

## **Bird watching in the Ale Water Valley**

The catchment of the Ale river covers 17,000 ha and within this area there are at least 62 wetlands with another 27 bordering the catchment. The largest wetland covers 47 ha but the majority are small at between 1 and 2 ha. The majority of the sites are basin fens.

There are a range of bird watching opportunities in our Valley. From moorland and upland grazing land in the upper reaches to woodland and arable in the lower sections of our catchment. But due to the larger than normal proportion of wetlands we hope to give you some special places to observe the birds that thrive on and near water.

The Valley has almost a tenth of the UK Water Rail population in or close to the catchment. These very secretive birds are not easy to spot. More often they are heard with their strange squeaks and hisses. All along the Ale you will see the very busy movements of Dippers who along with increasing numbers of Otters feel very happy here.

Below is a list of some suggested places to observe birds in or close to our River catchment. We would ask you to try to disturb our birds as little as possible especially in the breeding season.

**1. Ale Moor Reservoir. NT400155** This a reasonably large water body crossed by the B711 across a causeway. Due to the large size bringing binoculars or telescope is advisable. The western part of the Loch is also visible from a layby at NT388149. If you have an off-road bike this is ideal for access to several other nearby Lochs: Kingside (NT342135) Crooked (NT355140) and Hellmoor (NT355140). Great Crested and Little Grebe are some of the birds amongst a range of Ducks and Swans depending on the season.

**2. Back Lochs (and Clearburn Loch)** The very small Back Loch (NT357157) is just in our catchment and visible from a car on the B711. The nearby and larger Clearburn Loch is just outside our water catchment. Both are worth visiting and give opportunities to view birds such as Skylark. Meadow Pipits and Stonechats beside the water dwellers.

**3. Essenside Loch (NT451207)**

**4. Synton Mains Golf Driving Range (NT47782292)** Just at the bridge beyond the driving range is a spot where you can observe Goosanders and Dippers feeding on the River Ale. If you are lucky you may even observe the blue flash of a Kingfisher.

**5. Hare & Dunhogg Moss (NT466245)** Located 2 miles south of Selkirk, Hare Moss has an area of open water that attracts wildfowl throughout the year. The birds can be viewed from a hide on the reserve. Dunhogg Moss is an example of an upland basin fen and is reached by crossing farmland to the east of Hare Moss. A number of dragonfly and damselfly species can be found on this reserve. These are very well managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

**6. Ian Stark Equestrian Centre (NT482248)** is on a farm which is home to several SSSI's. Staff at the equestrian centre are able to point you in the right direction for a leisurely walk and a chance to see orchids and a range of farm and wetland birds, depending on the season.

**8. Lindean Loch (NT503292)** Some the mosses associated with this are just on the edge of our catchment. It's is now a nature reserve open to all and there is a walk of 1 mile / 2kms around the loch. Bird hide on the Southern edge of the Loch. The lime rich water and soil make Lindean Loch unusual for Scotland. Over 600 plant and animal species have been found in and around the loch.

**9. Born in the Borders (NT612222)** This is close to where the Ale flows into the larger Teviot and the Knowsouth Burn runs right through the site. The Mini Beast Safari lets children run backwards and forwards over little wooden bridges to root out all nature has to offer. Handy guides and collecting pots are always available, and the safari is contained within a manageable area that allows parents to easily keep an eye out for little ones. There is also CCTV coverage of a nearby Osprey nest during the nesting season. A great place for a cuppa or meal to recharge your batteries after a few hours bird watching in our Valley.

We would love to hear of your experiences using this information sheet. Please email [whitmuir@aol.com](mailto:whitmuir@aol.com) with any comments or suggestions.