

Common Summer Birds at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

On the short circular walk around the southern part of the nature reserve between **April** and **September** you should see many of the **41** birds in this leaflet. There will be others and for those you may need a bird book.

The birds marked with * nest here on the nature reserve.

Birds that catch fish



***Little Tern** is only starling sized and with a yellow bill and feet and a white forehead. They catch tiny fish and shrimps close to the shore.



***Common tern** is the greyest of our nesting terns and has red bill and feet. They regularly fish in freshwater.



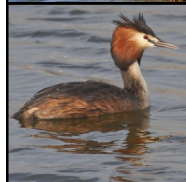
***Sandwich tern** is the largest tern here so can travel furthest to get fish for its chicks, often as far as Dungeness or Hastings. It has black feet and bill.



Grey heron is large and feeds along the edge of any water, waiting for fish or frogs or voles.



Little egret is smaller than grey heron and feeds in the water where its yellow feet are used to flush out fish or shrimps. It has a black bill.



***Great crested grebe** can be seen on the deeper pools and on the sea where they dive for fish. Look at their elegant plumes on the head.



***Little Grebe** nests on reed fringed ponds, pits and ditches and in summer more often heard trilling than seen.



***Cormorant** feed mostly out in Rye Bay and roost on islands on the pools where they stand upright and often hold their wings out. They nest in trees at Castle Water.

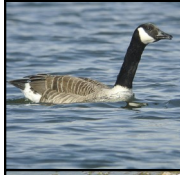
Waterfowl



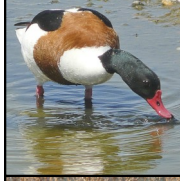
***Mute swan** is a very large bird and uses its long neck to feed on submerged plants, even in saltwater.



***Greylag goose** was introduced to southern Britain for shooting. Greylag means "grey goose". It is the ancestor of the farmyard goose and some are all white.



***Canada goose** was introduced as an ornamental bird. The black and white head is distinctive. They occasionally interbreed with greylags.



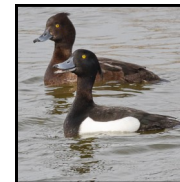
***Shelduck** is our only duck where both sexes look similar—they nest underground. They feed on the tiny snails and shrimps in the mud of saltmarshes.



***Mallard** is the most familiar duck and feeds on seeds by dabbling in shallow water, fresh or salt. The wing has a metallic blue flash. Females are brown.

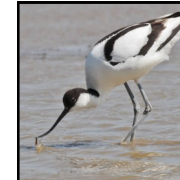


***Gadwall** is similar to mallard, especially the females, but there is a white square in the wing. The males look grey, but the plumage has many fine black lines.



***Tufted duck** is a diving duck and seen on the deeper pools where it feeds on snails and shrimps found in the bottom mud. Although they have golden eyes they are not the duck of that name!

Waders



***Avocet** nest in groups on islands, but lead their young chicks to shallow muddy water. The parents are noisy and aggressive, seeing off most other birds.



***Oystercatchers** are large and distinctive with their long orange bill which they use here to catch worms (not oysters). They feed in the intertidal areas but roost in large flocks at high tide.



***Lapwing** nest in wet grassland and have a tumbling display flight that shows off their rounded black and white wings, while calling "peewit".



Grey plover usually look like this; sometimes they have the black and white breeding plumage, but only small numbers stay here in summer.



***Ringed plover** is small with distinctive blackish rings around the head. They nest on bare shingle where rely on their eggs looking like stones.



***Little ringed plover** is similar to ringed plover but smaller, yellow eye-ring, dark bill and pale legs. They nest around muddy pools.

More Waders



Curlew is our largest wading bird and has a long down-curved bill. Feeds on the shore and grassland. Common July-April.



Whimbrel are smaller versions of curlew, but have stripy heads. They feed on grassland and saltmarsh. Their call is 7 rapid notes. Common April, May, August and September.



Bar-tailed godwit is smaller than curlew and with a slightly upturned bill. Breeding plumage has reddish underparts.



Black-tailed godwit similar to bar-tailed but with longer straighter bill and longer legs. In flight has distinctive black and white plumage.



Redshank has red legs and feeds on tiny shrimps in mud and saltmarsh. In flight they have a large white trailing edge to each wing.



Dunlin is the most common small wader, about robin sized, with down-curved bill. In breeding plumage they have a black belly.



Turnstone is a short legged wader that has a brown and white striped appearance in flight. Often seen feeding along the edge of the river and even on the road.

Gulls



Herring gull is the typical seaside gull and here they drop mussel shells onto the road to break them open.



Lesser black-backed gull is the same size as herring gull but has bright yellow legs. A few pairs nest on islands.



Great black-backed gull is the largest and darkest of our gulls and has flesh coloured legs. A pair often nests on the Martello Tower.



Common gull is like a small version of herring gull, but with a "kinder" face. Its call is like a small dog. 1-2 pairs nest.



Black-headed gull is the smallest gull, but doesn't get its dark brown head until February. Thousands nest noisily on islands within the fenced areas.



Mediterranean gull is like a black-headed gull, but has a true black head and white wing tips (not on young birds). A few nest on islands amongst the black-headed gulls.

Crows



Carrion crow is the most common black crow, but there are also jackdaw, rook and raven. Magpies are black and white.

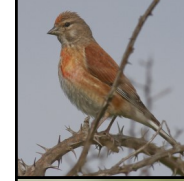
Small Birds



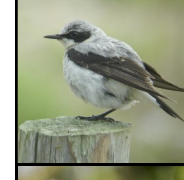
Meadow pipit is robin size, olive brown with pale legs. Its display flight is a slow "parachute" descent while calling over rough grassland or saltmarsh.



Skylark hover and sing endlessly, high over their grassland territories. Often landing on posts where they may show their short crest. Larger than pipits.



Linnet males have bright red patches on breast and head. They nest in bramble bushes. White flashes in the wing. Other finches with yellow in wing could be greenfinch or goldfinch.



Wheatear are robin sized summer visitors that sit on fence posts and nest underground! They have a white rump and females are brown. Male in photo.



Whitethroat are warblers that nest in bramble bushes, they have a chattering call and a display flight.



Cuckoo is pigeon sized with a long tail and pointed wings. They feed on the hairy caterpillars on bramble, grassland and the shingle.

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve has many special habitats: shingle, saltmarsh, saline lagoons, grazing marsh and reedbed. These are managed for more than 200 rare or endangered plants and animals and more than 4,000 other species. The fences are designed to reduce the impact of badgers and foxes on the ground nesting and roosting birds, which is why there are so many birds to see here. You can support our work by joining one or both charities;

Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve — supporting this reserve

Sussex Wildlife Trust — caring for wildlife across the whole of Sussex

Find out much more at www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/ryeharbour