



Pevensy Levels NNR

Welcome to the National Nature Reserve

The Marsh

The Pevensy Levels is a large area of wet meadows, scrub, willow carr, freshwater fen, pools and managed ditches situated between Eastbourne and Bexhill-on-Sea. The National Nature Reserve itself is a small area comprising 12 fields in the heart of the Levels. To the north of the NNR, the Sussex Wildlife Trust own and manage a larger area of land, which has also been declared a National Nature Reserve.

The two NNRs now total 183 hectares of land.

Pevensy Levels is very popular with bird watchers, using the country lanes and Rights of Way (including the 1066 path) crossing the marsh. The lanes are also very popular with cyclists. It is an ideal destination for anyone seeking tranquillity, fresh air, sea views and a chance to escape the hurly burly of urban life.

Wildlife

Whenever you visit, you are likely to spot grey heron, cormorant, mute swan, Canada goose, mallard, coot, moorhen and, if you are lucky, the more elusive species, such as kingfisher or water rail. Gull flocks can build up on the marsh when sea conditions are rough. Corvids thrive on the marsh, including flocks of crows,

jackdaws and rooks, accompanied by magpies. kestrels, barn owls and peregrine falcon hunt over the marsh all year round. Waders and wildfowl, include redshank, lapwing and snipe. Smaller birds of wetland habitats, include reed bunting, yellow wagtail, reed and sedge warbler. New species which have appeared on the marsh in recent years include Cetti's warbler, little egret and breeding marsh harrier.

Twenty species of dragonfly and damselfly, including black-tailed skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* and red-eyed damselfly *Erythromma najana* can be seen feeding and breeding over the water. Rare invertebrates include the fen raft spider *Dolomedes plantarius* and several species of water snail and water beetles.,

Wetland plants, include the rare sharp-leaved pondweed *Potamogeton acutifolius* and narrow-leaved water plantain *Alisma lanceolatum*.



Management

To maintain the diversity of wildlife on the Reserve, both the fields and ditches need to be managed. The open nature of the fields is maintained by a mixture of grazing animals. This provides the tussocky grassland for wading birds to nest in, but also provides a nectar source for insects. In addition, sluices have been installed so that water levels within the ditches can be carefully managed. This ensures the fields are wet at the right times of year, which benefits the array of marshland species. We are able to control this water flow without affecting other neighbouring fields or the nearby Wallers Haven, which forms a water storage reservoir for Bexhill.

Management also includes careful dredging of portions of the ditches, to remove silt build up and to maintain free flowing water. This is done in Autumn, and in small sections so as to minimise damage and maximise the mosaic effect of habitats at different stages of natural succession. This in turn provides a wide array of niches for aquatic plants and animals.



Access

Due to the sensitivity of the wildlife at Pevensey Levels, access to the NNRs is restricted. Access to the part of the reserve owned by the Sussex Wildlife Trust is by permit only, but the Trust organises guided walks in the summer.

The Natural England owned area of the NNR lies to the west of Rockhouse Bank and is reached by the Pevensey to Norman's Bay road. There are no public rights of way, and it is currently closed to the public, but you can get good views of the birds from the roadside. New visitor access has been provided for the easternmost compartment of the Reserve, comprising the higher ground of Rockhouse Bank, which gives panoramic views of the NNR and surrounding fields, without disturbing wintering or summer-nesting birds.

Students and naturalists wishing to access the NNR, for example to study the aquatic plants and invertebrates, need to arrange for permission with the Reserves Manager. Guided visits for groups can be arranged by request.

Facilities

The nearest toilet and refreshment facilities are located between the railway and the beach at Norman's Bay, but they are only open in the summer.

Location and access

By rail: The nearest railway station is Norman's Bay, on the Eastbourne – Hastings line, with a service every two hours. There are public toilets near to the station and it is a relatively short walk along the lane to reach the Reserve.

By bus: Nearest bus service is the Stagecoach 99 stopping at Cooden, 4 kilometres east of the Reserve.

By bicycle: The Sustrans National Cycle Route 2 (Downs and Wealds) passes through the Reserve (<http://www.sustrans.org.uk>)

By car: The Reserve is half way along a narrow lane running between the A27(T) – A259(T) roundabout and the junction with the B2182 in Cooden. Roadside parking is limited to one or two cars.

Pevensy Levels bye-laws

A series of byelaws are in force to protect the wildlife of the Levels, and ensure that as many people as possible can enjoy its beauty.

- Please follow the Countryside Code when visiting the Reserve.
- Please keep dogs on a short lead between 1 March and 31 July, to help protect ground nesting birds, and all year round near farm animals.
- Please leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Please leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available
- Camping and fires are not allowed within the Reserve
- Plan ahead and be prepared – You are responsible for your own safety and for others in your care

Contact

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Find out more at

www.naturalengland.org.uk

or by calling **01323 423962**

