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Community Fund



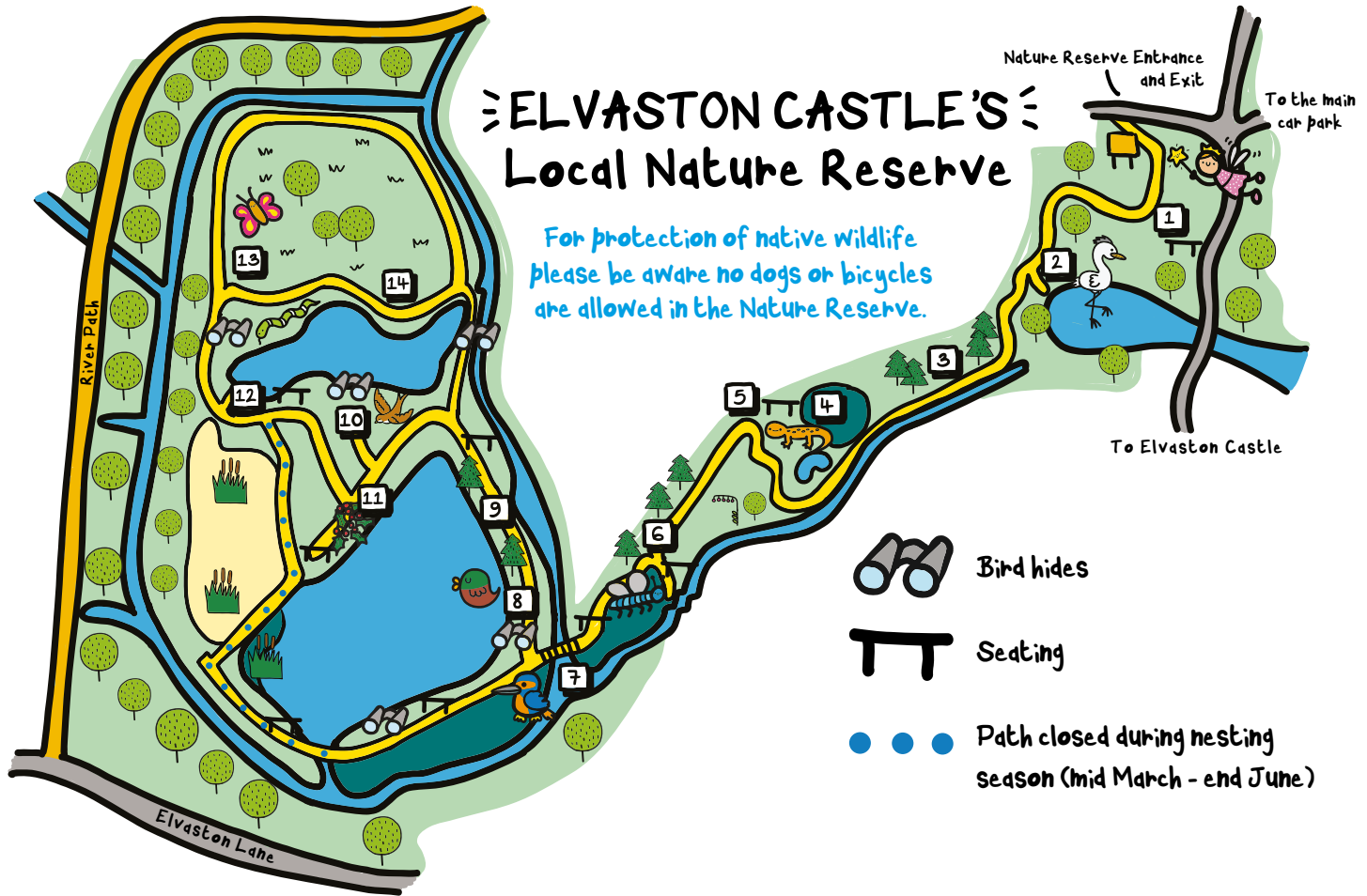
WONDERFUL ON TAP

ELVASTON CASTLE'S Nature Trail booklet



ELVASTON CASTLE'S Local Nature Reserve

For protection of native wildlife
please be aware no dogs or bicycles
are allowed in the Nature Reserve.



