

South Walney Nature Reserve



Cumbria
Wildlife Trust

Walney Island is one of the windiest places in Britain, so whilst you're enjoying a breath of fresh sea air, make sure you keep an eye out for great wildlife. In the spring, large numbers of birds like gulls and ducks come to nest, whilst in the autumn and winter, wading birds arrive and large flocks of geese fly in formations over the nature reserve to reach breeding grounds in warmer climates. Over 400 grey seals call this nature reserve their home.

Included in this pack:

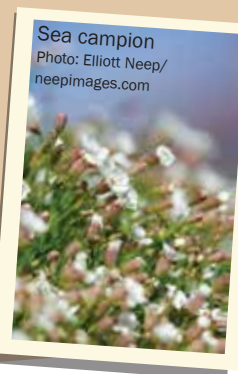
- Information on getting to and around the nature reserve
- A short history of South Walney
- Spotter sheets - easy, medium and difficult

Your walk

From the visitor centre, head through the small gate and up the grassy path to Observation Hide. The path descends, then turn right onto the gravel track which will take you all the way to Peggy Braithwaite Hide (look out for birds and seals). Follow the track onwards to Bay Hide, then up into the dunes, where you can take a left to Groyne Hide for views over the spit. Return the same way, then walk along the grassy path through Gull Meadow along the West Shore and up to Sea Hide, and from there you can walk along the path to return to the visitor centre.



Georgia, Marine Conservation Officer, says: "South Walney Nature Reserve is fantastic for all different types of wildlife in all seasons. But my favourite thing is the seals - and they are there all year around! See if you can spot the grey seals at high tide from Peggy Braithwaite Hide or from Groyne Hide at low tide. Watch them splash about in the water whilst they are fishing!"

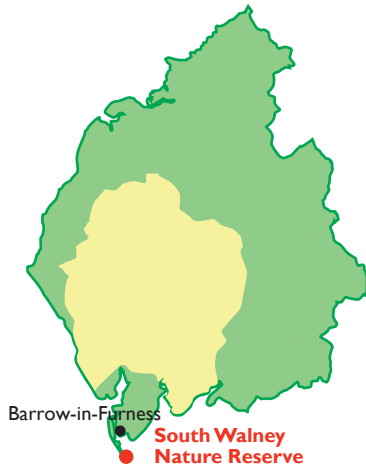


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GETTING TO THE NATURE RESERVE




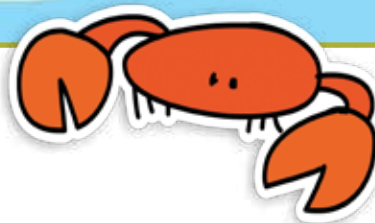
- *By car:* from Barrow-in-Furness follow signs for Walney Island. Cross Jubilee Bridge and follow the brown signs turning left at traffic lights. Follow this road for about 1km/0.6m then turn left down Carr Lane. Pass Biggar Village and follow the road to the South End Caravan Site. Follow the road for a further 1km until you reach the nature reserve.
- *By bicycle:* the nature reserve is 5km/3miles from National Route 70 (Walney to Wear) and National Route 700 The Bay Cycleway
- *By public transport:* buses run from Barrow-in-Furness to Biggar.



GETTING AROUND SOUTH WALNEY



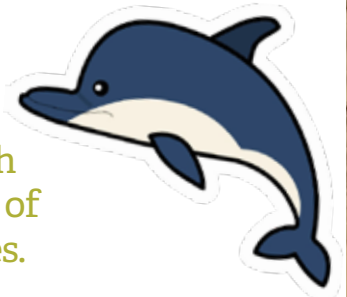
 For more information on features marked with this symbol, see 'A short history of South Walney'




A short history of South Walney Nature Reserve




South Walney forms the southern tip of Walney Island and during medieval times it was farmed by the monks of Furness Abbey. In the 19th and 20th century, salt, sand and gravel were extracted leaving large lagoons which now attract water-loving ducks, geese and gulls. South Walney has been a nature reserve since 1963 and has a range of habitats including saltmarsh, pebble beaches and sand dunes.





