

WALK 4 STAFFORDSHIRE

MAX DISTANCE: 5.5 MILES

SITE GUIDE



Pete Hackett

Branston WP & GP

Enjoy varied wildlife with easy access at any season

THIS FORMER GRAVEL working, which ceased to operate in the 1950s, offers a wealth of rich habitat with areas of open water, woodland, reed bed and meadow. The site is suitable for all, with excellent disabled access, where even dog walkers have their own dog dipping areas around the pool!

A good all year round site, there are wildfowl in abundance in winter and reedbed species such as Reed and Sedge Warblers breeding, plus Water Rail is also often present. Running alongside the pool is the Trent and Mersey Canal, part of The Way For The Millennium, which runs for 40 miles between Burton upon Trent and Newport to the west.

One of the best records for the site was a fly-over Purple Heron, while a Nightingale along the canal side in May 2009 was a real surprise. While the site looks a good bet for Great White Egret, currently increasing its numbers and range. Little Egrets are sighted from time to time and Cormorants find the area to their liking. Whatever the season, the pools and surrounds with picnic areas offer easy access and something of interest to suit the whole family.



Kingfisher

Calvin Dickson / Alamy

The nearby working gravel pits, although private, have excellent numbers of waders breeding and passing through with Ruff and Golden Plover often present during the winter, while wildfowl include breeding Shelduck in good numbers. These can be viewed from nearby public footpaths, giving a relaxing atmosphere just a short distance from the A38.
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Grid ref: SK 215 208
Postcode: DE14 3HD
How to get there: Located just off the A38 between Barton-under-Needwood and Burton upon Trent. Access from the A38 northbound. The Water Park is well signposted, follow the brown signs. To view the private gravel pits access along public footpaths (grid ref SK 197 207). Please do not enter the active workings.

Where to park: Plenty of free parking with disabled bays near to and overlooking the pool.

Distance and time: One hour for a walk of 1.2 miles. Allow more time to explore The Way For The Millennium.

Terrain: Good level pathway around the pool.

Accessibility: Site opening times – Summer (April-September) open every day 8am-9pm. Winter (October-March) open every day 8am-5pm. Visitor centre opening times – Summer (April-September) open every day 8am-9pm. Winter (October-March) open only at weekends and bank holidays 8am-5pm.

Facilities: Information centre open at weekends and during the summer on weekdays. Seats and information boards. Disabled toilet. Pubs nearby.

Public transport: None to site. The pool can be accessed on foot along the nearby Trent and Mersey canal.

Sites nearby: *Go Birding*: Croxall Lakes (February 2014).

Club contacts:

westmidlandbirdclub.com

County recorder: Nick Pomiankowski, 22 The Villas, West End, Stoke ST4 5AQ

staffs-recorder

[@westmidlandbirdclub.com](https://twitter.com/westmidlandbirdclub)

Website:

staffordshirebirding.blogspot.com

Maps: OS Explorer 245,

OS Landranger 128.

TOP TIP

Early or late in the day visits are recommended, while the birds are relatively undisturbed.



1 The pool can be easily checked from the car park. Goldeneye, Pochard, Shoveler, Great Crested and Little Grebe should be present during winter with large numbers of Greylag Geese. Kingfishers are often present along with a few Cormorants and Grey Herons. Sand Martins, House Martins and Swallows may attract the occasional hunting Hobby in late summer.

2 The reedbed holds Reed and Sedge Warblers and Reed Bunting during summer with the chance of Water Rail and Snipe during the winter months.

3 Check woodland for Marsh Tit, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Willow Warbler, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Great Spotted Woodpecker, which breed.

4 Check fields bordering the canal for Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Sky Lark, Yellowhammer, Buzzard, Green Woodpecker and overflying Raven and raptors.