

Tongwynlais

M4

A469

B4562

N

Radyr

Forest Farm

Whitchurch

A470

A4119

Llandaff North

Gabalfa

A48

Llandaff

Pontcanna

B4261

A4161

A48

A416

B4261

Riverside

A4234

Grangetown

Cardiff Bay

WILDLIFE OF THE TAFF TRAIL

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

For further information about other opportunities to enjoy the countryside on your doorstep contact the Council's Countryside Team.

Telephone: 029 2087 3230

Email: countryside@cardiff.gov.uk

Websites:

www.cardiff.gov.uk/countryside

www.cardiff.gov.uk/biodiversity

KEY

 Taff Trail

B4267

WILD GARLIC (RAMSON)

This aromatic plant is an ancient woodland species. It carpets the ground in the spring with its thick green leaves and delicate white flowers. In the Taff's Well area of the trail the scent is strong as the plant is flowering. It has antioxidant properties which reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels.





JAPANESE KNOTWEED

The plant was introduced to the UK as an ornamental garden plant in the mid 19thC. However it has since become widespread and can cause serious problems. This impressive plant can grow over 1 meter a month and has large, lush green leaves and cascading clusters of tiny white flowers. It is able to grow up through tarmac, concrete and drains and out competes native plants. It spreads by tiny fractions of the underground rhizome breaking off and creating a new plant. If you come across it do not attempt to remove it. The Council have a program of control for this plant.



GREY HERON

This large bird can sometimes be seen stalking fish close to the riverbank and in shallow water. They also eat small mammals, birds, amphibians and insect larvae. Grey Herons have a wingspan of 175-195cm and can live for up to 25 years. They nest in trees, in colonies called heronries. The only heronry in Cardiff is on the River Taff.

OTTER

Otters are shy, nocturnal mammals, but with luck you may see one swimming in the river or walking along the river bank. Their diet is chiefly fish but also includes birds, small mammals, amphibians, crustaceans (shell fish) and molluscs. Otters have very large territories, sometimes up to 40 km along a river. They rest and breed in underground 'holts' or in dense riverbank vegetation. You are more likely to see a 'spraint' than an Otter. These are droppings which are usually deposited in an obvious place such as on a large boulder in the water.





BRAMBLE

Bramble (blackberry bush) has white or pink flowers from May to November and fruits in August. The leaves and flowers are a particularly important food source for butterflies, moths and their caterpillars. The berries are eaten by birds, mammals, insects and people.



GRASS SNAKE

The Grass Snake is the UK's largest reptile. They can grow up to 190cm (6 foot). They feed on amphibians, mammals and fish so are closely linked to water and are excellent swimmers. They are not dangerous to people and will pretend dead if threatened. They do this by becoming completely limp and producing a foul-smelling fluid. They can sometimes be seen basking in the very early morning, particularly around Forest Farm.



DIPPER

The Dipper is a characteristic bird of British waterways. It looks like a small, dumpy, brown blackbird with a white chest. It has a distinctive 'bobbing' habit and obvious white eyelids when it blinks. They look for food by walking under water. They feed on insect larvae and freshwater shrimps. They build domed nests on ledges especially under bridges or among tree roots.

GOOSANDER

This unusual duck is in the 'sawbill' family, named because of the serrated bill they use to catch fish. They are mostly seen on the Taff in the winter. The males are mostly white with a flush of pink in the winter. They have a black back and dark green head. The females have a grey body with reddish-brown head.



BUZZARD

Buzzards are the largest birds of prey in the area and can be found all along the Taff Trail. They have brown upperparts and white and brown pattern on their underside which varies between individuals. They nest in the woodlands and can often be seen circling on thermal currents hunting for prey. They eat small mammals such as voles and rabbits, birds, insects, earthworms and carrion.



RED ADMIRAL

This dramatically coloured butterfly is one of the easiest to recognise. The black of the wing is contrasted with the bright red cross-lines and white patches. A closer look reveals small blue spots on the base of the wings. They migrate from North Africa and southern Europe arriving in May and June. They can be seen flying until November. Buddleias, flowering Ivy and rotting fruit are their favourite foods. The caterpillars live mainly on nettles and create small tents which they use to cover themselves while they pupate into adults.



OLD-MAN'S BEARD/ TRAVELLER'S JOY

This characteristic plant can be seen at its best in the late autumn when the fluffy seed-heads are out. It is a food plant for a number of moths, bees and hoverflies. Birds and small mammals use the fluffy seed-heads as a nesting material.



SALMON

Leaping Salmon are usually associated with the wilds of Scotland. However, they can be seen along the Taff particularly at Blackweir in Bute Park. In the autumn the adult Salmon migrate from the sea for many miles up river to the area they were born. This epic journey takes them past many obstacles which is when we see them leaping. There are specially built fish passes at most of the weirs.



MALLARD

Mallards are our most familiar duck. The handsome males have a dark green head and purple brown breast feathers. The female is duller by comparison but has a beautiful brown mottled pattern. Mallards eat seeds, acorns, berries, plants, insects, amphibians and shellfish.





