



Draw these symbols on the map as you walk around.

Where would you...



...admire the view?



...see evidence of a different use in the past?



...find evidence of transport?



...listen to the water?



MAP & GUIDE



Black Rock

8 kilometres (5 miles) south of Chepstow
Allow 1 hour for trail

Black Rock Picnic Site, Black Rock Road, Portskewett NP26 5TP (ST 51277 88090)

This site is managed by MonLife on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council.

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KEY			
	Water		Boundary
	Tarmac/ gravel		Monument (scheduled or in situ)
	Mud/rocks		Car park
	Light vegetation/ rocks		Path
	Dense vegetation/ woodland		Seasonal flowers for pollinators
	Viewpoint		

Black Rock

The site of river journeys
dating back to the Romans



Ferry

Two hundred years ago, goods and people had to be ferried across the estuary by boat from Black Rock. This crossing point was used by the Romans and Normans, and as early as 1138 a ferry brought monks, servants and cattle from England across the river. The boat journey was very hazardous due to the strong currents, the weather and the varying tides.

From 1863 a railway line stopped on Portskewett Pier at Black Rock. People got off a steam train and took a steamboat to a connecting train at New Passage across the river. The ferry crossing stopped in 1886 with the opening of the Severn Rail Tunnel, allowing passengers to remain on steam trains travelling under the River Severn. Trains between Wales and England still travel through this tunnel.

Changing sounds

The sounds of Black Rock have changed from the days of being a wetland, then a ferry crossing, to today, as a place for wildlife and for people to walk. As you walk around count how many different sounds you can hear. How many are made by people and how many are made by wildlife?



Lave fishing and salmon

On a rising tide, taking a lave net into the shallow water is a traditional way of catching fish, such as salmon. The salmon either swim into the net, or the person out fishing watches for salmon moving and catches one before it reaches deep water. At Black Rock, the lave net fishery keeps the tradition of lave fishing alive in Wales.

Today, lave fishing in the River Severn has a very low impact as it catches very small number of fish. However, fish such as salmon are declining due to overfishing, pollution, changing climate, river barriers such as dams, and disease. If they became extinct, how would their absence affect river food chains?

Spotting wildlife

Explore the area and see how many different varieties of plants, bees and butterflies you are able to find. How many different types of birds can you spot on the site and along the river? Look at the different ways they find their food.



Herring gull – a common gull feeding on the estuary



Meadow brown butterfly – common during the summer on grasses and flowers



Bumblebee – many varieties with different coloured tails and bands across their bodies



Knapweed – purple flower heads and loved by insects

Landmarks

Look around you at the different landmarks. Facing towards the water, the Severn Bridge (to you left) was opened in 1966 and with increasing traffic, the Second Severn Crossing (to your right) was built and opened in 1996. It was renamed the Prince of Wales Bridge in 2018. The tall square brick building to the right of the second bridge is a pumping station that pumps water out of the Severn Tunnel.



Historical clues

What evidence can you spot, in the water and behind the coastal path, that the ferry and the railway once existed? Look closely at what is in the mud and scan inland behind the garden of the nearby house.

