

Montrose Basin Wildlife Reserve

Reserve walks guide



Protecting **Scotland's wildlife** for the future
www.swt.org.uk

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Do you want to visit Montrose Basin Visitor Centre and save money?

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For more information, contact us on 0131 312 7765 or email membership@swt.org.uk or visit our website at www.swt.org.uk to join online.

VISIT OUR OTHER CENTRES



Falls of Clyde Visitor Centre & Wildlife Reserve

On the edge of the World Heritage site of New Lanark, breathtaking ancient woodlands line the River Clyde as it flows through the gorge and over a series of spectacular waterfalls. Meet the residents on a regular bat or badger walk and get a bird's-eye view of the peregrines. Woodland walks and visitor centre displays ensure a fantastic day out.

Admission charge, open daily.
Closed 25 – 26 December and 1 – 2 January.

New Lanark, Lanarkshire ML11 9DB

tel: 01555 665262

email: falls@clyde@swt.org.uk



Loch of the Lowes Visitor Centre & Wildlife Reserve

Each spring, ospreys arrive after a long migration from west Africa. The observation hide offers stunning views of the ospreys rearing their chicks. The displays in the centre tell the story of Loch of the Lowes and its wildlife – red squirrel, otters and more. An unforgettable experience.

Admission charge, open daily
from 10.00 am (April–September).

Dunkeld, Perthshire PH8 0HH

tel: 01350 773337

email: loch@thelowes@swt.org.uk

Exploring the sights and sounds of Angus' bird haven

This guide will allow you to get more out of your visit to Montrose and discover the amazing and diverse wildlife. There's information on some of the species and also three walks you can follow to explore different areas at your leisure.

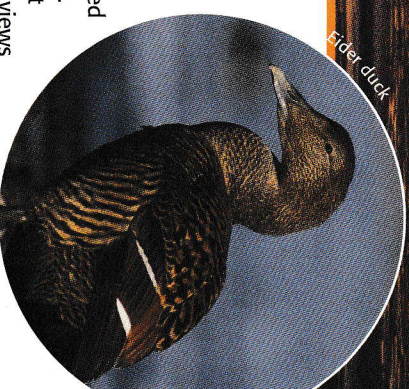
Why is Montrose so special?

Montrose Basin is an enclosed estuary of the South Esk and covers over 750 hectares. A daily tidal cycle brings in a rich soup of nutrients which attracts 50,000 birds during the winter months. These can be viewed from SWT's visitor centre or from three other hides around the reserve.

The Basin is a site of international importance for visiting and resident birds. As well as being a Site of Special Scientific Interest the reserve was designated a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in 1981 giving greater recognition and protection to its wildlife.

Where is a good place to start?

Start at SWT's visitor centre at Rossies Braes. Friendly staff and



Eider duck

volunteers are on hand to give you the latest update on birds spotted on the reserve. It's also a great place to enjoy views across the Basin and grab a cup of something warm in the colder weather. Pick up our *What's On* leaflet and find out more about what you can see during the season.

How much does it cost?

There is an admission charge for the visitor centre (see back page) and for associated events. The rest of the reserve is free to explore. The hides are open throughout the year.

When is the best time to visit?

There is something to see all year round; however, if you want to see wintering wildfowl the best time is between October and February. During the summer eider ducks breed on the reserve and many farmland birds breed on the surrounding arable land.

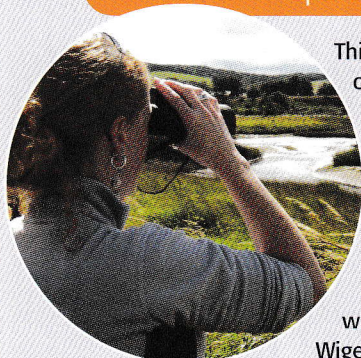
What should I bring?

Binoculars, Wellington boots (or stout footwear), warm, waterproof clothing, and a notepad and pen are recommended.



