

## Bird Watching in the Ale Water Valley

The catchment of the Ale River covers 17,000 ha and within this area are at least 62 wetlands with another 27 bordering the catchment. The largest wetland covers 4 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 is 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 the 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. Ashkirk 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 on the A7, 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 basis 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. Lindean Loch (NT503292)** Some of the mosses associated with this are just on the edge of our catchment. It's now a nature reserve open to all and there is a walk of 1 mile / 2 kms around the Loch. There is a 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.