

Lindisfarne

National Nature Reserve

NATURAL
ENGLAND



Welcome

Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve

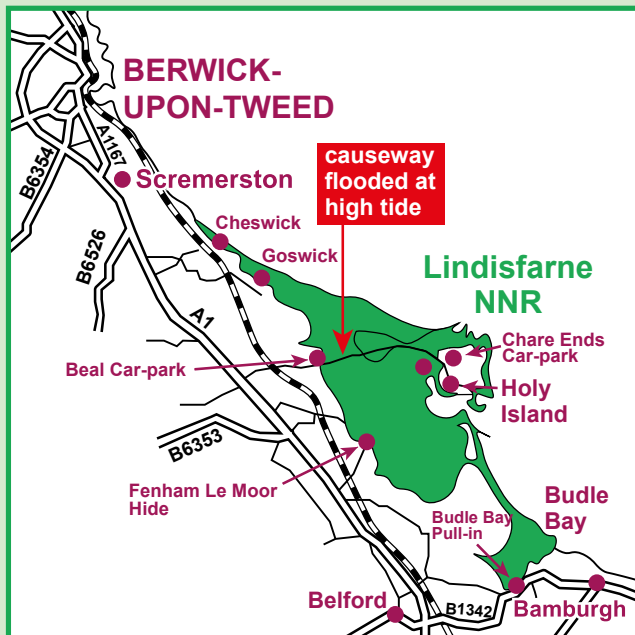
On the edge of Britain, land and water meet. Shifting sands and tides combine to create the 3500 hectares of dunes, saltmarsh, rocky shore, sand and mudflats of Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, home to a fascinating array of wildlife.

This ever-changing landscape has been moulded through time by man and nature to create a unique and spectacular habitat, waiting for you to discover.

Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve doesn't just include the Holy Island of Lindisfarne it covers over 65km of coastline stretching from Cheswick Black Rocks in the North to Budle Bay in the South.

England's National Nature Reserves are among the best wildlife and earth heritage sites in the country and many are important in an international context.

Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve is managed by Natural England in consultation with local residents, farmers and the Joint Advisory Committee.



Leave nothing... and take away only memories.

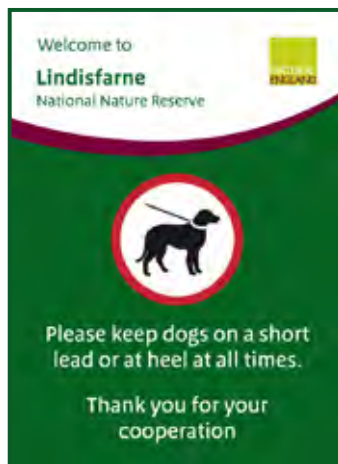


Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve is managed by Natural England in order to protect the important habitats and species which you will discover in this leaflet. We all have a role to play in making sure this amazing Reserve continues to prosper for future generations to enjoy.

One way you can help is by planning your visit to minimise your impact on the Environment and the Nature Trail is a designated route perfect for exploring the Reserve. One handy tip when walking in the dunes is to stick to existing routes to avoid damage to this sensitive habitat. You may be able to join in with one of our guided walks or events – check out our blog for more details.

Your visit.....

With wide sweeping beaches and amazing views, it's no wonder that visitors want to share the Reserve with their dogs. We welcome responsible dog owners and this includes keeping dogs on a lead or at heel at all times (even on the beach) to avoid disturbance to birds and grazing livestock. It's actually one of our bylaws which are there to protect the Reserve. They can be found on the back of our welcome signs. Don't be offended if you are asked to put your dog on a lead when out walking - we want you and your dog to enjoy your visit and this includes making the least amount of impact on the species and habitats you have come to enjoy.



A helpful sign you might see during your visit

The Reserve is Open Access; however, at certain times of the year we may restrict access. Restrictions will generally be in place to help sensitive areas with important wildlife and species such as bird breeding areas in the spring and summer. Any restrictions will be clearly signposted and if you have any queries – just get in contact and we will be happy to help.

