

# Wild Trails

Explore the natural beauty of WHITEHEAD



View towards the Yacht Club



Ulster Wildlife Trust

## Ulster Wildlife Trust

The Ulster Wildlife Trust is a charity committed to inspiring and delivering positive action for the conservation of wildlife and habitats throughout Northern Ireland. We work with people of all ages from all walks of life, enabling them to take positive action for wildlife conservation. We manage nature reserves as havens for both rare and common wildlife, deliver educational activities and influence decision makers in both government and the private sector.

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## Going Further?

There are many trail opportunities in and around the Carrickfergus borough area. Why not meet the

**Carrickfergus and Greenisland Walk 2 Health** groups at: Greenisland Library, Glassilan Grove, 10am Mondays or Springsteens, Omniplex car park, Carrickfergus, 10am Fridays. If you'd like to find out more about the borough's local history, why not contact **Ann Mayne**, tour guide, on **07742 839657**

Acknowledgements  
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Carrickfergus Borough



GREEN CITIES  
PLAN FOR THE PLANET  
WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY  
3 JUNE 2008

Co-operation and Partnership  
Promoting Better Property

## Getting there



Whitehead can be reached by train and bus from Belfast or Larne. Call Translink on 028 90 666 630 or click [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk). By car take the A2 from Carrickfergus or Larne.

## Access Information



The nearest public toilets, including disabled access, can be found on Kings Road next to the tennis courts. The Blackhead coastal path is concreted and wider than 1.5m up to the Sunshine House. The path is mostly level and contains no sharp inclines or declines. A limited number of braille and audio copies of this leaflet can be found at local libraries and the civic centre.

## UN World Environment Day

This leaflet was produced partly in accompaniment to **United Nations World Environment Day (UN WED)**. WED is hosted every year by a different city and commemorated with an international exposition through the week of June 5th. The UN uses WED to stimulate awareness of the environment and enhance political attention and public action.

Buttercups



Common Lizard (*Lacerta viviparosa*)



Yellow Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*)



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## Whitehead - Blackhead coastal path

The town of Whitehead on the Antrim coast, some 6 miles north of Carrickfergus, lies amongst hills and cliffs looking across Belfast Lough into the Irish Sea. On sunny days Scotland can be clearly seen.

The 'Blackhead' coast path runs northeast from Whitehead and is lined by interesting wildlife habitats including grassland, woodland - known locally as the 'magic forest' - and rocky shore. The Lough itself is an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), famed for its bird populations.

### The Old Quarry

Looking south from the Yacht Club, we see the old quarry, where **Peregrine Falcons** (*Falco peregrinus*) are known to nest. Peregrines can reach up to 320km/198mph in a dive, catching birds such as sparrows or ducks in mid-air. The female usually lays about four eggs but due to inexperience in hunting and flying, 60% of the young are dead the next year (the birds can live for up to 18 years). The main threat faced by the bird is illegal hunting and egg collection, though some problems due to pesticides in the food chain remain.

In summer, the small woods and grasslands surrounding the quarry are home to butterflies such as the **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*). This is one of the most common butterflies in the UK and can be found in almost any habitat. It feeds on many plants, but the **Common Nettle** (*Urtica dioica*) is a frequent stop.

### The Rocky Shore

Passing the Old Swimming Pool, the car park and slipway as we head northeast, we find grassland embankments leading away from the sea. They are covered in places by **Common Gorse** (*Ulex europaeus*), recognised by its yellow flowers and spiny green body. In dense areas, the flowers' coconut scent can be quite strong. To the seaward side, the shore is largely

## Follow the Wild Trail and discover Whitehead's wildlife...



### The Magic Forest

The 'magic forest' at Port Davy offers an enchanted world of stream and narrow trails bounded by the old estate walls of Port Davy House where trees and bushes such as the **Blackthorn** (*Prunus spinosa*) grow. This thickly branched, spiny black bush produces white blossom in early spring. Its bitter plum-like bluish-black fruit, the sloe, is used to make sloe gin. At the edges of this woodland habitat, perhaps in damper areas or lying under a heatherow we may spot **Lesser Celandine** (*Ficaria verna*), a bright yellow flower of the buttercup family, blooming from March to early June. Also here a small spring runs from the trees to the sea. Look closely into the water between April and June and you may see tiny eelers, juvenile eels, struggling upstream, having made the arduous journey across the Atlantic from the Sargasso Sea.

### To The Lighthouse

During warm days in summer, you may encounter **Common Lizards** (*Lacerta vivipara*) basking on the concrete, before scuttling away as you approach. With long bodies and short legs, the Common Lizard can grow up to 18cm in length. The only reptile to be found in Ireland, it lives in a variety of habitats such as marsh, woodland and dunes. Its diet includes insects and snails, which it eats by first shaking and then swallowing whole.

Now we near the rocky outcrop of Blackhead, atop of which sits the old lighthouse - now a museum - and pass Sunshine House, well known for its solar panelled roofs. Should the sea be calm and the weather clear, you may be fortunate enough to see **Harbour Porpoises** (*Phocoena phocoena*), though you might need binoculars. The Harbour Porpoise grows up to almost 2m in length and is grey in colour. It has a low triangular dorsal fin whilst also lacking a beak. Living in small groups of 2-5, the animal lives on fish. It has a distinctive movement as it rolls slowly through the water.

**All these wonders of nature and many more can be encountered on a leisurely walk along the Blackhead path (though we can't guarantee you'll see them all at the same time!) We hope you've enjoyed the trail.**



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