

Bird watching at the Coquet Estuary



Location

The area to watch starts at the bottom of Beal Bank (NU253056) where the river is to the north of the A1068 (see above) and farmland is to the south. From here there is good watching all the way to the sea. The **south bank** can be walked as far as the Marina (NU 263049) and the walk picked up again in the harbour. There is interesting watching all the way with birds on the river, the mudflats, in the harbour and Little Shore and in the fields along the A1068.



On the **north side** of the estuary is an area variously known as The Gut or Old Water (NU258055). This is a tidal area of salt marsh, mud flats at low tide and developing reed beds (see above). There are dunes seaward of the marsh.

Parking

As you leave Warkworth for Amble on the A1068 the river appears on your left at the bottom of Beal Bank (NU253056). After about 100m there is a parking bay to the left (by the weir). Continuing along the main road, there is another parking bay 200m further on, also on the left. The Braid provides off road parking. To park there, take the first left after the 30mph sign (The Marina) and then first left to the parking area.

There is paid parking in the harbour area.

Access to the North Side is from the council car park by Coquet View Leisure Park (NU255065). Travelling south, the road to this is the sharp left turn at the lights immediately before the road bridge. From the car park walk down the gravel path towards the sea and turn right through the gate. After 500m there is a path to the right leading to a wooden bridge. From here there are good views of the reed bed and tidal flats and marshes. Walking another 500m you arrive at the estuary.

Accessibility



The estuary

There are no mobility problems watching from the A1068 pull-ins, the harbour, the south pier and the little shore. The Braid does present more of a challenge, and is unsuitable for wheelchair users. There is a car park but the track to the shore is uneven and has potholes.

The north side or Old Water

Access to the site is not suitable for those with any mobility issues. There is a very steep gravel path from the car park.

The Birds

What's around in summer?

The river - mute swan, mallard, eider, cormorant, grey heron, little grebe, peregrine, sandwich tern, common tern, roseate tern, arctic tern, black-headed gull, greater black-backed gull, herring gull, rock pipit.

Mud flats - shelduck, little egret, oystercatcher, lapwing, ringed plover, curlew, turnstone, redshank, pied wagtail

Harbour - eider, cormorant, turnstone, black-headed gulls, greater black-backed gull, herring gull, sandwich tern, common tern, roseate tern, arctic tern.

Farmland - at high tide grey heron, a few lapwing & curlew, barn owl, pied wagtail.

Reed beds, marsh and mud flats at Castles Dike - teal, mallard, little egret, moorhen, coot, oystercatcher, a few lapwing & curlew, redshank, bearded tit, grasshopper warbler, sedge warbler, pied wagtail

Dunes and path - kestrel, barn owl, skylark, stonechat, meadow pipit, linnet

Car park at (NU255065) blackbird, chaffinch, dunnock, blue- great-coal tit, robin, chiffchaff, willow warbler, whitethroat, sedge warbler, reed warbler, blackcap

Sea watching from the piers (caution on the North Pier needed) – eider, gannet, cormorant, the terns.



What's around in autumn and winter?

The terns and summer visitors such as the warblers have gone, being replaced by the visiting waders, ducks and overwintering swans/geese:

The river – wigeon, goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, goosander

Mud flats - Brent geese, grey and golden plover, lapwing, curlew, whimbrel, black-tailed godwit, knot, ruff, sanderling, dunlin, spotted redshank, snipe

Harbour - turnstone, occasional Mediterranean and glaucous gulls, black redstart.

Farmland - whooper and mute swan, white fronted-pink footed- Canada - greylag geese, the waders at high tide.

Reed beds, marsh and mud flats at Castles Dike - wigeon, spotted redshank, curlew, snipe, kingfisher, wheatear, snow bunting,

Dunes and path - short-eared owl, wheatear, twite, snow bunting

Car park at Warkworth (NU255065) - no new birds

Sea watching from the North and South piers - common and velvet scoter, red-throated and black-throated divers, great crested grebe, purple sandpiper on rock protection.

What's around in spring?

The summer migrants are arriving in spring and all stay except the wheatear. This is a good season to see a lot of wheatears arriving and resting on the salt marsh grasses on the North side before moving on the upland valleys.

The best time of the year?

I would say autumn and winter on the estuary with the arrival of the waders and swans/geese but the Warkworth car park area in spring/summer with its warblers.

The tides?

Low and rising tides (2-3 hours before high tide) are the most productive times for watching. Standing on the Castle's Dyke Bridge on the rising winter tide you will see the waders being driven up into the salt marsh and pool areas.

Not Just Birds

The Warkworth Links side has an extensive dune system which has a wide variety of wild flowers. Amongst other plants there early purple, northern marsh, heath spotted, common spotted, hybrids of the last two, pyramidal and possibly bee orchids all occur.



Early Purple Orchid



Northern Marsh Orchid



Pyramidal Orchid