



BOARDWALK IN BLACK ALDER SWAMP



Location

Ķemeri, Jūrmala, at the Nature Conservation Agency Pierīga Regional administration building "Meža māja".

Description

During a short walk, the path invites you to a wet broadleaf forest – the Black Alder swamp on the banks of River Vēršupīte. Formed by the changing water levels of the river floodplain, the forest is dominated by Black Alder, with some mixture of Aspen, Oak and Ash. Large amounts of various deadwood provide perfect conditions for diversity of species. Undergrowth is formed by Hazel, Bird-cherry and Spindle. The ground is covered by different plants demanding large amount of moisture, for example Watercress and Yellow Iris.

For a careful observer the swamp forest will be a world full of discoveries in all seasons. It is fascinating in spring and in the beginning of summer when glorious spring flowers are in blossom and forest birds can be heard. In the middle of summer it turns into a shadowy, green kingdom full of life and mysteries, whereas in autumn it changes its palette to golden and rusty shades, and the diversity of moss and mushrooms can be seen on the stems of bare trees. In cold and snowy winters frozen puddles and the river bed become natural canvas for capturing animal footprint patterns. Almost all woodpecker species present in Latvia can be found here including the symbol of the National Park - White-backed Woodpecker.



Best time to visit

Spring, summer, autumn.

The path offers a special adventure in spring when the whole forest is babbling with the waters of the overflowed Vēršupīte River and covered by golden carpet of Marsh Marigolds. When visiting the path during summer, take into account that numbers of mosquitoes inhabiting this perfect wetland area can sometimes beat the worst expectations.



Tree-creeper

Type of transport: on foot

Time necessary for visiting: 30 min.

Length: 500 m

Fee: free of charge

Open: throughout the year

Type: circular

Locality: Black Alder swamp

Degree of difficulty: easy

Covering

Wooden footbridges. Average width of footbridges – 100 cm, minimal – 85 cm. There are several broadenings (outlook places) – up to 109 cm of width.

Attention! In wet and rainy weather wooden boards become slippery. In winter footbridges may be covered with snow.

Utilities

Information stands tell about the things to see along the path. Parking space is available. During the summer season toilets are available in the information centre "Meža māja", in the rest of the year on weekdays in the main building of the Administration.

Marking

There is no special marking. The path leads along wooden footbridges, it does not split and it is easy to find the way.

Environment accessibility

Accessible for families with baby carriages. For visitors in wheelchairs a companion is recommended.

Getting there

- by train Rīga–Ķemeri–Tukums up to the station Ķemeri, then 2,5 km long walk along Tukuma Str. and Tūristu Str. up to "Meža māja";
- by car along Talsi (P128) or Ventspils (A10) motorway until turn to Ķemeri, then follow the main road up to the "Meža māja";
- from Jurmala by bus No. 6 from Sloka or by minibus No. 10 from the central parts of Jūrmala City (Bulduri, Majori, Dubulti etc.) up to Ķemeri, bus stop "Meža māja".

Information Centre of Ķemeri National Park "Meža māja"

Offers information on:

- nature paths and routes in ĶNP;
- other activities and services available in the territory of ĶNP;
- environmental education events;
- guide services.

The Information Centre is open from June to August Wed-Sun 11am-6pm

in May and September Sat – Sun 11am-5pm

from September to April tourism information is available at the main building of the Administration Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.



Marsh marigolds





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Bird watching in the black alder floodplain forest

Considerable amounts of deadwood in the swamp provide excellent living conditions for woodpeckers and different cavity-nesting birds. The most promising time for a visit is spring from the middle of March until the beginning of June as this is considered to be the biggest activity time for woodpeckers – they are drumming, making nest holes and just “messing around” on tree trunks, their everyday life fully uncovered by the lack of leaves. The best chance of capturing at least some part of this is during early morning hours - in good weather conditions and in the right season you might be lucky to spot almost all of the nine woodpecker species found in Latvia (see pictures on the right) except the Green Woodpecker. Sometimes it is even possible to detect approximate whereabouts of woodpeckers’ nest holes – their young make a lot of noise during feeding.

With summer, autumn and winter being somewhat lower season for woodpeckers, it is definitely worth dropping by. Careful observation may lead to success – just pay attention to those quiet, yet characteristic noises caused by pecking and peeling of the bark of a tree. Patience, attention and silent behavior might be the key to the chance of seeing other bird species as well – tits, wrens or robins, sometimes rather close.

Small birds are used to the footbridge and gladly use it as a rest platform or observation post.



Wryneck



Middle spotted woodpecker



Great spotted woodpecker



Three-toed woodpecker



White-backed woodpecker



Leser spotted woodpecker



Grey-headed woodpecker



Black woodpecker