Shelduck Hide (2 km)

Start/ Finish: The Old Mill car park
Duration: 1.5 – 2 hours (return)
Rating: Medium
Good for: Linnet, skylark, eider, shelduck
If you are lucky: Yellowhammer, twite, sparrowhawk



This is the longest of the reserve walks but one which takes in a variety of different and interesting habitats. You can combine it with a trip to the Wigeon Hide.

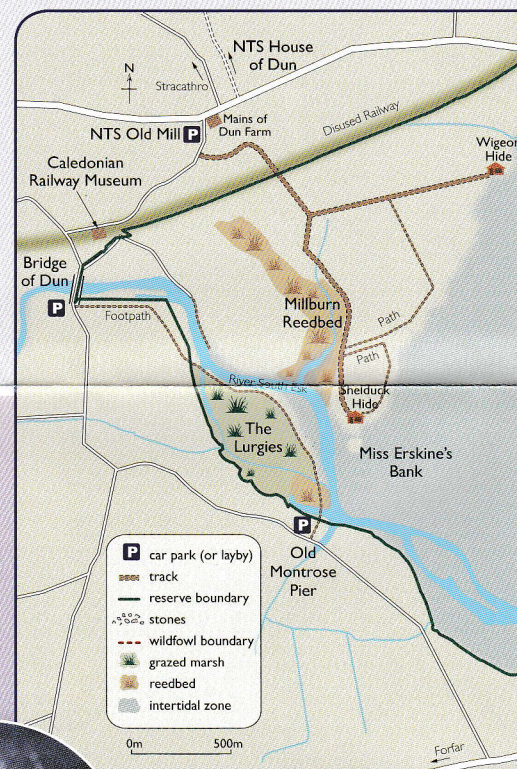
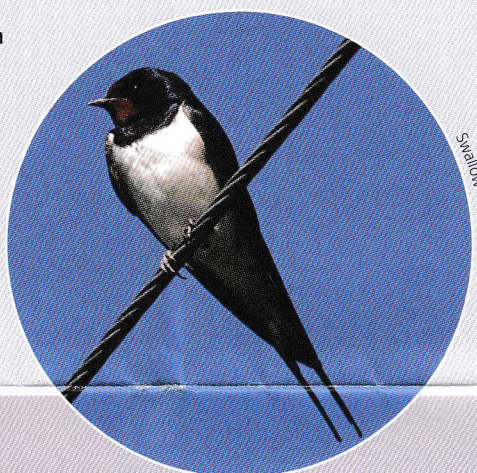
From the car park, walk through a small area of woodland - keep your eyes open for a great spotted woodpecker or sparrowhawk. On the farmland three song birds are listed as species of highest conservation concern: yellowhammer, linnet and twite, but with careful farm management numbers are beginning to recover. Look out for linnets perched on fences in breeding pairs and in large flocks during winter.

Often you hear a bird singing before you see it. Make a note of how many different birds you hear. Don't worry if you can't identify them - it's still fun!

As you enter the reserve, cross the old railway line. At high tide much of this land is below sea level and is protected by the sea wall. Beyond this is the Mill Burn Reed Bed, an important area for breeding sedge warblers. In the early morning, listen for the distinctive call of the grasshopper warbler and marvel at the large roosts of sand martins and swallows during late summer.

Did you know?

Migratory geese fly in family groups in V-shaped skeins. Young geese learn the route from their parents.



Lurgies Walk

(up to 2 km each way)

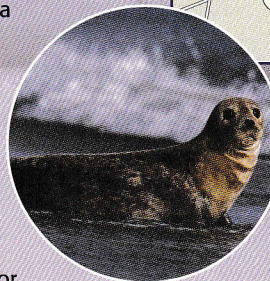
Start/ Finish: Old Montrose Pier car park or walk through to the Bridge of Dun
Duration: Variable
Rating: Easy
Good for: Reed bunting, sedge warbler, common seal
If you are lucky: Kingfisher, water rail

This part of the reserve was used as a dock as far back as 1178. Until 1780 when the Basin was probably deeper than it is now, it was regularly used by flat-bottomed boats laden with cargo. Historically the South Esk flowed into an area known as the Lurgies.

