**
- Places of interest:**
 - a Five Arch Bridge
 - b St Andrew's Church, Haughton Village
 - c Darlington Railway Centre & Museum, **tel 01325 460532**
- Refreshments:** Pubs, shops and takeaways in Haughton Village
- Toilets:** Pubs in Haughton Village



Wildlife on the River Skerne