

# WILDLIFE OF THE RHYMNEY TRAIL

**This leaflet will help you to identify some of the more common plants, animals and birds along the Rhymney Trail. There are many places to view the river. Take a moment to stop, look and listen for wildlife, you will be surprised how much you can find. Click on the 'icons' to find out more...**



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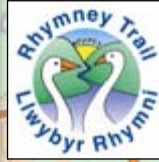
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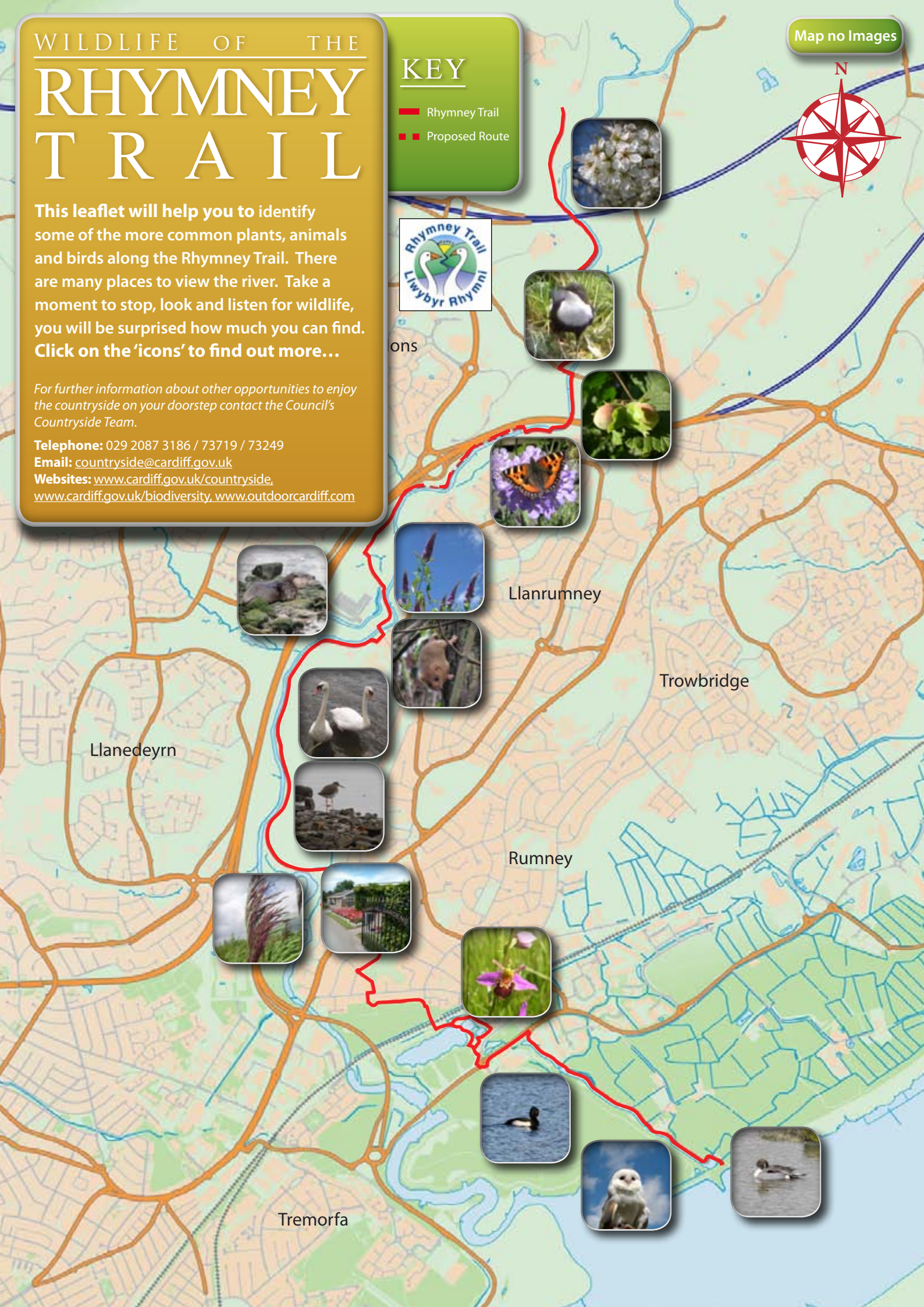
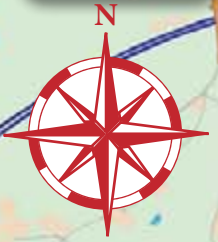
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## KEY