ALDER

Alder is a distinctive plant being the only native deciduous tree to produce seed cases in the form of cones. The seeds provide winter food for birds such as Siskin which have especially small pointed beaks to break open the seed cones. The branches have a purple tinge which makes the tree colourful in winter when the leaves have fallen. Charcoal made from alder wood used to be used in gun powder.

GREY WAGTAIL

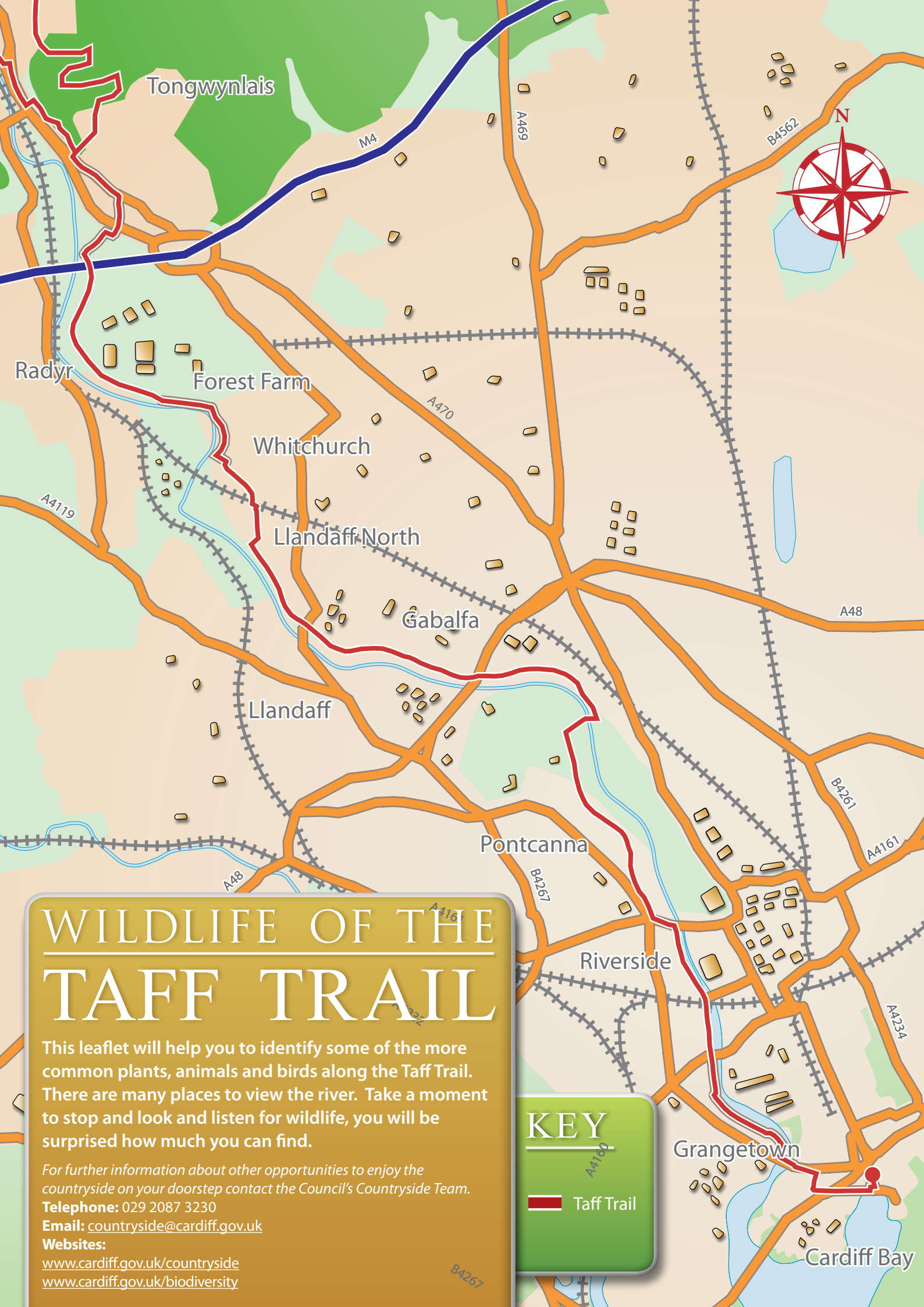
A similar size to the more familiar Pied Wagtail, the Grey Wagtail can be identified by its blue grey upperparts and white stripe over the eye. The males have a black throat patch and lemon yellow breast, while the females have a white throat. They feed on insects and other invertebrates which are often snatched from the air. They almost constantly wag their long tail when standing and can often be seen doing this on rocks in the river.



KINGFISHER

This well known bird is usually heard before it is seen. The call is a shrill 'chreee'. These striking birds are about the size of a sparrow with electric blue upperparts and orange underparts; they are usually seen as a blue/orange streak as they fly swiftly along the river. Kingfishers nest in tunnels in river banks. They eat fish and aquatic insects. If you are lucky you may see one fishing from a perch, they are often seen from the bird hides at Forest Farm.





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