



An Introduction to Bird Aware Solent: Coastal Bird Mitigation

Richie Ainger – Senior Ranger



What is Bird Aware Solent?

A project that raises awareness of the thousands of protected birds that spend their winters or summers on the Solent, so that people can enjoy visiting the coast without causing disturbance to wildlife.



Where we work



Why is the Solent special?

- Thousands of birds live on our coastline. **125,000** additional birds every winter.
- Important habitats – mudflats, saltmarsh, seagrass, rocky shore, shingle beach
- Rich biodiversity of marine life



Birds under pressure - a busy coastline

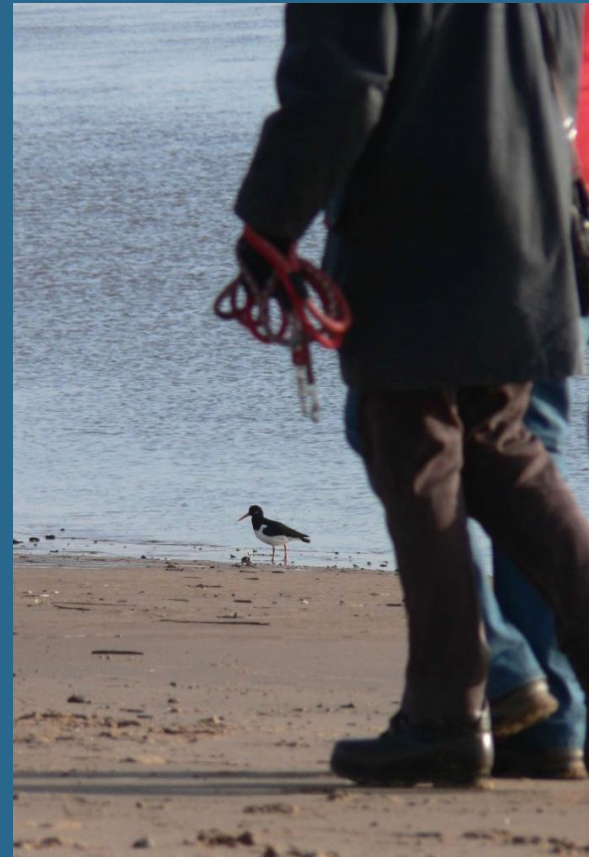
As our population grows and the coast gets busier with people and recreation, safe spaces for wildlife decrease and disturbance can happen more frequently



What is bird disturbance?

Any activity which prevents the birds from behaving normally or naturally such as:

- Feeding
- Resting



Why does it happen?



- Often disturbance is accidental
- Birds are well camouflaged or in difficult places to spot
- There is a lack of awareness and understanding of the issue



Photos courtesy of T D Codlin

Who causes bird disturbance?

We have seen disturbance caused by:

- **Walkers**
- Families/children playing
- Runners/joggers
- **Dog walkers**
- Horse riders
- Kite & wind surfers
- Kayakers & paddleboarders
- Motor and sailing boats
- Litter pickers/ beach cleaning
- Drones
- Cyclists
- Wild swimmers
- Bird watchers
- Photographers
- People fishing
- Bait diggers
- Helicopters/aircraft

How do we do it?

Rangers in action

The ranger team engage with visitors to the coast to raise awareness of the birds and the issue of bird disturbance



The rangers use many different methods and engagement activities to reach people:

- Site visits, patrols and guided walks
- Talks to local groups and organisations
- Events in the community
- School and education sessions
- Printed and digital communications and campaigns
- Wildlife Aware Guides



