

Welcome to Catcott

Our Catcott Reserve is comprised of an amazing wetland mosaic of traditional hay meadows, wet woodland and wet grazing marsh and fen, which encourages a range of species to feed, breed and roost all year round, and it has become internationally renowned for its birdlife. Part of the reserve, Catcott Lows, is one of the lowest points on the Avalon Marshes, as years of arable farming have caused the ground to shrink over half a metre in depth. If you visit at different times of year, you will notice that the water level changes, transforming the landscape. In the winter the reserve floods naturally and attracts an array of wintering birds, however as the seasons change and the water levels lower, the winter visitors leave and the spring visitors take their place.

What to do at Catcott

- Lights, camera, action!** Follow the board walk to the amphitheatre, and put on a spontaneous open-air show.
- Walk in someone else's shoes.** Walking along the drive into the reserve you might see leather soles of old shoes poking out of the ground – these were leather soles given by a local shoe manufacturer in the last century to provide better access for people along the drive.
- Have some peace and quiet.** Take the Roe Deer trail to explore the reserve in full, and look out for the beautifully carved wooden dragonfly bench for the perfect place to rest.
- Take it all in at the tucked away Tower Hide.** The reserve has four hides that you will come across by following the marked trails, however the Tower Hide provides an amazing 360 degree view of the reedbeds and species-rich meadows, and is a great place to spot an Otter or see the flash of Kingfisher. Marsh Harrier can also be seen quartering the reedbeds at eye-level on the hunt for its next meal.
- Pedal power!** If you are keen to cycle, a national cycle route runs through the Catcott village, a great way of seeing the local area before exploring the reserve. (Please leave your bikes before entering the reserve).
- Take in the scent of Bog Myrtle.** This amazing plant has a strong scent which is used in many products due to its insect repellent qualities.
- Winter Welly Walk.** Have fun getting through the wet and boggy peat soils.
- Find your inner explorer.** Peer into the Pitts at Catcott Heath to see breeding populations of frogs and toads and an array of newt species.
- Discover hidden creatures.** Slow Worms and Grass Snakes can be found warming themselves while under our reptile mats, which look like carpet tiles dotted around grasslands. If you lift a tile up, please only look at these creatures and carefully replace the mats.

What to take...

- Bring binoculars and a bird guide to make sure you don't miss a moment when you are in a hide.
- Take sturdy boots, and if it's been raining recently, take wellies to walk on the uneven terrain.
- In cooler temperatures pack your winter woollies in case the temperature drops.
- Don't be caught out by the heat. In the summer bring a sun hat, sun cream, plenty of water and keep in the shade where you can.
- Take a raincoat no matter what the time of year - you never know!
- Pack a drink and snacks to keep you going, but please take away all your rubbish.
- Bring along your wildlife identification books to discover species.

Why is Catcott special?

- This reserve is Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and RAMSAR site, meaning it is an internationally important wetland.
- Glastonbury Tor provides a beautiful backdrop when you approach the reserve and explore Catcott Lows.
- The reserve's landscape transforms due to the changes in water levels throughout the year, providing different habitat for a variety of species.
- Water levels are carefully controlled so the reserve can provide the right habitat the wildlife needs throughout the seasons. There are high water levels in the winter for overwintering birds and then the level is reduced to provide conditions that support breeding waders in the spring.
- Former carrot fields have been converted to wet grazing marsh which gradually dries out after winter to support breeding waders.
- The fields and ditch systems provide excellent habitat for numerous species of dragonflies and aquatic invertebrates and fish.
- This reserve is a mecca for wintering birds and is internationally renowned for being a great place for bird watching.