Bicycles aren't permitted as they can cause damage to sensitive areas. There is a Sustrans route running parallel to the Reserve which has amazing views and takes you away from the busy roads.

Please use official campsites adjacent to the Reserve. All habitats on the Reserve are important for rare and endangered species and camping can damage areas which they rely on to survive. Fires are not permitted anywhere on the Reserve for similar reasons.



Eider



Caution

Pirri-pirri bur, a non-native from New-Zealand and Australia, was first discovered on Holy Island in the 1930's. This invasive plant takes over areas of bare ground and competes with native plants. It is spread through burs which can stick to clothing as well as animals.

Please keep dogs on a lead or at heel and whilst walking in the dunes keep to existing desire lines at all times. This will reduce disturbance to ground nesting birds and the likelihood of coming into contact with pirri-pirri bur. Please ensure that it is not spread to other sites by checking your clothing and pets and removing any burs before you leave Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve.

What makes Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve special?

The Reserve can be enjoyed all year round. Winter is the best time to see visiting waterfowl, between their arrival in autumn and departure in spring. Autumn and spring are the best times for spotting rare birds on migration. The stunning flowers, butterflies and other insects are best enjoyed in spring and summer.



Dark green fritillary

Secrets of the dunes

Brought ashore by water and wind, the sand of the dunes is gradually stabilised by marram grass. Once stable, dunes support many other plants. In the dune slacks (the damper low-lying areas within the dunes) several nationally important plants exist including up to 11 species of orchid. Among them is the Lindisfarne helleborine, which is found only on Holy Island. This abundance of flowering plants provides a valuable food source for moths, butterflies such as dark green fritillary and ringlet, and other insects.

Teaming with life

In autumn and winter the mudflats host huge flocks of wintering waterfowl, which arrive from the Arctic to feed on the extremely rich supply of marine creatures and vegetation living in and on the mud.



You can't see these creatures, but you can see the tiny casts they leave behind all over the mudflats.

A variety of wading birds, ducks and geese over-winter on the Reserve. Among these are the rare light-bellied brent geese, which breed in Svalbard (also known as Spitsbergen), the most northerly inhabited island within the Arctic Circle. They start to arrive in substantial numbers in September; the Reserve is the largest wintering site in Britain and holds approximately half of the world population. Other internationally important wintering waterfowl found here include pink-footed geese, wigeon, grey plover and bar-tailed godwits.

Reserve staff and volunteers play an important role in conserving the precious habitats that attract them.

Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve

Nature Trail



Time: 1.5 - 3hrs **Distance:** 5km/3miles

Difficulty: Flat and mostly level. Muddy in places during autumn/winter

Follow this trail to see the many different aspects of Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve. Along the route, numbered wooden posts mark stopping points to view the stunning scenery, plant and wildlife.

Post 1 - Window on Wild Lindisfarne

Look seaward - the tall beacons ahead of you helped sea-going vessels chart a course out of the natural harbour, known locally as the Ouse. Uprturned boats on the shore are reminders of the herring industry that once supported the local population. Today's fish catchers are mostly birds including cormorants, eider ducks and also summer-visiting terns that migrate here from Africa. Wintering birds find plentiful food on the wet fields, mudflats and in the Ouse. Light-bellied brent geese, curlews and the much smaller dunlin can be seen from autumn onwards and red-breasted mergansers can be seen on the sea. Search the wall near the gate to find ferns, including wall-rue and maidenhair spleenwort. White-flowered scurvy grass, which provided essential vitamins for sailors, grows in clumps between the stone seats near the shore.



Red-breasted merganser

Post 2 - Whin Sill – A Northumbrian Icon

Continue along the road and find **Post 2** on the right, just through the castle gate.