-  Rhymney Trail
-  Proposed Route



Map no Images





# Pintail

The male Pintail duck is distinguished by its black and white tail with two greatly elongated black feathers; the females however are mottled brown with shorter tails.

They breed in wetland areas with shallow water close to grassland and open habitat. In the winter, they are more likely to be found around sheltered coasts and in estuaries such as the Severn Estuary. Pintails eat a variety of plants and invertebrates including pond weed, sedges, grasses, water beetles, fly larvae, snails, leeches, shrimps and marine snails.

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# Barn Owl

Barn Owls are generally nocturnal birds, hunting at night for small mammals including mice, voles and shrews and small birds including thrushes and finches.

Barn Owls have extremely sensitive hearing meaning that they can hunt even on the darkest night without relying on their eyesight. They are found in open country, farmland, coastal marshes and forest edges and commonly nest in buildings, hollow trees or on cliffs. The Barn Owl is distinguishable by its heart shaped face, honey-coloured upper parts to the wings flecked with dark grey on the back and snowy white underneath.

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# Tufted Duck

The Tufted Duck is smaller than a mallard with a blue-grey bill and golden eye. The males have glossy black and white feathers with a drooping crest from the back of the neck, whilst the females are chocolate brown in colour with darker upper parts and a smaller crest on back of head.

They breed around inland lakes, reservoirs and slow-flowing rivers where they collect food by diving to the bottom. Tufted Ducks feed on freshwater mussels, shrimps, crustaceans, insects, and also plants such as pondweed and sedges.

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# Bee Orchid

The Bee Orchid gets its name from its main pollinator - the bee. To attract the pollinating bees, the plant has evolved bee-like flowers. The hairy brown centre patterned with yellow spots and lines looks like the body of a bee.

The right type of bee to pollinate this Orchid does not exist in the UK and so here is self-pollinating. Flowering between June and July, this species of orchid is one of the most distinctive in the UK and can take 5-8 years to flower.

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# Rumney Hill Gardens

This attractive and well maintained public park in east Cardiff was established in the late 1950s on land originally designated as a burial ground.

The site consists of leisure facilities, a formal garden and woodlands containing the Wildlife Explorers Trail. A variety of wildlife makes this area home including bats, woodpeckers, blue tits, butterflies and insects.

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# Reedbed

Reedbeds occur in permanently wet or periodically waterlogged habitats, commonly around lakes and ponds, in flood-plain mires, estuaries and along canals and lowland rivers.

Reedbeds are characterised by the dominance of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), other vegetation often present includes reed sweet-grass, large sedges, yellow flag iris and water plantain. Reedbeds are important for absorbing nutrients from the water and can be used to protect lake shores and river beds from erosion.

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# Redshank

The Redshank is a common wading bird, identified by its long red legs, medium length, orange-red bill which has a black tip. This is used for probing in the mud for food. Feeding on invertebrates, in marine environments they will eat shrimps, small fish, shellfish and small crabs, whereas inland they will look for earthworms, beetles, flies and spiders.

Redshanks breed around salt marshes, flood meadows and lakes, however during winter they are commonly seen on estuaries and coastal lagoons. They build their nests on the ground amongst tufts of grass where the female will lay 3-5 eggs.