Welcome to the Nature Trail

The Nature Reserve was established in 1989 and sits at the heart of the wider Country Park, spanning an impressive 13.5 hectares. This natural haven boasts a diverse range of habitats, each teeming with life and transforming with the changing seasons. Whether you're an avid nature enthusiast or a curious visitor, there's always something new to discover. Keep your eyes peeled – you might even spot a grass snake basking in the sun!

In 2023, the Elvaston Castle & Gardens Trust received crucial funding from the Severn Trent Community Fund for an initiative aptly named Nurturing Nature. This volunteer-led project has been instrumental in revitalising the nature reserve. Volunteers have worked tirelessly to clear overgrown pathways, making them inviting once more and to survey the various habitats and insects that call this reserve home. One of the project's key goals has been to raise awareness about this beautiful natural area, encouraging more people to explore and enjoy it.

As part of the Nurturing Nature project, a new nature trail has been established. This trail is designed to guide you through the reserve, highlighting points of interest and providing opportunities for everyone, especially children, to engage with and learn about the natural world around them.

Around the reserve you will find 14 numbered wooden posts marking points of interest which include mosaics made by our volunteers and rubbing posts. There are blank pages at the back of this booklet so that you can keep your rubbings altogether and take them home with you.

We invite you to take your time and immerse yourself in nature and enjoy the many benefits. Happy exploring!



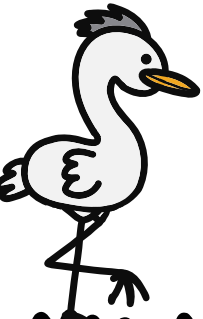


1. Fairy Ring

In folklore a 'fairy ring' is the name given to a ring of mushrooms growing in a circle, said to be the gateway to the world of the fairies!

Early in the year this area is covered in scarlet elf cup, growing on fallen willow trunks and branches. This is a fungus shaped like a small red bowl or cup that an elf or fairy might drink from. The fungus is so bright and red it can easily be mistaken as litter.

As well as fairies, this clearing is home to ferns and beautiful wildflowers such as bluebells, yellow archangel and snowdrops.



2. Heronry View

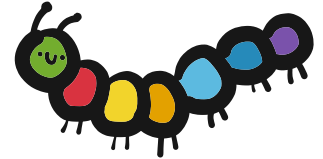
Hérons like to nest high at the tops of trees, far away from predators like foxes. They all nest in the same area and a heronry can be quite busy and noisy.

Sometimes you can find fish scales or crayfish claws at the bottom of their trees – the remains of the heron's dinner!

Our volunteers created this heron mosaic for you to enjoy.

3. Pine Hotel

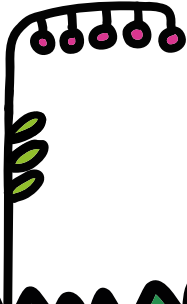
Glades are more open and sunnier than under the trees and that makes them great for wildlife. Lots of woodland flowers prefer to grow in glades or at the edges of woods.



Can you see the bug hotel near the big pine? The bug hotel has lots of little nooks and crannies for insects to hide in. Look out for speckled wood butterflies, their mottled brown colour keeps them camouflaged in the trees.

** Don't miss the rubbing plate.*

You can take this paper frog home with you!





4. Little Ponds

Amphibians can live on land and in water. Some aquatic species like murky, still water better than fresh running water.

Frogs, toads and newts can all be found at Elvaston. Frogs have smooth skin and jump around. Toads have warty skin and they crawl rather than hop. Newts look a bit like a lizard, with four short legs and a long tail. All amphibians breathe air, but they can hold their breath for an exceptionally long time!

5. Berry Corner

Berry corner takes its name from the different types of edible berries growing nearby. These are raspberries, blackberries, gooseberries, elderberries, and sloes. Elderberries grow on elder trees. They are quite bitter but can be used to make wine or cordial. Sloes are the fruit of the blackthorn tree.

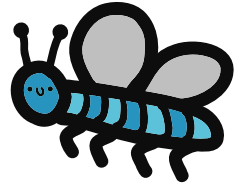
They are often used as a flavouring for Gin. Gooseberries are green and can sometimes be hard to spot. Blackberry and raspberry bushes have sharp thorns, so be careful!

** Don't miss the rubbing plate.*

6. Waterfall

Demoiselle (meaning young lady in French) damselflies can be seen here in late spring and early summer. The males have a bright, iridescent blue-green body and dark, patterned wings. Female demoiselles are green so they can be camouflaged around leaves and grass.

