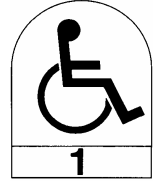




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English Tourism Council

Bird watching from Beautiful Burgh

East Anglia is unarguably Britain's best bird watching region and Burgh Castle is centrally placed for visiting the numerous wetland sites on grazing marsh, reed and woodland swamp fen and the Norfolk Broads. The coastal dunes at Winterton Ness and the Cley marshes and Blakeney Point further north provide contrasting habitats and species, whilst the easterly position of the whole region makes it a natural staging point all year round for many different migratory species as well as residents. Bird-watching can be pursued at every level from walking, boating or pottering around in a car or on bikes to visiting nature trails, taking guided tours of reserves or intensive observation from bird hides. Although there are fifteen nature reserves and sites of special scientific interest within fifteen miles (23 kms.) of Burgh, a great many of the waterfowl, birds of prey and local residents are just as commonly to be seen from waterways, footpaths and back lanes which are publicly accessible at all times.

Burgh Castle itself over-looks two famous areas for serious bird watchers: the RSPB reserve at Berney marshes and the tidal mud-flats of Breydon Water. Ralph McCloughlin of the RSPB describes below a short walk from the Marina, which overlooks these spots. But easiest of all is to relax with a pair of binoculars on the sun terrace outside The Fisherman's at the riverside or around the marina. One of our boat-owners regularly watches a grey heron take up its position at dusk on a pile at the edge of the marina, before fishing or picking off a stray newly born duckling. And for a conducted tour from our own doorstep, join the RSPB boat trip at the quayside of the Fisherman's on the first Sunday of each month (book beforehand on 01493-700645 to be sure of your place in the boat).

David Eley is a keen local bird watcher and a member of the RSPB. Here he introduces visitors to the year round attractions of Burgh:

“On a brisk December morning just as the sun is rising over Burgh Castle Roman Fort, you can stand and look out over the reed beds and mud flats of Breydon Water. Some might regard it as a bleak scene and perhaps it is a stark comparison to the summer months, but to bird watchers this is the most treasured part of the year to watch birds on the wing and at rest.

Within a short period of time you can spot numerous winter visitors like the Hen Harrier, Slavonian Grebe and also on water the Great Crested Grebe and Little Grebe. Others who only visit in winter are Red Breasted Merganser, Eider, Goodsander, Golden Eye and the Brentgoose. No surprise then that at weekends the area buzzes with bird watchers, all eager to get a glimpse of these birds.

Summer time can be busy as well, especially on the mud flats. Red Shanks, Dunlins, Ringed Plovers, the ever busy Lapwings, Black Tailed Godwits, Bar Tailed Godwits,

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Curlews, the beautiful sight of the Oyster-catcher at work, Sanderlings, Knots, Spotted Red Shank, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Green Shanks, Turnstone, Little Stint, Whimbrel and Grey Heron.

It is the mud flats, which provide the fragile food chain for many of the above species, and the local work of the RSPB protects and encourages these essential food beds and nesting areas.

Shift your gaze to the water's edge to see the unmistakeable Shelduck.

Next, look out upon the water at Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Coots, elegant Cormorants, Mute Swans, Pintails, Wigeon, Mallard, Teal, Shoveler, Pochard, Canadian Geese (increasing in presence every year now), and Greylag Geese.

Altogether they make a great industry of birds feeding and nesting to add to the beauty of the River Waveney and of Breydon Water - by themselves a sight to behold in their peace and tranquillity, especially looking down from the ruins on Castle Hill.

Once you have had your fill of all these, cast your eyes skyward and spot the great outline of a soaring male Marsh Harrier, a huge bird that could take out smaller birds in one swoop, and which nests frequently around the Waveney area, or perhaps a Sparrow-hawk, and of course just to complete birdwatchers' heaven, the now resurgent Kestrel.

Other common visitors these days are the Seals basking on the mud flats in the heat of the summer or warming in the winter sun.

The rare Summer visits of the Black Tern, White-Winged Black Tern, Caspian Tern, Roseate Tern, Mediterranean Gull, Little Gull, Glaucous Gull, as well as the more common Herring, Great Black Backed, Lesser Black Backed and Black Headed Gulls are best seen from a boat. The monthly RSPB trip from The Fisherman's is ideal for this purpose. And you may even see kingfishers nesting in the pocket nature reserve at the marina itself.

There are well over fifty species you can look out for around Burgh that you won't find in many English gardens.

Happy spotting!" (*David Eley*)

Breydon Walk

(For distances and full route description see Circuit 1 in our *Jog, Walk, Cycle* Leaflet).

Start at the Fisherman's and walk northwards along the river path (marked Angles' Way), detouring about 200 metres from the river-bank, around the reed swamp at the

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foot of the Roman Castle (now the latest bird reserve). When you reach Church Lane as it terminates at the abandoned Burgh Castle Staithe, turn left over the stile and follow the south bank of Breydon Water. At low water vast mudflats appear, upon which many birds rely for their food supply. The mudflats, the reed beds, the grazing marshes and the skies overhead each have their own distinctive species, feeding, nesting or hovering in search of prey with significant differences in the population in the seasons of the year.

Breydon Water, into which the Waveney and the Yare flow at this point, is Britain's largest inland tidal water. In the reeds which fringe the marsh drainage dykes you are more likely to hear rather than see sedge warbler, reed warbler, reed bunting and in summer the cuckoo. You might catch a glimpse of the latter as it searches for the nests of warblers in which to lay its eggs. The best advice is to take a good bird-spotting guide with you and a pair of binoculars. You never know what you are going to see.

Across the river stands the Berney windmill, sails turning in a strong breeze. The largest of the many marsh mills, previously used to power grazing marsh drainage, this mill has been restored and is open to the public (telephone 01493-700605 for details). A visit to the mill can be combined with a walk around the RSPB reserve on Berney Marsh. Yellow Wagtails, Wheatears, Meadow Pipits and Skylarks are notable among the species, which are often to be seen here.