Bird Aware Solent Outreach & Engagement

Events



Reaching the local community

Great Coastal Birdwatch

6th year for this citizen science project

Growing beyond the Solent area




Guided walks



Birdwatching, Waggy Walks, Photography, Wellbeing

Site Patrols & Pop-ups

On site information

Showcasing the birds in real life



Coast & Country Canines

Targeted dog walker engagement and events



Education

Sessions linked to the National Curriculum

Working with schools and other education providers



Talks & Presentations

Given to local groups and organisations

Opportunity for more in depth explanation of topics



Art Fest

Annual event reaching new audiences



Photography Campaign

New for 2024

The Bird Aware Solent PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION



Watersports with Wildlife

Bespoke resources for wind and paddle sports

Interactive map



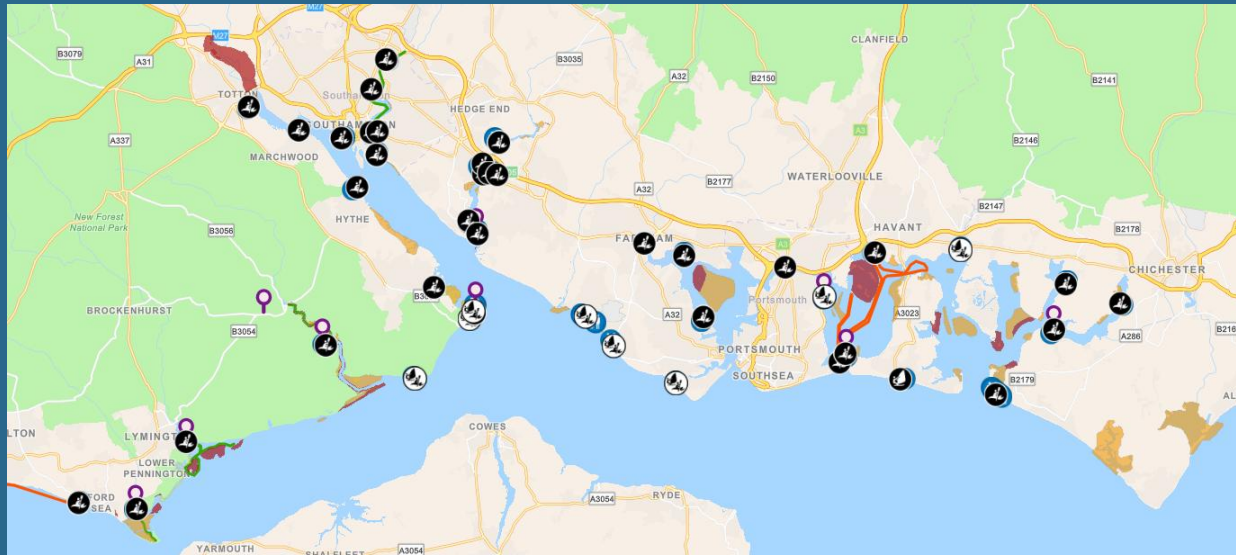
Monitoring, signage & Site Specific Projects



- On site signage and interpretation
- Site improvements
- Monitoring surveys and data collection



Wildlife Aware Watersports





Where to paddle

Entry and exit

- Plan your route and choose a wildlife friendly entry and exit point. Use our online map to find the most wildlife friendly routes.
- Keep kit at top of beach when not in use. Mud, marsh and the water's edge are feeding areas for birds; shingle beaches are resting and nesting areas.
- Carry or float equipment in and out. Dragging equipment will damage habitat and your craft.

Did you know?

Using suitable entry and exit points can reduce erosion, avoid trampling sensitive plants and animals, and lessen wildlife disturbance.



Protect sensitive places

- Islands, spits, marshes, lagoons and mud are vital habitats. Human presence will prevent birds using them. Avoid landing and keep your distance.
- Small creeks are the perfect hiding spots for birds and are sensitive to disturbance. Stick to the main channels.

Did you know?

Wildlife disturbance isn't just an issue in the summer. Coastal birds like waders, ducks and geese will be able to feed and rest safely if they're not disturbed in the winter months. This will help them thrive.



WILDLIFE AWARE WATERSPORTS

A guide for paddlers



Share how you are protecting wildlife on the water by using the hashtag #watersportswithwildlife on social media.

www.birdaware.org

Connecting with wildlife on the water

Paddle sports offer an opportunity to spot and appreciate wildlife from a unique perspective.