The Whin Sill, a line of very hard rock running across northern England, provides a foundation for the sixteenth-century castle. Looking out over towards the sea, smart black and white oystercatchers, with their bright orange bills, roost on outlying rocky islets.



Oystercatcher

You are now standing at the end of a nineteenth-century waggon-way, which brought limestone that used to be quarried on the north of the island, to be burnt in limekilns by the castle. Follow this tramway to the left of the castle. On the rocky base of the castle, look out for sea campion, biting stonecrop and sea thrift amongst the red valerian and wallflowers.

Post 3 - Rocky Shore

Do not go under the bridge, but climb up onto the waggon-way. Walk until you reach **Post 3** next to the gate.



Ringed plover

Looking out to sea in clear weather, you will see the Farne Islands, another National Nature Reserve and the most easterly outcrop of the Whin Sill. The islands are home to many grey seals and thousands of seabirds, including guillemots, puffins and kittiwakes, which all breed there. You can also see behind you a storm beach, where fierce weather has thrown up countless stones rounded by the sea. Most fascinating are St. Cuthbert's Beads, fossilised remains of animals called crinoids, which resemble the broken beads of a rosary. Although this area looks apparently barren, ringed plovers may breed here and rock pipits search for food.

Post 4 - Rocky Shore

Continue along the waggon-way.

If you look across to the foreshore, you may see wading birds such as knot and turnstone. As their name implies, turnstone upturn pebbles to feed on insects underneath. Around the rock pools grow various seaweeds, including serrated wrack, bladder wrack and knotted wrack. In the rocks pools hermit and shore crabs may be found whilst winkles and limpets graze on the surface of the rocks.



Squat lobster

Nature Trail



For more information on being a responsible visitor please see pages 3&4

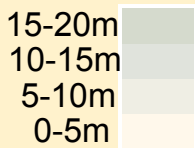
Snook Point

North Shore

The Snook

Lindisfarne Causeway

Holy Island Sands



Lindisfarne NNR		Footpath	-----	Post Number	
Nature trail	●●●●●	Sand		Toilets	
Extension to trail	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Saltmarsh		Parking	
Minor road		Dunes		Wildlife Watching Hide	
Other road		Mud			
Track		Rocky Shore			
Bridleway	-----	Sea Cliffs			

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Post 5 - The Lough

Continue along the waggon-way to **Post 5** at the bird hide by the Lough.

The Lough hide is a great place to stop and look at the wildlife in front of the hide. Before Christians settled here, alder, hazel, birch and willow wooded the area. The shallow freshwater lake was perhaps dug out by monks, to provide a water supply and for fish. From inside the hide, you can watch waterfowl such as little grebe, shoveler, mallard, moorhen and coot. Black-headed gulls nest in the vegetation, which includes velvet-tipped reedmace, waving reeds, yellow iris and floating bogbean. Peregrine, sparrowhawk and short-eared owls hunt over the Lough in winter, when diving ducks such as pochard and tufted duck may be joined by small groups of whooper swans.



Mute swan

Post 6 - The Dunes

Continue along the waggon-way until you reach the kissing gate and **Post 6**, opposite the welcome sign.

Marram grass is the main dune stabiliser. Once the sand becomes fixed by marram, it gives way to other grasses, mosses and lichens. Tussocks of grass provide homes for insects and make ideal nest sites for skylarks and meadow pipits, hidden from the eyes of local foxes. If you have a four legged friend with you it is important to keep them on a lead at this point to avoid disturbing the amazing wildlife in the dunes.



Skylark

Post 7 - Grazing for Wildlife

Turn left, following the path beside the farm wall. At the wall corner, you reach **Post 7**.

The grassland here is grazed by livestock in autumn and winter. This grazing keeps the grass short and allows marsh and spotted orchids, twayblade and grass of Parnassus to flourish. Rare dark green fritillaries fly here in summer and you may see grayling basking in sunny, sandy spots. Wet ditches and pools offer common frogs, smooth newts and other amphibians the chance to breed.