Damselflies have long, thin, delicate bodies. Dragonflies are bigger and broader and look a lot more fearsome. Make sure that you take a look at the mosaic that our volunteers made. Parts of it shine just like the real thing!

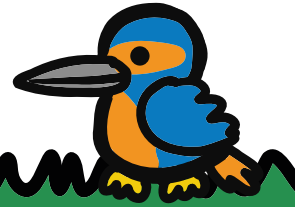


7. Poacher's Bridge

The brook is a home for small fish such as minnow and stickleback, keep an eye out on a sunny day and you might spot them.

Kingfishers might also be here looking for fish. Look for a splash of blue and orange as they dive into the water!

** Look out for the rubbing post. You can find newts in the brook too.*





8. Lake View

You will probably have seen a mallard before, but did you know that there are many more species of duck living in the UK? In winter, many rare ducks can be seen on the lake including wigeon, teal, gadwall, and shoveler. In spring lots of ducks and geese nest on the islands in the lake, so they can be safe from predators.

** Don't miss the rubbing plate. There are some fun facts about mallards.*

9. Monterrey Pine

The tree here is a Monterrey Pine, normally found in Mexico. Elvaston has a lot of exotic pine trees that were planted in the 1800's by William Barron, the landscape gardener that designed Elvaston's gardens. Planting evergreens was an unusual style at the time and Barron helped make it popular. The mosaic is a cone from the Monterrey Pine.

Can you see any cones on the tree or on the floor?



10. Sand Martin Bank

Sand martins are small, fast flying birds that are similar to swifts and swallows. The bird in the mosaic is a sand martin. They like to fly low across rivers and ponds, trying to catch flies. They make their nests in sandy banks, hence their name. We have provided them with an artificial 'bank' for them to nest in.

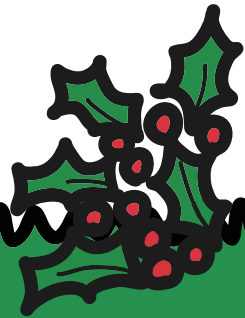


11. Holly Arch

Holly trees grow spiky leaves to try to stop animals like deer or cows from eating them. Holly berries are poisonous to humans, but birds can eat them with no problems. They are a tasty winter treat for birds like mistle thrushes or waxwings.

Because holly trees are green even in winter, they are a good home for lots of species of bird and insect. Walk through the holly arch to reach a hidden scenic spot with a bench and viewpoint.

Did you see the mosaic at this stop?



12. Reedbed View

In spring the reedbed path is closed to the public, to keep things quiet for the birds that nest there. Small songbirds called reed warblers can be found here.

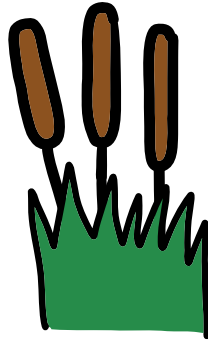
Sit at the bench and listen for their wild, energetic song. Reedbeds are a good place for ducks and geese to hide and make nests.

Can you spot the owl statue?

13. Gretrick's Field

Gretrick's Field is a wildflower meadow, home to many native UK species of flower such as meadowsweet, meadow cranesbill, buttercups, and yellow rattle.

Butterflies, moths, bees and other pollinating insects need these wildflowers to survive. The UK used to be covered in meadows, but since WW2 we have lost over 95% of them as they have been converted to intensive farming.



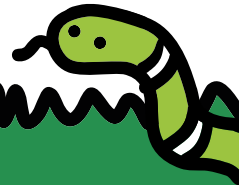
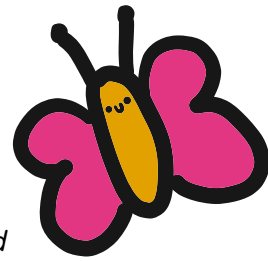
Many meadow species are now endangered, including birds like skylarks, lapwings, and curlews.

* *Have a look for our rubbing post to find out more about butterflies.*

14. Snake Point

Congratulations you have made it to the end of the nature trail! Gretrick's Field is home to grass snakes. Grass snakes are harmless, they aren't poisonous, they are very shy and will hide or slither away if they see people. They won't try to bite unless you scare them by trying to pick them up! Snakes are cold-blooded, which means they can't produce their own body heat like mammals can. Look for them basking in sunny, warm places, especially in the morning.

