

The New Forest

Where is it?

The New Forest is located in Southern England (which is in Europe) and covers an area of about 560 square kilometres across the counties of Hampshire and Wiltshire. It includes 15 miles of coastline. The closest large city is Southampton. Two main rivers, the Lymington and Beaulieu run through the New Forest.

How old is it?

The New Forest was created as a royal forest by William I (who was also known as William the Conqueror) in the 11th Century. He brought together lots of small farms and tiny villages to create the new, bigger area. He used it as his 'new' hunting ground which is where the name the New Forest comes from.

More recently, in 2005, it became one of Britain's 10 National Parks.

Some of the trees in The New Forest are very old. Ancient Oak trees may be 400 - 800 years old. Beech trees can be over 300 years old, but the oldest of them all are thought to be the ancient yew trees which could be over 1,000 years old.

The tallest tree is Wellingtonia in Rhinefield Drive - it is 35m tall!

Why is the New Forest important?

The New Forest is an important environment because it contains virtually undisturbed deciduous (ones that lose their leaves in the autumn) and coniferous forest (evergreens). This means that the trees within the forest are very old or ancient.

It is unusual because people who live in the New Forest are allowed to let their livestock (animals) graze freely on the land - about 6,500 animals roam throughout the forest freely. The horses actually have right of way over cars! That means that if a horse wants to walk on the road, the car has to stop to let them do so! Horses are a symbol of the New Forest, and bones dating back 500,000 years have been found nearby. Horses have been making the New Forest their home for a long time.

As well as horses, the New Forest contains lots of rare and unusual birds, insects and animals. For this reason, it is called a site of special scientific interest.

Who lives there?

Almost 180,000 people live within the New Forest. Most of these people live in the towns of Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst and Sway.