



Information

Distance: 2.5km (1.5miles)

Gradient: Flat level ground but the paths can get muddy in winter.

Starting Point: Weymouth Beach car park.

Public Transport: Buses to the Sealife Centre.

Parking: Weymouth beach Car Park, a Dorset Council pay and display car park. DT3 6HS.

Accessibility: Most of the walk is accessible to people of all abilities, including wheelchair users. But at certain times of the year, it will be muddy and more difficult. There are benches around the trail.

Facilities

None on the reserve.

Toilets: The nearest public toilets are at Overcombe corner and Lodmoor country park.

Eating: There are several cafes along the seafront.

1. The entrance to the reserve is opposite the Beach Car Park (DT4 7SX).
2. From the entrance to Lodmoor and the reserve map, take the right-hand path parallel with the beach and follow the Marsh Trail. Depending on the time of year that you visit, the entrance to Lodmoor can be incredibly noisy. In summer you'll be greeted by sights, sounds and smells of over 50 pairs of common terns nesting on small shingle islands. In winter flocks of lapwing and Canada geese feed on the wet grass. Look out for shelduck, they are here all year round.
3. The path turns left onto a paved cycle path over a metal bridge and then immediately then left back into the reserve. Look out for kingfishers from the bridge. Stop at the viewing shelter ... Whether or not the terns are on the reserve (having come all the way from central and southern Africa), there will be plenty to see. Lots of waterfowl over-winter here, look for waders too.

Even though it's on the edge of town many rarities are found every year. Look up, past Lodmoor, and the land rises into the Lorton Valley largely protected and managed for the benefit of both wildlife and people. The path becomes more wooded, but on your left, you'll see more salt marsh than open water. This is an ideal habitat for ducks and geese that graze the vegetation, and a shelter for thousands of birds in the winter.

4. Carry on along the path, parallel with the sea, until you come to a main path called Beachdown Way where you turn left to follow the Reedbed Trail. The path becomes more open again, offering views across the salt marsh and then the reed bed. Reed buntings are often perching on the reed tops, and you may be lucky enough to see marsh harriers
5. Turn left at the end of the path walking on the grass verge along Southdown Avenue. You get some great views of the reserve here, and the pools in front of you are the last to freeze (come here on a cold morning in winter and you should keep your eyes peeled for rare birds). For several years, bitterns, (a rare bird that looks like a small brown heron and nearly went extinct from the UK) have been overwintering. This is a great spot to look for them.

In winter, there are sometimes large flocks of starlings roosting in the reedbeds, and they coordinate themselves in large murmuration's – a fantastic sight to see and hear. This is home for many birds (male reed buntings with their black faces and white collars are easy to see all year round), but that is not all. Come along here at night and see Daubenton's bat flying over the water.

6. At the end of Southdown Avenue, the road ends and a path starts, carry straight on here.

7. Now you have a choice of routes. The gate on your right will take you up to Dorset Wildlife Trust's Lorton Meadows and more walks. But to get back to the start, follow the path round to the left and you will have reeds either side of you. One of the successes of Lodmoor is the breeding of marsh harrier. Rarer than golden eagles, these large birds of prey can be seen gliding over the reeds looking for prey, stay here for long enough and there is a good chance of seeing one overhead. The metal bridge is a good place to see them from.
8. Turn left when you come to a wooden barrier and a no cycling sign and start heading back towards the sea following the route of the Legacy Trail. Here you get a great intimate feeling of how the habitat changes as you get closer to the sea. The reeds make way for a more open habitat.

If you're very lucky you may get sight of a water rail or a kingfisher, they are often seen in the ditch on your right. The more open areas are fantastic for close views of birds you would normally need a telescope to see...look for little egrets (small white herons) as these stand out at a distance. As you come to the end of the path you will see the tern islands again, in summer stop and watch the birds bringing in fish for their chicks.

9. At the end of the path turn right to leave the reserve.