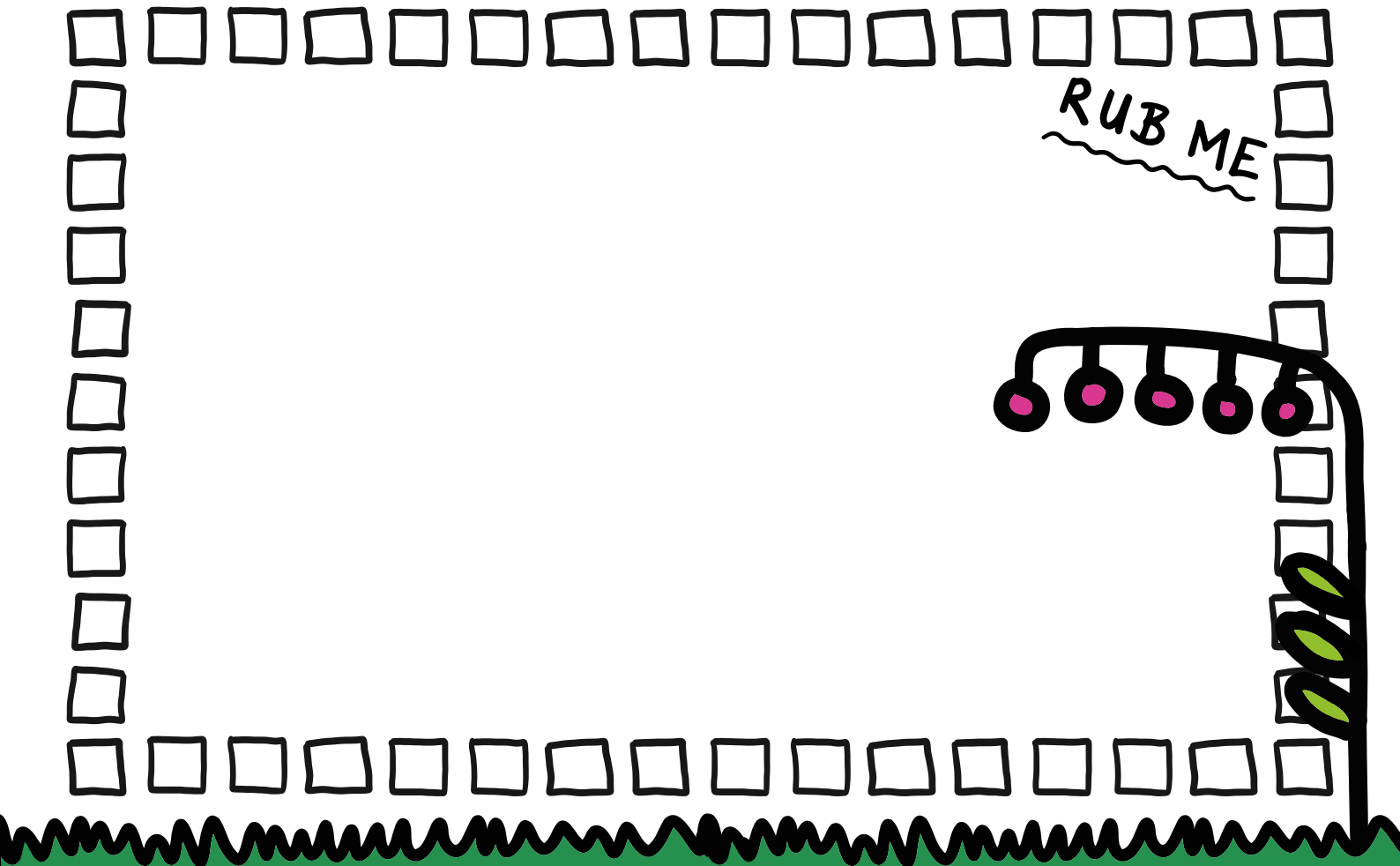
This mosaic has been in place for over 10 years. It is the only mosaic that survived from the last nature trail at Elvaston.



RUB ME



Where do frogs borrow money? From the river bank.



RUB ME

What do you call a bunch of berries playing instruments? A jam session.

