



RSPB Arne - Large Print Guide

Arne remains one of the few places in the UK where all six of the UK's native reptiles can be found. Situated on Poole Harbour and within the Dorset Area of Natural Beauty, it's a stunning landscape which consists of dramatic open heathland and ancient oak woodland. On your visit you will see Spoonbills, Nightjars and the Dartford Warbler!

There are several trail options, designed to show you different areas of the site and to suit different abilities. Depending on how long you plan to spend at RSPB Arne and the weather, you may get to see some of the wildlife described below. Ask the staff about suitable trails.

RSPB Arne covers more than 565 hectares of the Arne peninsular in the Isle of Purbeck in Dorset and attracts well over a hundred thousand visitors a year. The RSPB first bought land here in 1965 after a particularly cold winter drastically reduced Dartford Warbler numbers to just two breeding. The reserve is now managed for a range of rare and endangered heathland species, such as the Smooth Snake and Sand Lizard, Silver-Studded Blues and a wide

variety of heathland flora. The reserve is a haven for wildlife and has many designations including:

- **SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)**
- **SPA (Special Protection Area)**
- **SAC (Special Area of Conservation)**

In 2017 the RSPB started the process to acquire Hyde's Heath, on the Arne peninsula, adding another 67 hectares to the reserve. This former pine plantation will be restored back to heathland over the coming years, providing more vital habitat for the heathland specialists that call Arne home.

Habitat and Conservation

RSPB Arne is a patchwork of a huge array of different habitats.

Although the reserve is famous for its dry and wet lowland heath you can also find:

- **ancient oak woodland**
- **farmland**
- **reedbed**
- **mudflats**
- **scrub**
- **wet woodland**
- **acid grassland**
- **and sandy beaches.**

The mix of habitats and being near Poole Harbour is partly why the reserve is home to such a huge variety of species.

Arne protects an important area of lowland heath. This threatened habitat is home to many rare species of animal and plant. Other habitats on the reserve include woodland, salt marsh and reedbed. Poole Harbour, adjoining the reserve, holds internationally important populations of wintering waders and wildfowl, including the second largest population of avocets in the UK. The RSPB is actively managing all these habitats for the benefit of their wildlife and to help people enjoy the amazing spectacle.

We are working to maintain and enhance the heath for the benefit of birds such as:

- **Dartford Warblers**
- **Woodlarks**
- **Nightjars**

As well as other wildlife such as:

- **Smooth Snakes**
- **Heath Tiger Beetle**
- **Ladybird Spider**
- **Yellow Centaury (a rare heathland plant)**
- **and Silver-Studded Blue butterfly**

We manage using a range of specialist techniques to ensure a mosaic of micro-habitats across the heathland, maintaining a balance of mixed-age heather and gorse, ensuring there is enough bare ground, managing invasive pine, rhododendron and bracken to keep the heathland open as it has been for millennia. Grazing forms an important part of how we look after this historic wildlife rich landscape and you may see some of our cattle, ponies or pigs.

Dartford Warbler

In 1965 Arne was home to two pairs of Dartford Warbler, 50 years later there are more than 70 pairs! RSPB Arne is one of the best places to spot the Dartford warbler, they will be busy nesting in Spring, it's a good chance to spot them on the heath as they flit around the gorse shouting at anything (including you!) that gets too close to its territory. The nest cameras are worth a look at this time of year too - the Hobby cam gives great views of this small but stunning bird of prey.

Reptiles

During the summer, the reptiles are out and RSPB Arne remains one of the few places in the UK where all six of the UK's native reptiles can be found! This includes heathland specialists like the sand lizard, and the UK's rarest reptile, the Smooth Snake. Despite being the rarest reptile in the UK, the Smooth Snake is likely the most

common snake on the peninsular. Smooth Snakes will prey on absolutely everything within their capability, including each other!

On a warm day you could catch a glimpse of a Sand Lizard basking in the sun, or a slow worm slithering across the path.

Sika Deer

Autumn is rutting season for the sika deer at Arne, you can't miss the piercing call of the stags. These are the most common species of deer in the Purbeck area but they are not a native species. It is believed that the current population at RSPB Arne and the rest of the Purbecks swam across from Brownsea Island where they were introduced in the late 19th century.

Look out for the mystical White Hart, of which there are several on the peninsular. These are leucistic, a quirk in their DNA means that they cannot produce the colour pigment in their fur.

Wading Birds

Poole Harbour is recognized as an internationally important area for wintering wildfowl and wading birds. Huge flocks of black tailed godwits, avocets and a large variety of ducks spend the winter feeding up on the invertebrates and small fish found in the tidal mudflats.

As winter starts to thaw look out for the stunning rusty red breast of the black tailed godwits, as they prepare to fly to their Icelandic breeding grounds.

Shop and Café

The shop and café, opened in March 2016, means visitors can satisfy their appetite after exploring the reserve, and make a purchase in the shop stocked with bird food, and nature friendly gifts, as well as binoculars and telescopes so you can get an even better view of the wildlife.

We also run a variety of events throughout the year and are constantly working to improve our nature trails and cater for educational groups on request.

We work hard to ensure the support and involvement of the local community and are supported by many local people who volunteer with us.



**Formatted by the Heritage Ability project
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