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# Mute Swan

The Mute Swan is one of Britain's largest birds characterised by a long graceful S-Shaped neck, pointed tail, large black feet and orange bill. At the base of the bill is a large black knob which is larger in males than females. Juveniles are brownish grey getting their white feathers in their first summer and a grey bill.

Once Mute Swans start breeding at the age of 3-4, they will generally mate for life. They will breed on lakes with shallow areas for feeding, slow flowing rivers, canals and beside salt and brackish water. Mute Swans generally feed on aquatic plants and other vegetation, although sometimes they will eat small animals including insects and snails.

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# Otter

Otters live on the banks of rivers, canals, streams, ponds and lakes in homes called 'holts' which are generally underground or in dense riverbank vegetation or reedbeds. Otters prefer to feed in and live around clean water and their presence indicates a healthy, clean river. An otters diet consists mainly of fish, with eel and salmon being favourites, however they have been known to take birds and amphibians and crustaceans as food.

In the spring they will also enjoy eating frogs and toads. Otters are usually solitary animals except when they are breeding or looking after young, they are nocturnal animals and will be very wary of humans. Otters mark their territory with spraints (dropping) which have a sweet musky odour like earl grey tea!!!

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# Dormouse

Dormice are recognisable by their golden fur, furry tail and large black eyes. They are shy, nocturnal animals, living mainly in woodland, scrub or hedgerows and spending the majority of their time in tree branches searching for food, they will rarely come to the ground. Their favourite food is hazel nuts but they will also feed on flowers other nuts and some insects (especially aphids and caterpillars).

Dormice hibernate through the winter when food sources are scarce. They are protected by European legislation making it an offence to deliberately disturb, capture, injure or kill these animals. It is also an offence to damage or destroy the Dormouse breeding or resting places.

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# Buddleia

This bush is commonly known as the 'butterfly bush' especially by gardeners because it attracts all kinds of butterflies and moths looking for nectar. The flowers which are usually purple or white bloom between June and October.

Although Buddleia is not native to the UK, it is popular with a variety of insects, in particular butterflies, as the flowers provide a rich source of nectar.

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# Small Tortoiseshell

The Small Tortoiseshell is the commonest butterfly found in the UK. It is identifiable by its bright orange and black wings with a row of blue crescents around the wing edges. Both male and female look very similar. These butterflies are attracted to flowers and nettles – one of their favourite foods and the place where they lay their eggs.

Buddleia is a particular favourite of this butterfly whilst its caterpillars prefer to eat the nettles they are born on. Small Tortoiseshells hibernate through the cold winter months in garages, lofts, outhouses, cool rooms and churches.

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# Hazel

Hazel are relatively small trees seen in woodlands below larger oaks and beech trees. Male and female flowers are found on the same tree, the male flowers form catkins which can be seen hanging down from the tree between February and April. The catkins are often called 'lamb's tails'.

The female flowers are very small and concealed in the buds and when fertilised grow into hazel nuts. These nuts are an important food source for many different birds and animals including dormice, squirrels, woodpeckers and jays.

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# Dipper

Dippers are small plump birds with short tails, white breast and throat and short wings. When their eyes are closed, the white eyelids are visible. They are commonly found around fast flowing waterways and are characterised by their bobbing action. They look for food by walking under water picking up insect larvae and freshwater shrimps from the bottom of rivers and streams.

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# Blackthorn

The Blackthorn tree is often found in lowland woodlands, scrub and hedgerows. It is a thorny tree with a dark stem and white flowers with 5 petals which appear in early spring, before the leaves of the tree come out. This distinguishes it from the Hawthorn tree whose leaves come out before the flowers.

The Blackthorn tree attracts a variety of wildlife from birds who build their nests among its branches to small mammals such as hedgehogs who take shelter below its dense canopy. In autumn, this tree produces black fruits called sloes, which are particularly attractive to birds and often used to make sloe gin.

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