

Notes to accompany slide show – KS2

Overview

Description	This presentation will help you introduce the wetlands of the Avalon Marshes to you pupils. It gives an overview of the characteristic, history and wildlife of the wetlands.
Time	Allow 30-40 minutes to run through the 18 slides with your pupils, encouraging interaction all the way through
Curriculum	Science – identify and name a variety of living things in the local and wider environment; recognise that environments can change and that this can sometimes pose dangers to living things. Geography – name and locate geographical regions and their identifying features; describe and understand key aspects of physical geography; use maps. History – changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age; the Roman Empire and its impact on Britain.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarise pupils with the name ‘Avalon Marshes’ and where the Marshes are. • Prompt thinking and discussion about wetlands and wetland wildlife. • Give pupils a broad overview of the characteristics and history of the Avalon Marshes, including ways in which the Marshes are used by people
Learning outcomes	At the end of this introduction all pupils should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the Avalon Marshes. • Talk about some historical findings in the Avalon Marshes. • Describe a wetland habitat and some wildlife found in it. • Give an example of something people do in the Avalon Marshes.
Linked resources	<p>Pick & Mix – all of our Pick & Mix activities can be used for KS2 pupils</p> <p>Factsheets – all of our Factsheets can provide teachers with extra information</p> <p>Audio – Avalon Marshes, A Peatland Story; Tales From the Marshes; Somerset Wetlands CD</p> <p>Film (YouTube channel) – various wildlife films; Sights & Sounds of the Marshes (films about farming, peat and history made by young people).</p> <p>Specialist equipment – Avalon Marshes Water Model; Avalon Marshes Peat Dig; Avalon Marshes Floor Map; Avalon Marshes Ruckles.</p>



Teachers' notes

Notes - Questions in italics are direct questions for pupils

1. AM logo

Tell your pupils that they will be learning about a place called the Avalon Marshes. *Has anyone heard of the Avalon Marshes?*

Has anyone been to the Avalon Marshes?

What can you tell the rest of the class about the marshes?

If no one has been ask your pupils what a marsh is and what they imagine a marsh might be like.

2. Marsh landscape

Ask your pupils to look at the picture, and give them 30 seconds to talk to the person next to them about what they can see in the picture.

What did you spot in the picture?

e.g. water, reeds, plants, trees, sky, Glastonbury Tor

Some words to describe the marshes (each will appear on a click) –

Wetland (a wet area of land containing bogs, swamps, lakes and ditches)

Ancient (it is full of history, people have been using the marshes for thousands of years)

Habitat (the Marshes contain lots of different habitats that are good for lots of different plants and birds)

Wildlife (because the Marshes have lots of habitats, they are very rich in wildlife)

3. Map of UK and Somerset

Help your pupils orientate themselves and the Avalon Marshes on the map/s.

4. Map of the AM

Help pupils orientate the map. Is the location of your school on the map? Are any of the pupils' homes on the map? Discuss where the Marshes are in relation to the sea. Discuss what the green and cream colours indicate on the map (green = low lying land, cream = hills and higher land). Look for the cream area that marks Glastonbury Tor

5. Glastonbury Tor and reeds

The Avalon Marshes is the area of wetlands around Glastonbury and the Tor. It is low-lying (less than 10m above sea level) and full of water and wildlife – trees, plants and animals.

6. Ancient track-ways

People have been living in the marshes for thousands of years, finding ways to live in such a wet area. Before there were roads people built raised wooden paths to get across the reedbeds and bogs. Many have been found by archaeologists. The most famous is The Sweet Track, a Stone Age track way that was made in 3806BC and used for around 10 years. It was 2km long and made from oak. The photo is of a replica that is on Shapwick Heath NNR.

7. Iron Age Villages

Several 'lake villages' have been discovered that were built in the Iron Age on the edges of bogs. People used clay to create raised dry areas to build roundhouses on. The most famous is the Glastonbury Lake Village, where over 40 roundhouses were found along with dug-out canoes, beads, pottery, bones and tools.

8. Roman industry

Archaeologists have found evidence of Roman salt making in the marshes, made by channelling water from the coastal salt marshes and heating it to leave just salt. This was valuable in trading. Roman hordes of coins have also been found in the area, as well as evidence that the salt-makers were making fake coins too!

9. Draining the Marshes

It's difficult working and living in a very wet area! Despite trackways and boats, people looked for other solutions. The Romans started draining water, but in the 1700s it began more thoroughly, with the digging of rhynes (pronounced 'reens') and later the introduction of water pumps.

Introducing the Avalon Marshes



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10. Peat extraction

The dark wet soil in the Marshes is called peat and it has lots of carbon in it. This means that when you dry it, it burns well. The Romans knew this! But it wasn't until the 1800s that people started to dig up lots of it for fuel (to keep their house warm and to cook on). More recently people have dug it up to use as compost on their gardens.

11. Cattle, farming in the marshes

Since the stone age people have been farming animals in the marshes, making the most of the rich summer pasture for cows and sheep to graze on. In the winter when the marshes are very wet and often flooded, the animals are moved to higher ground. Farming is a key part of Avalon Marshes life today

12. The Avalon Marshes today

A bird's eye view of the Marshes. A mosaic of different habitats, with a mix of land and water. The funny shapes are where peat has been extracted and the holes have filled with water. Within the wetlands are lots of different areas of habitat, such as:

Grassland – habitat mainly consisting of different grasses. Also wild flowers and the odd tree.

Bog – wet spongy ground, often in areas with poor drainage, often acidic

Reedbed – area of shallow water with extensive growth of common reeds

Woodland – land covered in trees and shrubs

Water – shallow or deep bodies of water (rivers, ditches, lakes, ponds)

Farmland – area used to raise animals or crops

What sorts of plants do you think you would see in the Avalon Marshes?

e.g. reeds, grass, moss, pond weed, trees, rushes

13. Wetland plants/trees

Because there is so much water in the Avalon Marshes, you find lots of plants and trees that like to be in wet places, including:

Reeds, willows, and marsh iris – all of these can grow in water

Cotton grass and sundew (a carnivorous plant!) – both like soggy bogs

14. Glastonbury Tor and reeds

Have another look at this picture.

What animals can you see in this picture?

Swans love the Avalon Marshes because there is a lot of water and lots of plants.

What other animals do you think would live in the Avalon Marshes?

e.g. ducks, frogs, dragonflies, fish, kingfishers, starlings, otters etc

15. Wetland birds

There are lots of birds in the Avalon Marshes, including:

Heron, bittern, great white egret and kingfisher

These birds like living there because they eat other animals in the water like fish, insects and pond snails

16. Wetland animals

There are lots of other animals that live in the Avalon Marshes and like the water too!

Dragonflies, otters, water voles, butterflies and snakes all love it in the Avalon Marshes

17. People enjoying the Marshes

Now the Avalon Marshes is a place for people to live, work and enjoy. You can go cycling, walking, pond dipping, exploring, discovering and more.

18. AM logo and website, HLF logo

We've come to the end of the introduction to the Avalon Marshes. Ask your pupils to do the following:

In pairs describe the Avalon Marshes

Think of something that archaeologists have discovered in the Avalon Marshes and tell the class

Describe a wetland and some of the plants and animals you find there

Give an example of something that people do in the Avalon Marshes today