

# Flocks of birds



Thousands of migratory shore birds spend autumn and winter at South Walney Nature Reserve, feeding in Morecambe Bay at low tide, and then returning to the shore to roost and rest in safety at high tide.



*Eider duck*

Winter is harsh here, so finding enough food and opportunity to rest means the birds have a much greater chance of surviving their return migration and being healthy enough to breed.

Global numbers of all our shorebirds are in perilous decline. **Help them survive winter by staying well away from large flocks on the shore.**

Photo credits: Gulls on Spit, Joe Murphy; Eider ducks pair, John Attiwell

# About us



**Cumbria**  
Wildlife Trust

Cumbria Wildlife Trust is the only voluntary organisation devoted solely to the conservation of the wildlife and wild places of Cumbria. The Trust stands up for wildlife, creates wildlife havens, seeks to inspire people, and raise environmental awareness.

Formed in 1962, the Trust now cares for 38 nature reserves that you can visit, works to save threatened wildlife and wild places, campaigns for the protection of marine wildlife, and works with adults and children to discover the importance of the natural world.

## Visiting South Walney Nature Reserve

We hope you enjoy visiting South Walney Nature Reserve and the wealth of wildlife it has to offer.

**Beaches:** There is no access to the beaches at the nature reserve to protect disturbance of the seals and breeding and wintering birds. Beautiful public beaches are nearby at Biggar Bank and at West Shore.

**Dogs:** Strictly no dogs are allowed on the nature reserve (except guide dogs) to protect vulnerable wildlife.

**Walney Bird Observatory:** Because of its ornithological interest, South Walney is home to the Walney Bird Observatory. The organisation is independent of the Trust and carries out scientific monitoring of wild birds.

**Injured marine animals:** If you see a seal, dolphin, porpoise, or whale that is ill or in distress call British Divers Marine Life Rescue on 01825 765546, or 07787 433412 out of office hours.

The marine environment is a fascinating place to be, but you must be aware of the dangers and risks involved in sea kayaking and train and prepare accordingly. Further details can be found if you visit the British Canoeing website: [www.britishcanoeing.org.uk](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk)



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[www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk)

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## Wildlife watching in the Walney Channel

A guide for kayakers, canoeists  
and small boat users



# Seals at South Walney Nature Reserve



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South Walney Nature Reserve forms the southern tip of Walney Island, and has been managed by Cumbria Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve since 1963. Throughout the year, its sand dunes, beaches and pools are home vast numbers of birds, plants and insects.



Cumbria's only grey seal colony is found at its very southernmost point. Seals use the protected beach here to haul out, to rest and moult, and to breed and give birth to their pups.

As visitors have no access to the beach, the lack of disturbance has made it a safe place for seals, and numbers have steadily grown from one or two in the 1980s to over 200 in recent years. In 2015, the first pups were born here.

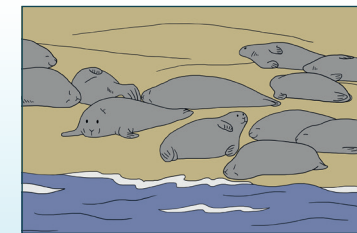
## Enjoying the seals

Seals are highly intelligent marine mammals, and the best way to see them up close is when they're in the water, where they can approach you on their own terms.

### Here's how you can paddle past the grey seal colony:

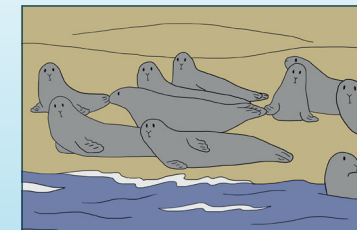
- ❖ Approach as **slowly** and **quietly** as possible, and sideways on.
- ❖ Paddle parallel to the shore.
- ❖ Stay **at least 50m** away.
- ❖ When a large number of them are sitting up, looking directly at you, **back off slowly** until they relax again.
- ❖ Speak **quietly** and **avoid paddle splash**.

As seals expend a lot of energy in the water feeding, they need to rest on land to digest their food, moult and pup. Trying to get close on land causes disturbance and distress to the colony.



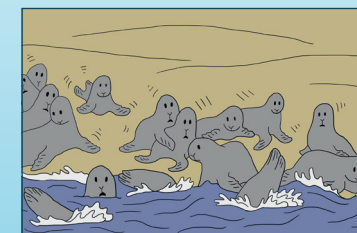
Seals resting, perhaps aware of you, but not disturbed.

Watch quietly.



More than 10% of seals awake and looking at you.

Back away slowly until they settle again.



Seals are panicked and stampeding into the sea.

Must be avoided.

When seals are spooked their immediate reaction is to stampede into the sea. By doing this, they waste a lot of energy and injuries can be caused in the panic. As mothers can abandon their pups, we need to avoid this at all cost.

