

STEART MARSHES WILLOW SCULPTURE TRAIL





WWT and the Environment Agency have created WWT Steart Marshes – one of the UK's largest wetland reserves, providing vitally important tidal habitats. Hundreds of hectares of saltmarsh and freshwater wetlands protect nearby homes and businesses from rising water levels. It provides habitat for a rich mix of wetland wildlife, which you can see represented in the willow sculptures.

Wetlands are productive and useful. As well as being a natural buffer from seawater, the saltmarsh is farmed for specialist saltmarsh lamb and beef; its creeks are a nursery for important fish stocks; and as the saltmarsh soil develops it absorbs tonnes of climate-polluting carbon. Elsewhere freshwater wetlands are grazed with traditional grazing animals like long-horned cattle.

Within the Wetland Walkway you will be able to spot 10 willow sculptures, all of animals that live or visit here. These have been made by local artists from Somerset willow.

WETLANDS WORKING FOR WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE





LITTLE EGRETS

Working Wetlands can be used for storing water, particularly in times of intense rainfall. Sensitive design and management can provide a home to many water birds, such as little egrets and, importantly, reduce flood risk.



MARSH HARRIER

These birds of prey are particularly associated with reedbeds like the ones found here. They use the reedbeds for hunting and nesting. As well as providing a good habitat for this rare bird, reedbeds improve water quality.



SHORT EARED OWL

Short eared owls fly during the day and prey upon small rodents. The rodents move to higher ground to escape from the water during the winter months. The tidal range on the Severn estuary is the second highest in the world and creates impressive and inspiring landscapes to humans.



CURLEW

Saltmarshes are places where salt water and fresh water mix. Where this happens, mud is formed which over time traps tonnes of carbon in the developing soil – a positive contribution to climate change. Curlew use their bills to probe for worms living in the mud.



KINGFISHER

New wetlands provide very important areas for fish to breed. From autumn to spring kingfishers can be seen (or more likely heard!) throughout the Wetland Walkway as they search for small fish.



BROWN HARE

Farmland is a valuable habitat in the UK and carefully managed cultivated land and grasslands can also be good for wildlife. Brown hares are often seen during the daytime and in spring you may see them boxing. The rest of the year they are shy.





OTTER

Wildlife thrives in healthy wetlands and a widespread population of otter at WWT Steart Marshes indicates the rich quality of this Working Wetland. Otters move around all the different wetland habitats on the reserve, using connecting water bodies, such as ditches, eating fish and invertebrates.



GREY HERON

Grey herons feed on a variety of aquatic and terrestrial species. Eels move from salt to freshwater as part of their lifecycle. The watercourses at WWT Steart Marshes are carefully monitored and managed, many of the water structures have special eel passes to ensure that whilst water is stored, the movement of eels is still possible.



ROE DEER

Large open undisturbed wetland landscapes provide a home to many other animals that are more often known to be secretive. Roe deer are grazing animals that help manage the growing vegetation in a natural way.



MALLARD

As developing saltmarshes are washed with the tide, thousands of tiny marine snails move in and graze on the vegetation. In turn they are fed on by large numbers of waterfowl. We have large numbers of shelduck, teal and wigeon here, as well as the more common mallard.



All willow sculptures made by Sophie Courtiour (sophiecourtour@gmail.com), except the Egrets, made by Sarah Webb
To donate to Steart Marshes, text **STMA16 £3** to **70070**



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Stearth Marshes

Wetlands working for wildlife and people
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