The land was reclaimed through the building of the wall which this route follows but the area has never really dried out, leaving areas of common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and wet grassland.

As you leave the car park and go onto the sea wall you may see a kingfisher perched at the burn mouth or a water rail skulking in the reed bed. Reed bunting and sedge warblers breed in the reed bed to the left and are often seen. Listen for the descending notes of the willow warbler's song. Along the path look out for hare and roe deer which graze in the meadows on your left.

Exposed mud in the area attracts many waders particularly during spring and autumn migration. Greenshank are seen on the river's edge or in muddy pools and common sandpiper, noticeable for their distinctive bobbing and nervous behaviour,



are also seen in this area. Outside the breeding season, little grebe congregate at the river mouth.

Further upstream you may see mute swans. One or two pairs breed on the reserve but hundreds visit as a safe place to undergo their annual moult. Common seals often pop their heads up out of the water or haul up onto sand banks in the middle of the Basin.

Did you know?

Mute swans are flightless during their annual moult.



Young bird watchers why not time how long different diving ducks can stay underwater for?

Wigeon Hide (1.5 km)

Start/ Finish: The Old Mill car park

Duration: 1 – 1.5 hours (return)

Rating: Medium

Good for: Views of the Montrose skyline, grey partridge, wigeon, curlew

If you are lucky: Peregrine, merlin, short-eared owls

It is best to visit the Wigeon Hide around high tide (call the visitor centre for these times). Follow the directions for the Shelduck Hide walk but at the junction take the route through open arable land. This area is home to breeding grey partridge, a species of conservation concern. The Wigeon Hide provides a bird's-eye view of the salt

Look at how all the birds feed; each of their bills are different. Try drawing some of them. Come to the visitor centre to find out more about these special adaptations for feeding in the mud.

marsh and the Montrose skyline. Most species of wader on the reserve can be seen near here and on a winter's day look out for shelduck, eider and over 2,500 wigeon.

The keen eye can also pick out the remnants of the Dronner's Dyke in the middle of the Basin. Today all that remains of this ambitious attempt in 1670s to reclaim further land from the sea are piles of stones.

Succulent stems of glasswort (*Salicornia spp*) cling improbably to the mud in front of the hide and in late summer the purple flowers of sea aster (*Aster tripolium*) dominate the salt marsh. Looking along

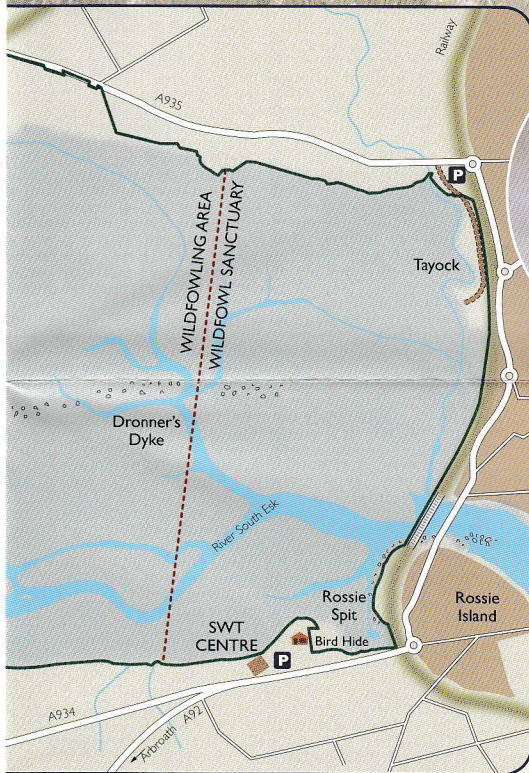
the sea wall from this vantage point

you may see a peregrine, merlin or even a short-eared owl hunting for voles in the long grass.



Did you know?

Because in mountain areas prey becomes scarce during winter, upland raptors like merlin and short-eared owl come down from the hills to coastal areas to hunt.



Bird box

Yellowhammer

Where am I likely to see them?

In hedgerows and areas of scrub on the reserve.

What do they sound like?