Dogs are welcome on leads to part of our reserve, however we ask that you adhere to our Canine Code as signposted throughout the reserve. For more information please visit: www.somersetwildlife.org/visitor_information

How to get there

By road: The Catcott Complex is a mile north of the village of Catcott

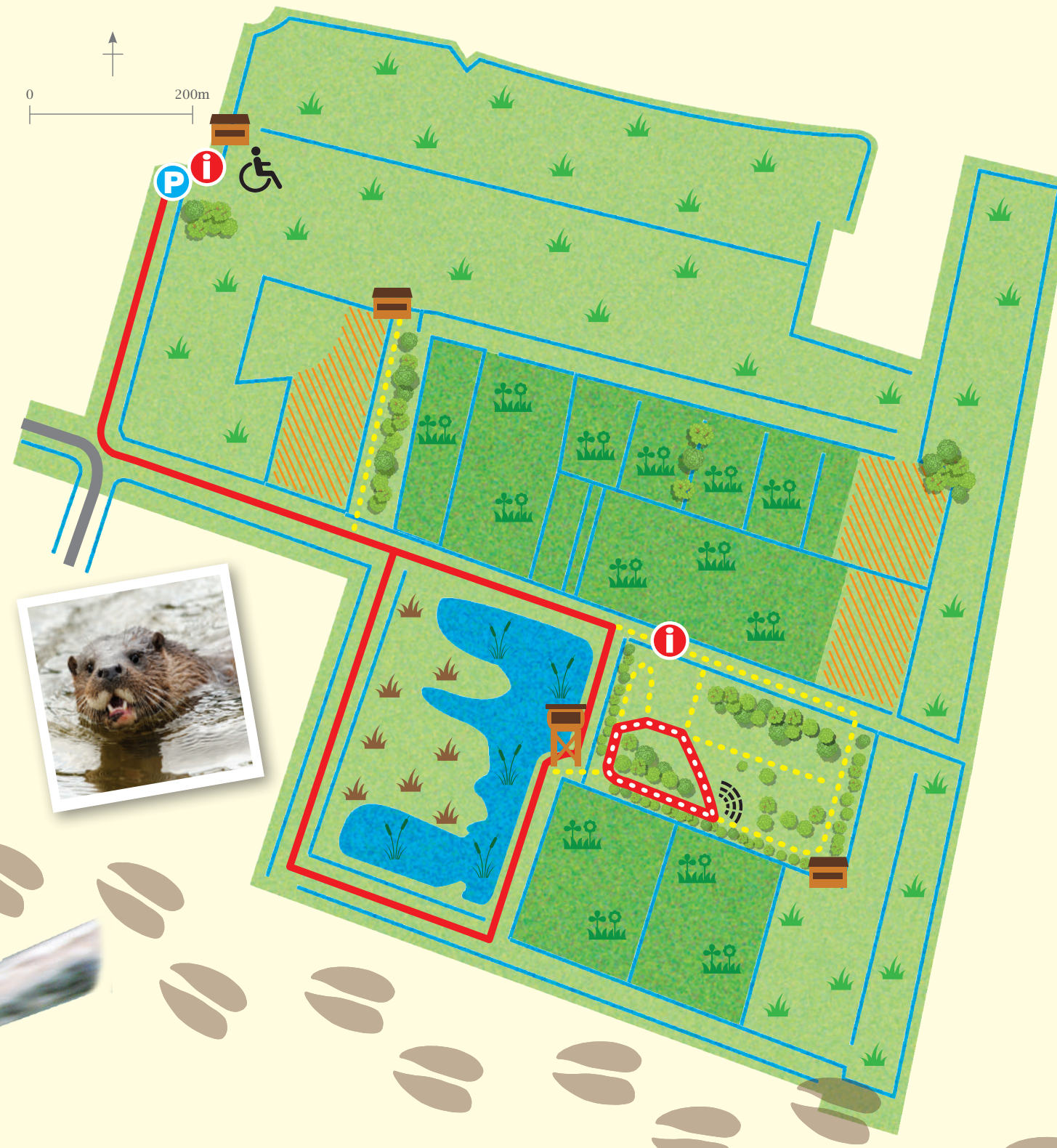
By bicycle: A National Cycle Network route runs through Catcott village

Grid Reference: ST 400 415

Try a trail

The 'Coot Trail' is a 3km stroll that loops around the open water and reedbeds - look out for the way-markers with bird footprints. Or, if you want to delve a little deeper, take the 'Roe Deer Trail' along the boardwalk which leads to the amphitheatre. No matter what trail you choose, don't miss the Tower Hide which is 1.3 km from the car park and can be reached on both trails.

