

**The Porter Valley is a three-mile long finger of green open space linking the inner suburbs of Sheffield to the countryside. A series of public footpaths, bridleways and cycle-ways follow the river from Hunter's Bar to Fulwood Head. From these you experience two designed city parks, then from woodland emerge into a picturesque landscape of farms, hills, small woods and fields where, in summer, cows stand knee deep in buttercups. The footpath network enables circular walks to be followed away from the valley bottom.**

A feature of the valley is the remains of water-powered industry in the form of six mill ponds (dams) and goits that once provided water to drive grindstones, forge-hammers and wiremills. Shepherd Wheel, is the one remaining example in the valley of a grinding shop, but is in need of restoration. A recent archeological survey of the valley financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund has revealed an unexpected wealth of additional features such as medieval and earlier field patterns, deep hollow-ways, rig and furrow, and 'socket and groove' gate posts together with other wall furniture.

Throughout the valley a wealth of natural history is present at all times of the year. Much of it is concentrated on the mill ponds with their ducks, herons, water lilies, toads and sticklebacks, while the woodland is alive with song birds and in spring the paths are edged with an attractive flora. Away from the valley bottom there are species-rich grasslands, attractive hedgerows, flowery road verges, veteran trees and sheltered lanes favoured by butterflies.

What both regular users and occasional visitors appreciate about the valley is its tranquillity, naturalness, ease of access, and the variety of experience it has to offer. The information provided here gives some idea of its rich history and the kind of plants and animals you might encounter.



## **OLD SPECIES-RICH MEADOWS**

A few areas of grassland have escaped improvement being on slopes too steep or in sites too wet for agricultural machinery. They can be identified by the presence of Ox-Eye Daisy, Bird's-Foot Trefoil and Lady's-Mantle. In autumn some produce notable crops of Wax Cap fungi.



Picture: David Woodfall

## **ANCIENT WOODLAND**

There are several areas of 'ancient woodland' in the valley; some may date back to Saxon times.

They are oak woods on the slopes and mixed deciduous woodland on the valley floor. Most contain an outstanding spring flora including Bluebells, Wood Anemone, Ramsons and Yellow Archangel.



Whiteley Woods in Spring

## BIRD LIFE

The valley has a thriving population of birds, up to 80 species have been recorded including woodpeckers.

Along the river you may see *Dippers* and *Grey Wagtails* or encounter a *Heron* on the dams.



Dipper



Heron



Grey Wagtail

Pictures: Paul Hobson

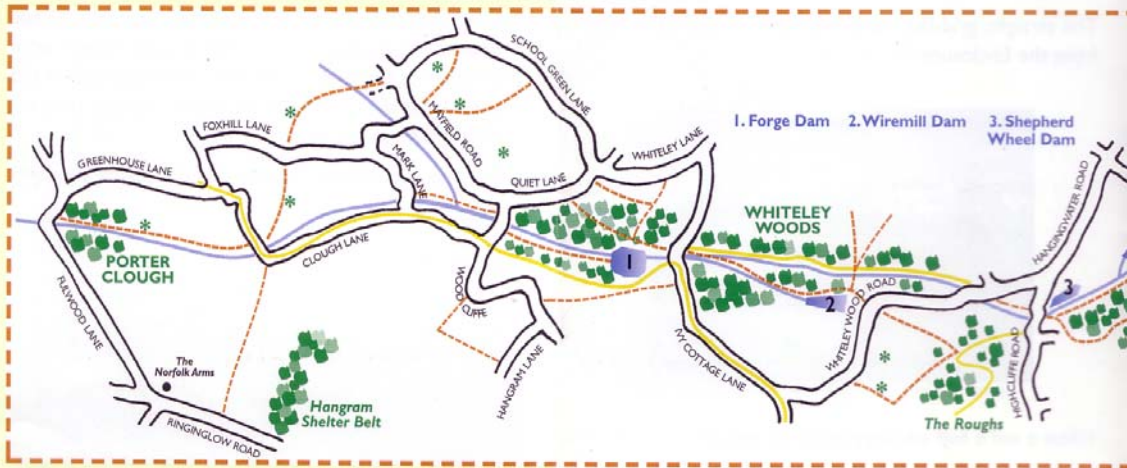
## BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

In warm, sunny, sheltered places a wide range of butterflies such as *Comma*, *Red Admiral*, *Peacock* and *Orange-Tip* can be found.

Day-flying moths like the *5-spot Burnet* and *Cinnabar* are found in the meadows.



Orange-tip on Cuckooflower



## VETERAN TREES

Within the Porter Valley there are some older and larger trees that provide wonderful habitats for species such as bats, hole-nesting birds, fungi, lichens and mosses. They are known as *Veteran Trees*.

This symbol \* shows their position on the map.



*Veteran oak tree*



## MAMMALS

Grey squirrels and foxes are frequently seen in the valley. The millponds are the habitat of water shrews and water voles. At dusk insects flying over the ponds attract several species of bat including Pipistrelles and Daubentons.



*A water vole at Forge Dam*

In the upper parts of the valley brown hares and rabbits can be seen.



*A brown hare*