What you get up to on the water matters. Many paddlers are taking steps to avoid wildlife disturbance and share our shores with nature by following the Bird Aware Coastal Code:

- Look out for birds
- Move further away if birds become alert
- Follow requests on signs

Did you know?

Wildlife is more sensitive to being disturbed in areas that aren't frequently visited.

Watch out, birds about!

Paddlers stay wildlife-friendly by minimising noise and sudden changes in direction.

Tip

If birds have flown from an area, move away as they may return.

Tip for kayakers and canoers:


Keep a low paddle angle near wildlife.

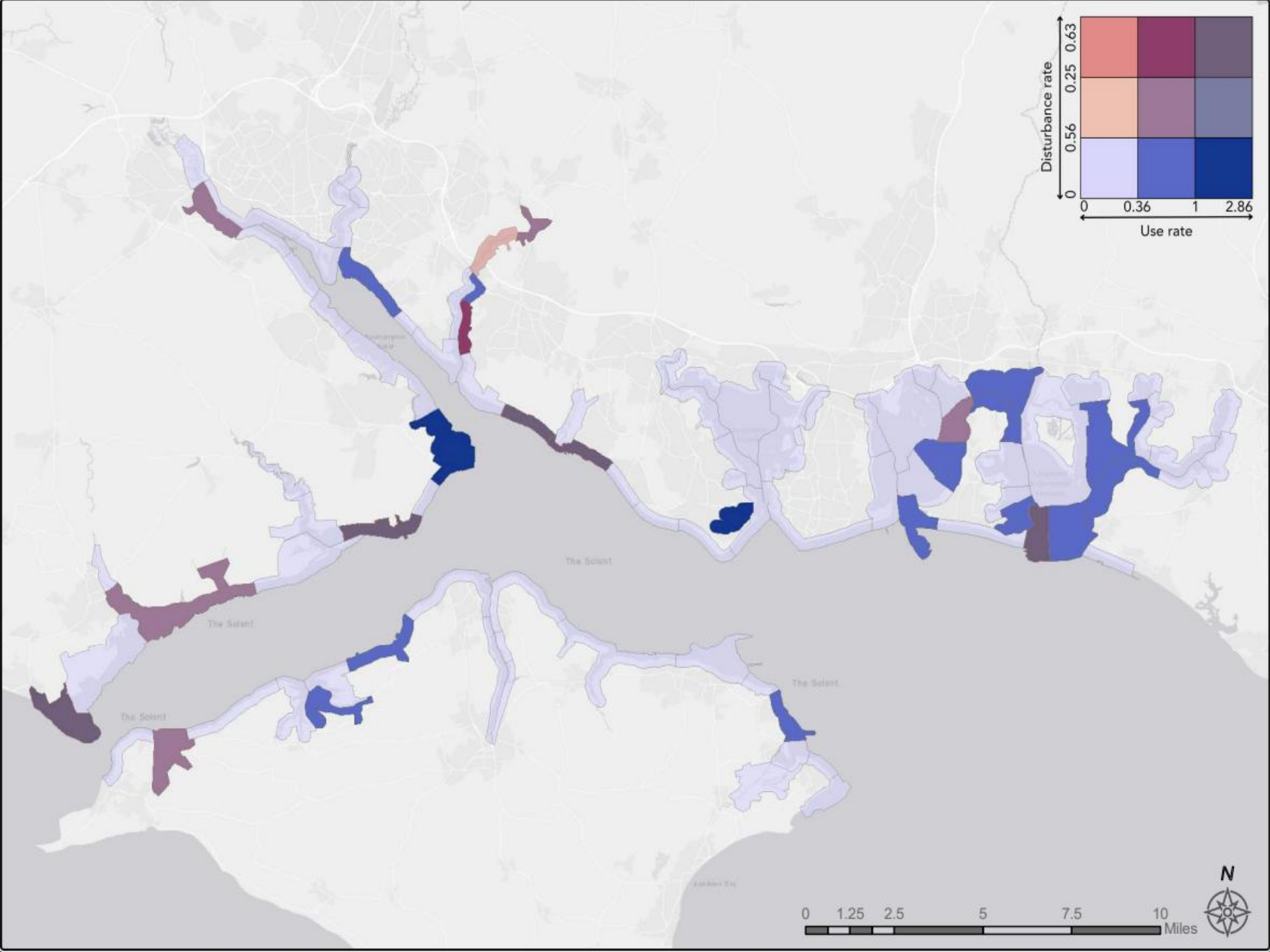
Tip for paddleboarders:

