



# Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve

Slapton Ley is one of the finest areas of the British coastline. The coastal and wetland habitats are home to a wealth of wildlife and it is recognised as a National Nature Reserve.

The Ley is the largest natural freshwater lake in south west England and a fragile shingle bar divides the lake from the sea. Discover a unique mix of wildlife including Great Crested Grebes, Cetti's Warblers and Yellow Horned-poppies.

## Discover more

Field Studies Council at Slapton Ley runs courses for individuals and schools. Why not join in our free events? Our easy-to-use guides to identify the wildlife of wetlands, woods and coast are available to buy from the Field Centre.

Call in to the Field Centre to find out more or visit [www.field-studies-council.org/slapton](http://www.field-studies-council.org/slapton) or [www.slnnr.org.uk](http://www.slnnr.org.uk) or telephone 01548 580685.



A379 to Kingsbridge

A379 to Dartmouth

Printed on recycled paper

# Walks and trails



**Field Studies  
Council**

**Slapton Ley National  
Nature Reserve**

Slapton, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 2QP  
[www.slnnr.org.uk](http://www.slnnr.org.uk)

in partnership  
with:



**Field Studies  
Council**

**Slapton Ley National  
Nature Reserve**



**1 The beach** This dynamic and fragile beach is shaped by the power of the sea. During the last ice age the coast was 25 miles further out, and the ground here would have been permanently frozen. As our climate became warmer the sea level rose, pushing shingle inland to create the shingle ridge. But the story doesn't end there, with climate change the shingle ridge continues to move inland. Even overnight, storms and crashing waves reshape the beach.

**2 Living on the edge** Look for Yellow Horned-poppay, Sea Thrift and Vipers Bugloss that flower during the summer. These flowers are adapted to grow in a hostile environment with onshore wind, salt from the sea and very little freshwater.

**3 Slapton Bridge** Watch an amazing array of wildlife from Slapton Bridge, including birds, bats and fish. Listen for the loud bursts of song from the Cetti's Warbler. The Cetti's Warbler spread north from France to Slapton in the 1970s as our climate became milder.

**4 Life in the lake** Look out for Great Crested Grebes, Tufted Duck and Coots feeding on the Ley. They are a good sign of a healthy ecosystem because they feed on fish, insects and plants under the water. The wildlife of the Ley is carved on the handrail.

**5 Hazel coppice** You can see Primroses, Bluebells and Red Campion flowering in the spring. We cut or coppice the Hazel trees in this woodland on a 10 year rotation to let light reach the woodland floor for wildflowers. The Hazel Dormouse is a very special and secretive resident that also makes its home in the hazel coppice.

**6 Wet meadow life** Specially adapted plants, like Southern Marsh Orchid, Sedges and Flag Iris, grow in the flooded wet meadow. We mow the meadow in late summer to maintain the variety of marsh flowers and reduce competition from other plants.

**7 Life in the reeds** Enjoy the view across the reedbeds, it's a great place to look and listen for Reed Warblers in summer. We restrict access to these areas to provide a sanctuary for secretive Bitterns, Water Rails and Otters that can easily be disturbed.

**8 Wet woodland** Willow and Alder trees are adapted to grow in very rich, waterlogged soils and swamps. The Start Valley is periodically flooded by the Start Stream which is one of five streams that flow into the Ley. Rain washes nutrients from the surrounding farmland into the stream which then carries them down the valley into these pools. Eventually all these nutrients end up in the Ley, increasing the growth of algae that can be harmful to other wildlife.

**9 Slapton Ley Field Centre** Call into the Field Centre to find out more about our free events, courses for individuals, families and professionals, as well as educational visits for schools and colleges.



### Routes

- **Family trail:** 1.5 miles – approx 45 minutes
- **Village trail:** 1.75 miles – approx 1 hour
- **Valley trail:** 2.5 miles – approx 1.5 hours
- **South West Coast Path**

### Facilities

- Memorial Car Park:** parking and toilets
- Slapton Bridge:** parking and viewing platform
- Slapton and Torcross:** shops and pubs
- Slapton turn:** bus stop

All routes include steps and some narrow paths. The Village and Valley trails are partly on roads. The viewing platform at Slapton Bridge provides access for all.