Key	
--- Reserve path trails	Reedbed
— Coot Trail	Trees
— Roe Deer Trail	Open water
— Tower hide	Rhyne
— Hide	Car park
— Hay meadow	Information board
— Great Fen	Disabled access
— Wet grazing marsh (floods in winter)	Amphitheatre
	Non SWT land



Winter
In winter Catcott Lows floods naturally. As water levels rise, leaving just a few tussocks of rush poking through, the habitat becomes perfect for wintering and passage birds such as Teal and Wigeon.



Spring
In spring the water levels reduce through gravity and evaporation, leaving perfect ground conditions for nesting birds. Look out for Lapwing displaying through the air and listen out for the drumming sound of Snipe.



Autumn
In autumn machinery is brought in to manage the excess vegetation, to ensure that the perfect conditions for the following season's wildlife is created – all ahead of this cycle beginning again and the site filling up with water once more.



Summer
In summer the site is grazed by Exmoor ponies and cattle to provide the perfect grassland habitat for birds, invertebrates and mammals – look out for Brown Hares bounding through the grassland.

While you are here, why not visit Westhay too? Flip over to find out more.

What to look out for

Brown Hares

Lepus europaeus
Spring/Summer
You might spot them boxing.



Snipe

Gallinago gallinago
Spring
They use their long beaks to probe the ground for food.



Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus
Spring/Winter
Look out for them displaying across the fields.



Slow Worms

Anguis fragilis
Summer
They are much smaller than snakes, with smooth, golden-grey skin.



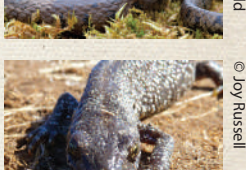
Grass Snakes

Natrix natrix
Summer
Usually greenish in colour, with a yellow collar and black neck patches.



Great Crested Newts

Triturus cristatus
All Year Round
Folded leaves contain their eggs.



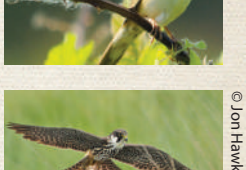
Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella naevia
Spring/Summer
Listen out for their Grasshopper sounds.



Hobby

Falco subbuteo
Summer
Look out for them chasing dragonflies.



Roe Deer

Capreolus capreolus
Summer/Autumn
If you're lucky you might see one bounding across the fields.



Devil's Bit Scabious

Succisa pratensis
Flowers from June to October.
12 species of bumblebee love this plant.



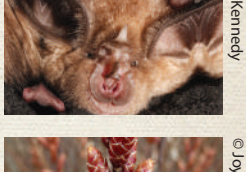
Greater Horseshoe Bat

Rhinolophus ferrumequinum
Summer/Autumn
A rare species of Bat in Britain.



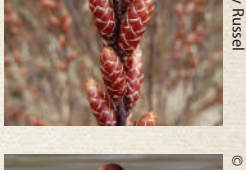
Bog Myrtle

Myrica gale
All year round
You might be able to smell its fragrance before you see it in summer.



Wigeon

Anas penelope
Winter
These birds flock to the flooded parts of the reserve.



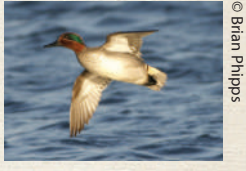
Teal

Anas crecca
Winter
Often spotted in amongst Wigeon and seen in large numbers.



Shoveler

Anas clypeata
Winter
Look out for their large spatula-shaped bill.



Starlings

Sturnus vulgaris
Winter
Witness them flying overhead in their dazzling murmurations.