RUB ME

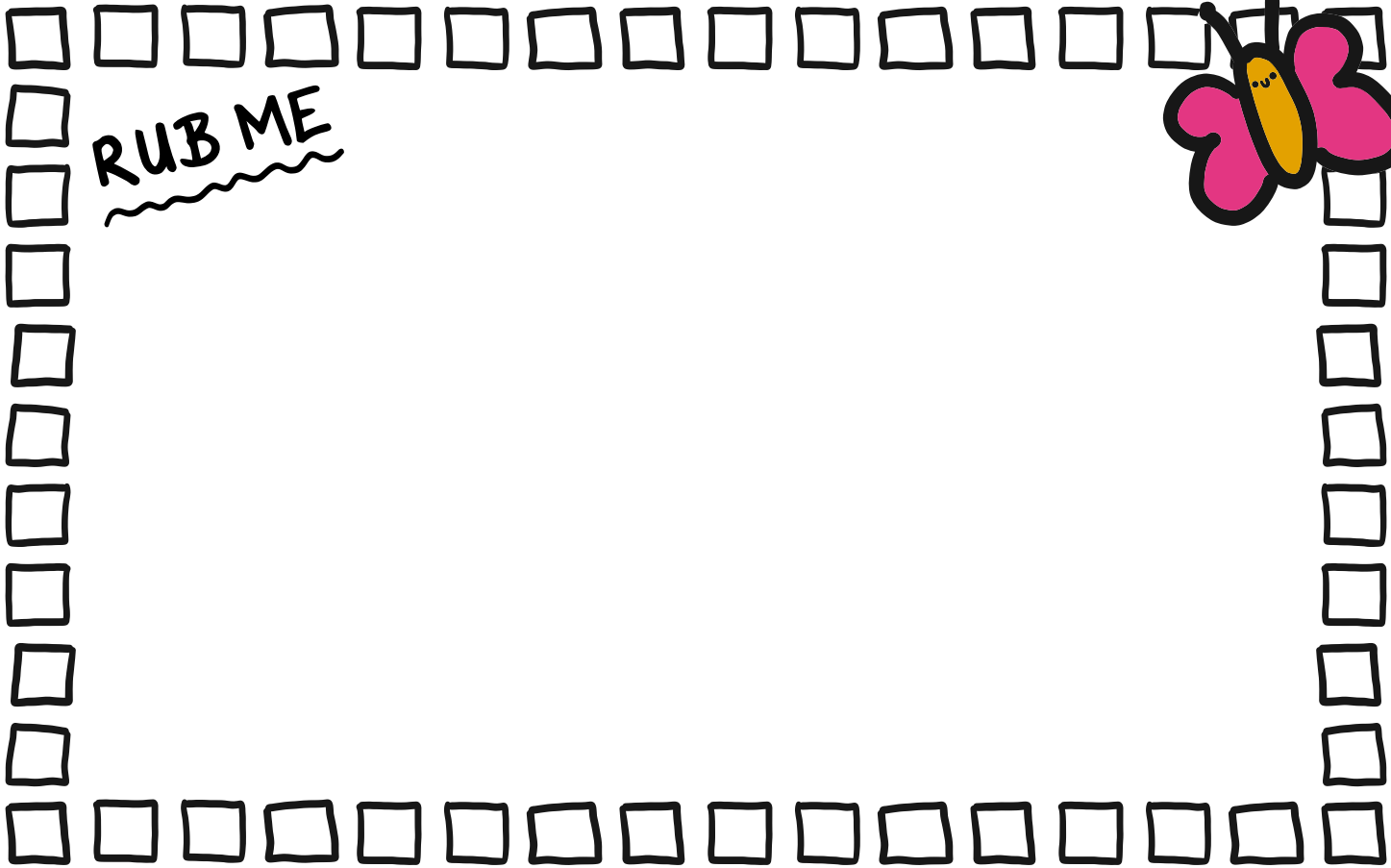


Why do I call my lizard Tiny? He's my newt.

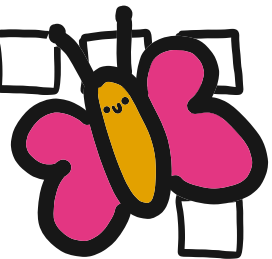
RUB ME



What goes 'Quick, Quick'? A duck with hiccups.



RUB ME



What do you get if you swallow a moth? Butterflies in your tummy.