

Hello, I'm Lance and I'm a kestrel. I'm going to tell you all about the huntsmen who used to work in this wood.

Hundreds of years ago, Skipton Castle Woods was part of a great hunting forest. Imagine the woodland you're in now but many, many times bigger, with large animals like deer, wild boars and wolves roaming around. Does that sound a bit scary? We still have a small family of deer here, but definitely no wild boars or wolves!

The king or baron who owned the land would employ a huntsman to track and stalk animals across the forest. He would sometimes hide behind a 'stalking horse' so he could creep up on his quarry. At first these were real horses but later in history they were made of canvas.

Kestrels like me were often used by the huntsman to catch small animals and birds which we were trained to bring back to him. Today, no huntsmen hunt in Skipton Castle Woods, but we do still have hunters. They include birds, animals and insects, but don't worry – they wouldn't want to eat you!

Can you help the willow huntsman standing near the entrance gate to find his stalking horse? It's grazing above a bridge at the end of the wood. On your journey, see what you can spot using the skills of a huntsman – looking, tracking, listening and being still. He would have been very quiet and careful not to make any sound as he moved. Could you do that? Would you have made a good huntsman?

Turn over the page and see if you can spot some of the hunters and the hunted who live in this wood.

Ask your grown up to share photos online of your journey by using #SkiptonCastleWoods.





**HUNTER**



**Grey heron**

Standing as still as a statue, it waits to spear a fish with its sharp beak.

**HUNTER**



**Red kite**

Twisting its forked tail like a rudder, it catches birds in flight.

**HUNTER**



**Dragonfly**

Folding its legs like a basket, it catches small insects to feed on. But it has many predators, including birds, reptiles, frogs and mammals.

**HUNTER**



**Kingfisher**

Perching above the water, it dives in like a dart to catch a fish.



**Beetle**

Five species of bat hunt here for flies, beetles and moths.

**HUNTER**



**Ladybird**

After scouting for the best patch of aphids, it can eat up to 50 a day.



**Butterfly**

Eaten by many species, including birds and dragonflies.

**HUNTER**



**Sparrowhawk**

Selecting its quarry, it swoops in fast to take the bird in mid-air.



**Worm**

Badgers love eating worms. It makes their poo sloppy!

Top tip: spot red kites hunting above the woodland edges, and the grey heron near the waterfall and Eller Beck.

Use a magnifying glass to carefully examine footprints, feathers and droppings on your walk.

Feel free to copy and share this for personal and educational use – and don't forget, there are loads more brilliant activities to download on our website!

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