Post 8 - Butterflies, Moths and Wildflowers

Please keep to the path, continuing until it meets the Straight Lonnen at **Post 8**.

Here too, you may see moths and butterflies, some attracted to the bright yellow flowers of ragwort in the summer. The small tortoiseshell butterfly feeds on these, as does the dark red and green cinnabar moth. Its caterpillar can be recognised by its black and yellow hoops. A similar looking moth is the six-spotted burnet, which cannot resist the purple and blue spikes of viper's bugloss.



Viper's bugloss

Post 9 - A small detour - Sandy Bays

For an interesting extension to the walk, turn right and follow white-topped posts through the dunes to the final red-topped post, from where you may see seals and nesting fulmars. Otherwise, turn left and follow the Straight Lonnen back to the car park.

Along the way you may be accompanied by the eerie calls of lapwings or the strident alarm of the watchful redshank. Birds of prey such as kestrel and merlin use the dry stone walls as hunting lookouts. The hawthorn hedges are a magnet for birds crossing to and from Scandinavia in spring and autumn. These migrants include thrushes such as redwing and fieldfare, in large noisy flocks, delighting in the hawthorn berries in autumn.



Barnacle geese - wigeon (In background)

Seals

We have up to 4,000 grey seals hauling out on the sand flats, mudflats and rocky shore of Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve. You may be lucky enough to see some of the seals close at hand as you walk around the Reserve. If you do come

across them please keep your dog on a short lead (their bite can be harmful to dogs and humans) and keep a clear distance -we recommend at least 50m but this might not always be possible. The rarer harbour seals can also be seen, with around 10 recorded annually. Most years there are harbour seal pups hauled out near to the bridge on the causeway.



Geology

The geology of the Island is of considerable interest. The foundation rocks which form the island are carboniferous, consisting of limestones, shales, sandstone and coal seams.

The rocky outcrops such as St. Cuthbert's Island, Heugh and Beblowe Crag are composed of hard dolerite. The Holy Island dolerite is part of the Whin

Sill, a large body of igneous rock which occurs at several localities across northern England. The Whin Sill formed about 295 million years ago, when hot magma forced its way upwards from deep within the Earth and solidified before it reached the surface.



St. Cuthbert's Island - Extraordinary geological feature, a place of spiritual importance and part of the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve

History

St Aidan from Iona brought Celtic Christianity to Lindisfarne, and eventually the North East of England and beyond, in 634/5 AD.



Succeeded by St Cuthbert, who became known as the Fire of the North, this ushered in the Golden Age of Northumbria – a time when the world-renowned Lindisfarne Gospels were created by one monk, Abbot Eadfrith.

St Cuthbert's well documented appreciation and respect for the natural world has led many to award him the title of Lindisfarne's first Nature Warden.

A link is maintained with Anglo-Saxon Lindisfarne via the Green Shiel site on the Reserve – a 9th century settlement whose inhabitants may have been forced to move by the invasions of Vikings in the 870s.

Manufacturing has always been a staple of the island. After the Norman Conquest, the new order of Benedictine monks at Lindisfarne Priory, built in the 12th century, managed farming, fishing, mining, quarrying, limeworking and brewing.

Real industry came to the Island in the 19th century, when lime kilns were built, initially at Chare Ends and later at the Castle, to make lime from the limestone brought to these kilns from the quarry at Ness End. The kilns themselves survive, as do many of the walkways which criss-cross the island - these were the original tramways along which ponies pulled the limestone to the kilns in wagons.

Fishing has always been a mainstay of the Island, and boats still leave the harbour today. At its peak in the mid 19th century the herring fleet and the itinerant fisher lassies were part of a seasonal industry, and tubs of herring would stretch from the Harbour up to the Castle.