 Features with this symbol are marked on the South Walney map

In spring, colourful wildflowers can be seen along the paths such as viper's bugloss, harebell and sea campion. These attract butterflies such as the common blue. A sea of purple indicates the sea lavender in bloom on the salt marsh in Lighthouse Bay. 

There are 4,000 pairs of herring and lesser black-backed gulls nesting on the nature reserve, one of the largest ground-nesting gull colonies in Europe. South Walney also has one of the most southerly eider duck breeding colonies in Britain with 300 breeding pairs; look out for the colourful males with their black, white and green feathers.

250 different species of birds have been spotted on South Walney, and most of them are passing migrants. In winter, large numbers of wading birds such as the curlew, knot and dunlin can be seen in Lighthouse Bay feeding in the food-rich  muddy sand. Oystercatchers can be seen all year round and are easily spotted by their white and black feathers and bright red beak. Look out for grey seals at Peggy Braithwaite Hide  and Groyne Hide.

The vegetated pebble beaches  are a very rare habitat and plants like the yellow horned poppy and viper's bugloss grow on them. These plants are adapted to living in a harsh coastal environment with high winds and little fresh water and soil.

Looking over towards Barrow-in-Furness, you will see Piel Castle  on Piel Island, where there is evidence of human occupation for over 3,000 years. The lighthouse signals the most southerly tip of the nature reserve where on a clear day you can even see Scafell Pike and Blackpool Tower.

With thanks to RSPB and www.walney-island.com



EASY SPOTTER SHEET



South Walney Nature Reserve

Tick them off as you spot!



- Offshore wind farm
The wind turns these turbines around, which creates power for over 600,000 UK homes.



- Herring gull
Herring gulls are large, noisy gulls found all year round. Adults have light grey backs, white bodies and black wing tips.



- Lighthouse
The lighthouse was built in 1789 and is 21 metres tall! There are 91 steps to the top and the light flashes every 15 seconds.



- Piel Castle
The current castle was built in the 14th century and was intended to be used to keep cargo safe from pirates.



- Marram grass
Marram grass grows on sand dunes and is very important as its long roots bury deep into the sand to prevent the sand from being blown away by the wind.



What else did you spot?

MEDIUM SPOTTER SHEET

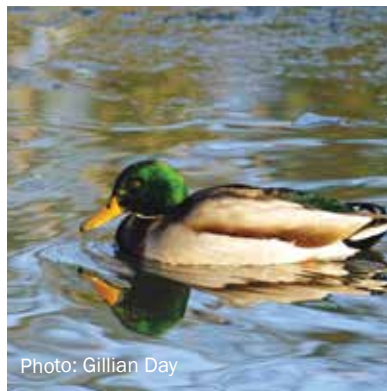


South Walney Nature Reserve

Tick them off as you spot!



- Oystercatcher
Striking black and white birds with a long red beak and pink legs. They use their long beak to delve into the sand to find shellfish to eat.



- Mallard duck
The UK's most common duck. Males have a bright green head, yellow bill, grey body and purple breast. Females are mainly brown with an orange bill.



- Harebell
The beautiful pale-blue bells flower between July and September. It is regularly visited by bumblebees and honey bees, providing a late autumn nectar source.



- Pyramidal Orchid
The purple-pink flowers are clustered in a spike at the top of the plant and are in flower from June to August. This orchid can grow to a height of 60cm!



- Viper's bugloss
Viper's bugloss has upright spikes of blue flowers, hairy stems and narrow pointy leaves.

What else did you spot?

DIFFICULT SPOTTER SHEET



South Walney Nature Reserve

Tick them off as you spot!



- Grey seal
Grey seals are the largest carnivore in Britain. Males grow to about 2.3 metres while females are smaller and average 1.8 metres in length.



- Yellow horned poppy
This plant has long roots to protect it from being uprooted by strong winds and fleshy leaves to retain water – important for plants living in harsh coastal environment.



- Common blue
The bright common blue male can be seen flying around the dunes between April and October. Females have brown wings with a blue body.



- Eider duck
The heaviest, yet fastest flying duck! Males have white, green and black feathers and females are a mottled brown, which acts as camouflage against predators when she is nesting in vegetation.



- Cinnabar caterpillar
These caterpillars have striking gold and black stripes and feed on ragwort. They develop into beautiful bright red and black moths.



What else did you spot?