

The Barton & Barrow Claypits **HERITAGE TRAIL**



Original artwork by
Cheryl Cullingford

11

Barton & Barrow Claypits' Birds

The extensive wetland habitats of the Barton and Barrow claypits are a haven for wild birds. But what you see and hear, will depend entirely on when you visit.

In springtime watch out for the graceful courtship displays of the great crested grebes and the noisy mating chases of the mallards. Coots and moorhens make little attempt to hide their nests tucked into clumps of water weed. Listen out for the explosive song of Cetti's warbler and in May, for the rattle of the reed warbler. Both of these small brown birds are usually well hidden. You may be lucky enough to catch the electric blue flash of a kingfisher heading back to its nesting burrow in a bare local waterside bank. If incredibly lucky you might just hear the strange 'boom' of a calling bittern, a rarely glimpsed gold and black heron-like bird. The commoner ducks are joined by scarce breeding species such as shoveler, gadwall and pochard. A dark shadow passing over the reedbeds might just be a superb marsh harrier, hunting for the next meal for its chicks.

Summertime can be one of the quietest seasons for birds, most getting on quietly with the hard work of feeding and protecting their young.

Autumn sees flocks of swallows and starlings use the reedbeds for roosting a few nights before moving south. The local ducks take on strange, more cryptic feathering as they pass through 'eclipse' plumage.

Wintertime welcomes visitors from the north. Ducks such as pochard, tufted duck and goldeneye dive in the deeper waters of the pools. They chase small fish and invertebrates. Mallards and teal dabble in the shallower water of the pool edges after seeds and little creatures. In the evening the ducks and gulls will gather in the centre of the larger pools to roost safely for the night. The hawthorns are visited by flocks of redwings and fieldfares, winter thrushes from the far north, drawn here to gorge on the rich crops of berries. Winter is an excellent time to see the local herons standing sentinel at pool sides or fishing in shallow water for sticklebacks and other small fish.

This project is supported by:



waters'edge
country park & visitor centre



University Centre
Grimsby



**shrink
map**
.uk