Today all is quiet on the industrial front, and tourism is now the main business of the Island. The building of the causeway commenced in the early 1950s and was finalised in 1966.

Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve was designated in 1964, and now extends to over 3500 hectares stretching from Cheswick Black Rocks in the north to Budle Point in the south. It continues to protect the habitats and associated species that make this area so special.

A Window on the Seasons

Spring As the darkness and cold of winter turns to spring, the Reserve bursts into life. Early wild flowers such as early marsh orchid begin to bloom in the dunes providing food and homes for the invertebrates which emerge as temperatures rise. Birds such as skylark and meadow pipits take advantage of the newly emerging food source and start to pair up and breed. Although we bid a fond farewell to geese and waterfowl that have been with us over the winter, they leave to head back to their breeding grounds in the high Arctic. We also welcome some of our summer visitors back from their long migration. One of the first tern species you will see are Sandwich terns calling as they fish out to sea. The rocky shore and coves of the east side of the Island are a great place to see them.

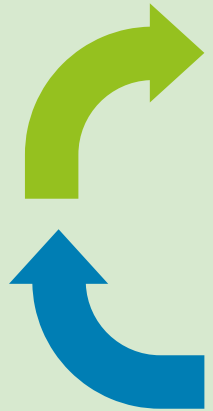


Sandwich tern

Winter The Reserve is a safe haven in winter for up to 50,000 birds which can be seen on the mud and sand flats. We have over 50% of the world's population of the rare light-bellied brent goose. They migrate here from Svalbard, in the High Arctic making the long journey to our shores. Along with wigeon and teal, they come here because of the large eel grass beds which they feed on. Waders such as bar-tailed godwit and oystercatcher are also drawn here and they feed on the thousands of worms and other invertebrates that live in the mud. If you are visiting during winter then Budle Bay is a great place to view this amazing migration spectacle. You may also like to try Fenham-le-Moor hide - a great place to view the geese and waders as they are pushed closer on the rising tide.



Light-bellied brent geese

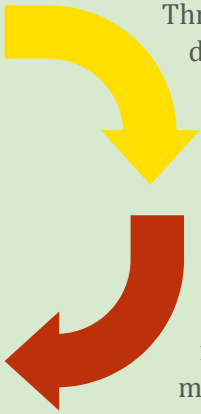


Summer Summer is an exciting time of year. The dunes are awash with colour, with wild flowers and orchids of which there are 11 species recorded. Butterflies flit and fly throughout the dunes adding further splashes of colour – look out for the beautiful dark green fritillary throughout the summer. Coming away from the dunes and venturing onto the shore there is further excitement as terns, oystercatchers and ringed plovers (collectively known as shorebirds) create small scrapes, no more than an indent in the sand and lay eggs.



Pyramidal Orchid

To give shorebird species the best chance of survival, our staff and volunteers warden fence off sensitive areas and watch over the nests throughout the summer months.



Throughout the Reserve visitors are asked to keep to paths and desire lines, and keep dogs on leads to avoid disturbance to nesting birds. This includes within the dunes where skylark, meadow pipit and lapwing nest in tussocks.

Autumn As the excitement of the summer breeding season comes to a close, the beaches around the Reserve become even more important to our shorebirds. Young birds move away from their scrapes and use the whole beach to rest, feed up and learn to fly. They are getting ready for their mammoth return migration to warmer climates for the winter period. If you see birds on the shore they need all the help they can get – please don't approach them and keep your dog on a lead. We start to say farewell to our summer visitors and welcome large flocks of geese and waders which migrate here to take advantage of the amazing feeding opportunities and safe haven the Reserve provides.

When the last flowers wilt it's up to us to give nature a hand by cutting vegetation and grazing areas with cattle and sheep. This allows us to tackle invasive species such as pirri pirri bur and Michaelmas daisy as well as opening up the sward to encourage flowers in the summer.



Wigeon in flight



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Photos: NE & JJD

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