Keep a low profile; get onto your knees near wildlife.

If birds become aware of you and change their behaviour, give them space by moving away at a steady pace. You'll know they've become aware of you if they start:

- putting up their heads,
- bobbing or turning head in your direction,
- calling out
- stretching or flapping wings,
- walking, swimming or flying away.





Langstone Harbour ecology

The harbour spans across more than 2000 hectares of intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh, as well as including sand dunes and saline lagoons on the boundaries. All these habitats are essential for supporting wildlife.



Saltmarsh

Saltmarsh can look quite plain and non-descript but if investigated more closely, it is not so much what you see on the surface but what lies beneath in the mud that makes it so incredible.

This special habitat is found on the upper part of the shore, an area that the sea reaches only when the tide is high. It is covered in plants that can cope with salt and with being regularly underwater.

However, this habitat is under great threat and suffering serious declines due to sea level rise and coastal development. There are subsequently multiple projects around the Solent region working to generate new areas for this vital habitat.

Did you know:
That a single hectare of saltmarsh can absorb up to 14 tonnes of CO₂ per hectare annually?

This is significantly more than forests absorb.

Intertidal mudflats

Mudflats are well named – they are muddy and flat! They are expansive areas of mud which are exposed at low tides and submerged at high tides, making them intertidal habitats.

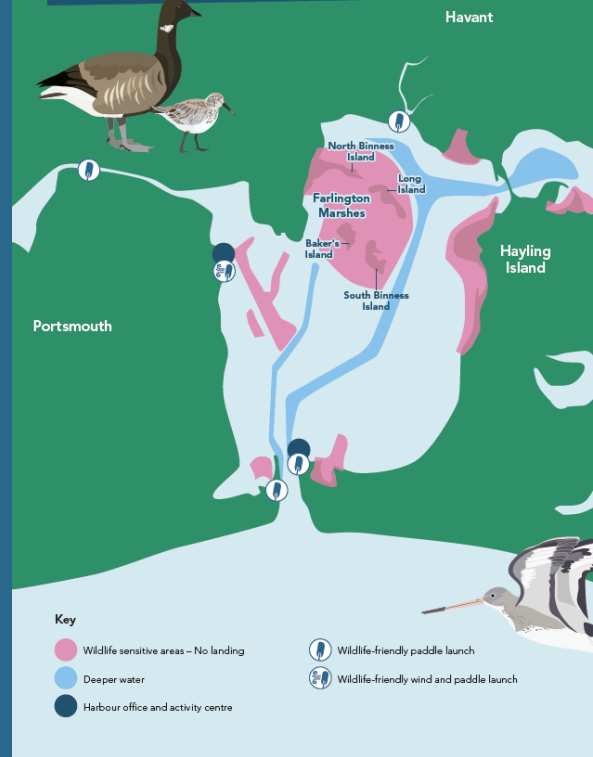
Mud may look devoid of life to the human eye but is full of plant life and small creatures. Due to the huge abundance of animals that live in the mud, it acts as an 'all you can eat food buffet' for birds.

Many wading birds enjoy searching for food that lives inside the sediment while ducks and geese enjoy munching on the plants that live on top.

Different birds are adapted to feed on different mud-dwelling animals – birds with longer beaks can eat the animals who live deeper while those with shorter beaks are adapted for eating the animals which live near the surface.

