

Natural history

Amongst the 160 reservoirs owned by United Utilities, Stocks is rated as the most important for wildfowl and is high amongst the best sites in north west England.

Up to 30 species of wildfowl can be encountered during an average winter and amongst often spectacular numbers of common species one might come across more uncommon species such as Red Throated Diver, Whooper Swan, Gadwall, Ring-Necked and Long-Tailed Ducks. From October to March, the most numerous water birds are Mallard, Teal, Wigeon, Pochard, Tufted Duck and Canada Geese.

Shoreline mud, exposed when the reservoir is drawn down, is attractive to migrant wading birds and some breeding birds. This draw-down zone also provides opportunities for scarce species of mosses and liverworts to become established when conditions are ideal.

Surrounding habitats, which range from deciduous and conifer woodlands, to heather moorland, meadows and wet flushes, streams and limestone outcrops, hold a wide and diverse range of flora and fauna, much of which can be seen from the footpaths throughout the area. Our heather moors support Red Grouse, Hen Harriers, Peregrines and other upland species, whilst the woodlands attract wintering thrushes, several species of tit, finches, and occasionally Crossbills. In summer, the island in the reservoir has very noisy colony of Black Headed Gulls and if you are very lucky, you may see a passing Osprey, these have become fairly regular visitors to the area in recent years.

Recreation

A selection of waymarked forest walks and cycle routes are available throughout the forest area and these connect with the wider network of public footpaths and bridleways on surrounding land.

A waymarked circular footpath around the reservoir, much of it on permissive routes, starts and finishes at the School Lane car park. Walkers are asked not to wander down to the reservoir edges and to keep to the waymarked route, as much of it passes close by several sensitive areas for wildlife.

Visitors interested in trout fishing can obtain fishing permits from the Fishing Lodge, at Hollins Bay. Access to the Lodge is from the Slaidburn to Bentham Road, west of the reservoir, but vehicular access is only available to fishermen.

Light refreshments are available to fishermen and walkers at the Fishing Lodge.

Forest of Bowland

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally protected landscape and internationally important for its heather moorland, blanket bog and rare birds. The AONB is managed by a partnership of landowners, farmers, voluntary organisations, local councils and government agencies, who work to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of this special area. For more information regarding the Forest of Bowland AONB, visit the website at

www.forestofbowland.com

or telephone 01772 531473 for an information leaflet.

Leaflets available from Barley Information Centre and Pendle Heritage Centre, Barrowford.

Public transport details telephone Travel Line 0870 608 2608.

Much of the land around Stocks Reservoir forms part of a valuable water catchment area. The reservoir supplies drinking water and it is important to safeguard this supply.

You can help by guarding against risk of fire, fastening gates, keeping dogs under proper control, keeping to paths across farmland and avoiding damaging fences, hedges and walls. Be careful on country roads and please protect wild life, plants and trees.

When walking and riding in the countryside please follow the country code.



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Stocks Reservoir



The reservoir

Lying within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Stocks is the only reservoir on United Utilities' Bowland Estate. It was opened by HRH The Prince George KG, on July 5th 1932.

Annual rainfall here is about 1500mm (5 feet) and when full the reservoir covers an area of about 192 hectares, the equivalent of about 500 football pitches. Full, the reservoir holds up to 12 billion litres (2.5 billion gallons) of water, collected continuously from the 3750 hectares of land around you. After treatment, the water from Stocks goes mainly to the Fylde area of Lancashire.

Major works on the construction of the reservoir began in 1922, but prior to that much preliminary work had been completed. These works included the reconstruction of over five miles of road from Long Preston which could carry heavy traffic to a depot and railway at Tosside, and the construction of a 3ft gauge railway from Tosside to the site of the dam (a distance of about five miles). Before work could start on the dam, a village to house 300 - 400 men and their families had to be built, which when complete had its own water supply, sewerage scheme, electricity supply, canteen, cinema and a recreation hall. Other necessary buildings included offices, joiner's shops, engine sheds, blacksmith's and fitter's shops, and a power house. Sadly, the construction village is now long gone, all that remains to be seen is the dam and the causeway.

Forestry

Gisburn Forest, lying to the north and east of the reservoir, is a major part of the Stocks catchment area and is leased by United Utilities to the Forestry Commission. Covering some 1245 hectares, the forest is now managed for multi-purpose benefit. The coniferous trees generate a useful raw material, contributing to the regional demand for timber. Small areas of ancient woodland are being supplemented by the creation of new native woodland providing a range of important wildlife habitats. The forest has also become an important recreation destination with a range of activity opportunities for locals and visitors. United Utilities is also investing considerable amounts of money into creating new plantations, besides managing and improving its own woodlands and plantations around the estate.

Farming

The massive catchment area for the reservoir is split between three farms, all owned by United Utilities, and all produce sheep as the mainstay. The principal breed is Swaledale and around 3000 animals are present for most of the year. It is important that visitors, especially those with dogs, take extra care when crossing farmland and to avoid disturbing the flocks. This is especially so at lambing time, which in these upland areas can extend for a longer period than in lowland regions.

1 School Lane Car Park makes a good starting point for the reservoir walk and also for many forest trails. The walk is approximately 8 miles through fields and woodlands.

2 Picnic area and former site of St Marys Church which was reconstructed at its present site.

3 Bird Hide. Excellent observation point for many water related birds, ducks, geese, with the occasional rare visitor.

4 Site of Birch Hill Farm. The small building is all that remains. Many farms became unviable when the reservoir was constructed and afforestation of the land took place.

5 Lock Bridge over Hasgill Beck carried the old road which would connect the farms of Hasgill, New House and Collyholme.

6 New House Farm. Whilst the house and barn are derelict, the land is still farmed.

7 Stepping Stones - now replace a footbridge which was washed away when the River Hodder was in flood condition.

8 Ruined remains of Collyholme Farm.

9 Route of old railway track taking walkers to the Fishermans Hut.

10 Fishermans Hut - fishing is available during the season. Refreshments can also be obtained when open.

11 Stocks Board House - formerly offices of the Fylde Water Board. Now United Utilities Bowland Estate Office.

12 Stocks Reservoir Dam with huge overflow returning water to the River Hodder.

13 At the far end of the dam, cross the stile to join the old railway track.

14 Follow the track through the woodland until the Metalled Road.

15 Wildflower Meadow - during the summer this is a good site for many wild flowers, including Orchids.

16 Cross the stile, bear left across the causeway.

17 Cross the stile on your left and follow the path behind the hedge to your starting point at School Lane Car Park.

Key

- Reservoir Trail
- Reservoir Trail (Concessionary)
- Waymarked Forest Trails
- Cycle Trail
- Footpath
- Information Centre
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Fishing