The rhythm of their song is easily remembered as "a little bit of bread and no cheese".



Yellowhammer

Wigeon

Where am I likely to see them?

All over the basin but the Wigeon Hide is the best.

What do they sound like?

They have a whistling "whe ooh" call.



Male wigeon



Sedge warbler

Sedge warbler

Where am I likely to see them?

In any dense vegetation or reed bed on the reserve.

What do the sound like?

Very vocal with a loud rambling song which builds to a chaotic crescendo.



Pink-footed goose

Pink-footed goose

Where am I likely to see them?

All over the Basin, up to 40,000 arrive from late September onwards and stay until March.

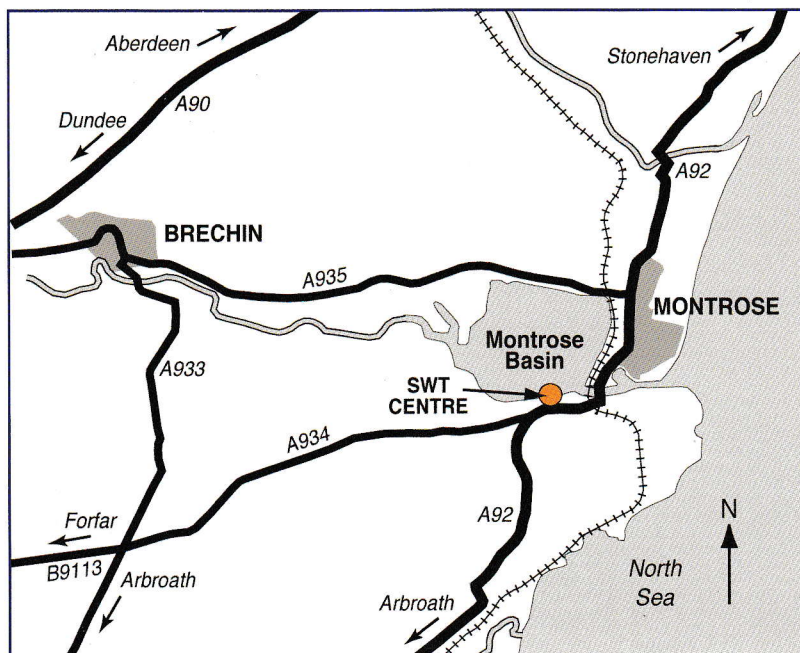
What do they sound like?

"Wink, wink"

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre & Wildlife Reserve

Scottish Wildlife Trust, Rossie Braes, Montrose, Angus DD10 9TJ

tel: 01674 676336 email: montrosebasin@swt.org.uk



By car

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre is on the A92 Montrose to Arbroath road just 1 mile (1.6 km) south of Montrose. Follow the brown signs to Montrose Basin Wildlife Centre. Parking is available at the visitor centre, Old Montrose Pier, Bridge of Dun and at Old Mill. See map overleaf for more details.

By train

Frequent services from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and all intermediate stations.

By bus

From Montrose town centre to Ferryden, then a short walk.

Special provision

The visitor centre is wheelchair friendly including toilet facilities. An induction loop is fitted. Education activities are available for school groups. Ask at the visitor centre for more information.

Opening times

Open daily, 15 March – 15 November from 10.30 am – 5.00 pm and from 16 November – 14 March (Friday – Sunday only) from 10.30 am – 4.00 pm.

The visitor centre is closed on 25 and 26 December and 1 and 2 January.

The hides are open all year round.

Admission

Adults (concessions) £3.50 (£2.50).

Family ticket (2 adults up to 4 children) £7.00. SWT members FREE. Groups of 11 or more 10% discount. Access to the reserve including the hides is free.

Wildfowling

As part of the management of this LNR, some wildfowling is allowed on Montrose Basin. Shooting occurs around dawn and dusk from 1 September until 20 February (not Sundays). There is a permit system in place. Rangers are responsible for monitoring the shooting to ensure it is legal and sustainable. The eastern area of the reserve is an area where birds are able to roost undisturbed.



Photography:
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