This means you can spot many different species of birds using the same areas of mudflats since they don't compete for the same food.

Map of Langstone Harbour



Bird ID guide

Black-tailed godwit

Migrates from Iceland, a journey of over 1000 miles

On the red list for conservation concern

40-44cm

Common tern

Migrates from West Africa

On the amber list for conservation concern

34-37cm

Curlew

Migrates from Russia and Scandinavia

On the red list for conservation concern

Our largest wader at 50-60cm

Dark-bellied brent goose

Migrates up to 3,000 miles from Arctic Siberia

On the amber list for conservation concern

56-61cm

Dunlin

Migrates from Scandinavia and Russia

On the red list for conservation concern

One of our smallest waders at 16-20cm

Little tern

Migrates from West Africa

On the amber list for conservation concern

Our smallest tern at 22-24cm

Mediterranean gull

Migrates from France, Spain, Portugal, the Atlantic coast of Morocco and from elsewhere in the UK

On the amber list for conservation concern

36-38cm

Redshank

Migrates from north west UK and Iceland

On the amber list for conservation concern

27-29cm

Wigeon

Migrates from Iceland, Scandinavia, Russia and Ukraine

On the amber list for conservation concern

45-51cm

Wildlife-aware guides

Paddle sports offer an opportunity to spot and appreciate wildlife from a unique perspective. What you get up to on the water matters. Many paddlers are taking steps to avoid wildlife disturbance and share our shores with nature by following the **Bird Aware Solent Coastal Code**:



Look out for birds



Move further away if birds become alert



Follow requests on signs

Look out for birds

Look carefully for any coastal birds who may be sharing the coastline you're visiting. If you see birds on an area that you are approaching, it makes sense to avoid that area completely so they can rest or feed undisturbed.

Quite a few of our coastal birds, such as the dunlin, the turnstone, the ringed plover, the little tern and the sanderling, are very well camouflaged, particularly on shingle. They can be quite hard to spot unless you look carefully.

Move further away if birds become alert

Signs that birds have become aware of you and are getting ready for flight include:

- lifting their heads or turning their heads in your direction
- crying out
- stretching or flapping their wings
- walking or swimming away.

- ✓ If you think birds are becoming alert to your presence, it's a good idea to move further away.

Follow requests on signs

In particularly sensitive areas, you'll find signs which give you more information about protecting the wildlife on the shore. Some of the areas in Langstone Harbour are 'no landing' or are particularly sensitive to human presence. Following requests on signs can be a great way to make sure you're minimising disturbance to birds.



Paddling in the harbour

Paddle sports naturally seem like they have less impact on nature compared with noisier motorised craft. Whilst that is certainly true, the ability to explore shallower, quieter and less visited areas can unwittingly cause huge disturbances to wildlife.



Where to paddle

As more paddlers take to the water it is important to know that, even from a distance, wildlife can feel threatened. Plan your route and choose wildlife-friendly entry and exit points.

- ✓ **Rig up and keep kit at the top of the beach.** Mud, marsh and the water's edge are feeding areas for birds; shingle beaches are resting and nesting areas.

- ✓ **Carry or float equipment in and out.** Dragging equipment will damage habitat and your craft.

- ✓ **Using suitable entry and exit points** can reduce erosion, avoid damaging sensitive plants and animals, and lessen wildlife disturbance.

Protect sensitive places

The quieter, less explored areas are home to roosting or feeding birds and they are incredibly sensitive areas for wildlife. Islands, spits, marshes, lagoons and mud are vital habitats for our wildlife and human presence will prevent birds using them. Avoid landing your craft on the four islands in the centre of the harbour and do not enter the West Hayling, The Kench or Southmoor nature reserves.

- ✓ **Small creeks are perfect hiding spots for birds.** So stick to the main channels.

Other tips

Paddlers stay wildlife-friendly by **minimising noise** and sudden changes in direction.

