

With your back to the Cathedral, leave the North Door and face the Castle. Walk straight ahead and take the second path on the left between the buildings (known locally as Windy Gap). At the bottom of the slope, turn right and follow the path down the bank. At the end of the path turn left so the river is on your right.

Trail walking

Grade easy to moderate

Accessibility some steps and short steep slopes

Distance 1.5 miles (2.41km)

Time 1-2 hours

KEY

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Route of trail

●●●●●●●●
Footpaths on the woodlands and riverbanks

↑
Direction of trail

↺
Go back in the direction you have come from

|||
Steps

»
Steep slope



1 Framwellgate Bridge

Look across to the other side of the river.

- Look out for gulls, ducks and cormorants which like to rest here. You might spot a cormorant diving underwater to catch fish and then perching on the branches with its wings stretched out to dry.

Follow the path with the river on your right until you reach the Old Fulling Mill. Take the first path on the right after the Mill and continue along the riverbank until you reach the Storyteller's Chair.



2 Storyteller's Chair

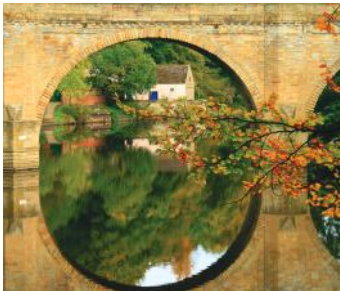
- Can you see the faces carved into the Storyteller's Chair? What do you think they mean?

- Lots of animals make their homes in the riverbanks. You might like to spend a few minutes here quietly watching for wildlife. Squirrels, foxes, mice and voles live here.

- If you're very lucky you may see an otter near the riverside, they're very shy though. They swim underwater to catch fish and can hold their breath for up to three minutes.

- Near the Storyteller's Chair there is a willow tree. Willow is used to make cricket bats and stumps.

Follow the path a little further until you come to Prebends' Bridge.



3 Prebends' Bridge

- Go under the bridge and look up; do you think any bats might roost under here? Bats are nocturnal, which means they only come out at night. They fly along the riverbanks and paths hunting for their favourite food: insects such as midges and moths. They communicate with each other using a very high-pitched noise, which humans can't hear. There are lots of different species found here such as: Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Noctule, Brown Long-eared and Daubenton's. Did you know that bats are our only flying mammals?

Follow the path along the river and turn left where it meets the little house called the Count's House. Follow this higher path so the river is now on your left. You'll come to a bird screen on your left.



4 Bird Screen

- Be very quiet and peep through the gaps in the screen to see how many different types of birds you can see. There might be chaffinches, which have short, stubby bills, good for eating seeds; robins, with their striking red breast, or blue tits, which are blue and yellow.
- Listen for the great spotted woodpecker drumming on tree trunks looking for juicy insect larvae to eat.
- Look up at the sky, you might see a kestrel hovering, looking for a mouse or vole to eat. They nest in the western towers of the Cathedral.

Follow the path until you come to Prebends' Bridge, cross the bridge to the other side of the river and turn left.

Follow the path until you reach a bench and a viewing point on your left.



5 Viewing Point

- Look out for grey squirrels as they spring from tree to tree, how many can you count? Grey squirrels are one of the most common mammals in these woodlands and were introduced here from the USA in the late 19th century. They have taken advantage of the decline of our native red squirrel and are much more versatile feeders. Greys also carry the squirrel pox virus which, although it doesn't seem to harm the greys, is a serious infection for red squirrels.

Continue along the path until you come to a shallow cave on your right.



6 The Wishing Cave

Many years ago children used to call this the wishing cave. Put your hand on the cave wall and make a secret wish. Will your wish come true?

There are lots of small paths to the right that lead up into the woodland, you can see bluebells here in the spring time. Please don't pick wild flowers, leave them for the insects to feed from and for other people to enjoy.

To return, head back to Prebends' Bridge, cross it, turn left and retrace your steps to the Cathedral. Remember to be quiet and always look out for wildlife, you never know what you might see!

Trail produced by pupils from Silver Tree Primary School and Witton Gilbert Primary School.

The woodlands and riverbanks surrounding the Cathedral are the remnants of a planned landscape dating back to the 18th century. Since then, the woodland has been allowed to grow naturally and is very important for Durham City. It is often referred to as a 'green lung' and is a valuable place for wildlife, including rare plants and a variety of birds and other creatures.

The habitat here, a mixture of woodland, grassland and river, is known as semi-natural, broadleaved woodland and has lots of different species of plants and animals.

The wealth of plants and trees provides plenty of natural food for wildlife, and many different species of insects, birds and mammals use these woods and riverbanks as their habitat, where they feed, nest and live.

This area is also home to some special animals which are called 'protected species' – this means that it is against the law to do anything that damages them or their habitat. Around 80 different types of bird have been recorded in the area, including the kingfisher, whilst protected mammals include bats and otter, which have been spotted along this stretch of the River Wear playing and hunting for fish.

Quiz

1. Can you find a magpie feather?
2. How many streams did you pass?
3. Can you take a rubbing from a tree?
4. Did you see some bluebells?
5. Did you see a willow tree?
6. How many species of birds did you see?
7. Did you see any squirrels?
8. What is carved in the side of the Storyteller's Chair?
9. How many cormorants did you see?
10. What did you like best?

Try and answer the following questions while you explore:

This nature trail has been developed with local school children to help you explore our woodlands and riverbanks. Look out for animals, birds, trees and flowers on your way round.

The woodlands and riverbanks change throughout the year. From the bluebells and wild garlic in spring to the golden leaves of autumn, each season offers something new and exciting to explore! The trail is 1½ miles long and can take as long as you like, so head for the woods and see what you can find. There are six stops altogether and a quiz to test your wildlife-watching skills. Keep your eyes peeled for tracks and footprints and listen out for birds singing and creatures rustling in the leaves.

The eighteenth-century woodlands and riverbanks at the heart of Durham City provide a unique setting for the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Durham Cathedral and Durham Castle. With support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Durham Cathedral's Heritage Woodlands and Riverbanks Project has rejuvenated this historic landscape, creating more opportunities for people to engage with the area through improved physical access, a programme of events and outdoor education sessions, and other learning and volunteering opportunities.



This trail is one of a series, to help residents and visitors to Durham become more aware of the rich natural and cultural heritage of the woodlands and riverbanks.

Other trails in the series include: Pilgrimage, Geology, History and Photography.



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