If birds become aware of you and change their behaviour, **give them space** by moving away at a steady pace.

Paddlers should also **keep a low paddle angle** or keep a low profile by getting onto their knees near wildlife.

By adapting our behaviour to the environment, we can ensure we are keeping nature safe while out on the water.



Windsports

Windsurfing is permitted within Langstone Harbour. However, to protect the harbour's internationally important birdlife, we must avoid landing on the islands in Langstone Harbour, as well as ensuring we avoid causing disturbance to wildlife in other sensitive areas.

However, kitesurfing is not permitted. This is for reasons relating to safety as well as the unique environmental sensitivities present in Langstone Harbour. There are 2 locations on the south of the island where kitesurfing is permitted: a membership-only launch on the beach in front of the golf club; and a free launch zone in between the amusement park and Chichester Avenue.

Want to get more involved in our mission for wildlife-aware watersports?

Get in touch by emailing info@birdaware.org



Look out for birds



Move further away if birds become alert



Follow requests on signs

The Bird Aware Coastal Code

www.birdaware.org



Coast and Country Canines

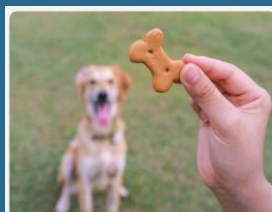
Specific engagement for the dog walking community



TOP TIPS FOR A WILDLIFE AWARE DOG WALK

April 5, 2023

[Find out more >](#)



RECALL TRAINING GUIDE

[Find out more >](#)



LOOSE LEAD WALKING TRAINING GUIDE

[Find out more >](#)



"STAY" TRAINING GUIDE

[Find out more >](#)



LEPE COUNTRY PARK

A dog friendly walking option, taking in the views and history at Lepe country park.

[Find out more >](#)



HAMBLE COMMON

A short circular walk with beautiful sea views, woodland paths and some nice alternative routes to explore.

[Find out more >](#)



RYDE - APPLEY PARK AND SEAFRONT

With beautiful woods and open grassy areas, Appley park has stunning views of Ryde beach and across the water to Portsmouth.

[Find out more >](#)

**FREE
ENTRY**



**COAST & COUNTRY CANINES
DOGS' DAY OUT**

TREAT YOUR FOUR-LEGGED FRIEND TO A GRAND DAY OUT

- designed with them in mind

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11am - 4pm

 **River Hamble Country Park**
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- Free 'have a go' activities & games
- Expert advice and exciting demos
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- Eco-friendly treats and toys
- Fun doggy activity trail



Scan to find out more, or visit
coastandcountrycanines.org



Follow the Coastal Code

Four simple steps we can all follow to help protect our wildlife:



Look out for birds



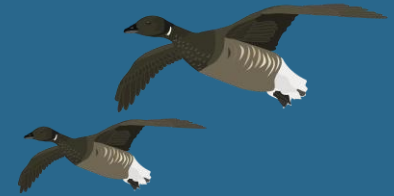
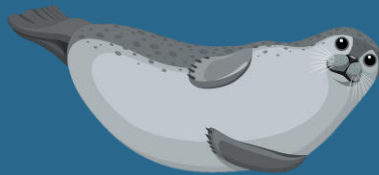
Move further away if birds become alert



Keep dogs alongside



Follow requests on signs



#shareourshore

Keep in touch

Say hello to the Rangers if you see them out on the coast, we will show you what birds and wildlife are around.

- Website: www.birdaware.org
- Newsletter
- Events
- Social media

@birdawaresolent



Bird Aware Solent
Working together to protect our coastal birds
Raising awareness of protected birds and encouraging people to share our special shores with wildlife.

The Bird Aware Solent Photography Competition
The deadline for competition entries has now passed. Thank you to all who entered. We'll be announcing the results within the next few weeks.

Meet the team
Find out more about us and the work we do.

Meet the birds
Learn about the wading birds, ducks, geese, gulls and terns that you'll see on the Solent coast.

Thank you!

