

Butterflies, Dragonflies and Invertebrates

NWT Martham Broad is nationally important for invertebrates with 11 red data book species recorded. These include swallowtail butterfly and Norfolk hawk dragonfly which are both regularly seen in the summer months.

Conservation Management

The cutting of both reed and sedge is vital to maintain these habitats and prevent the nature reserve becoming a dense tangle of willow and alder carr. The reedbeds are managed on rotation, with each area cut only every two years. Every winter up to 1,500 bundles of reed, each measuring 24" in circumference, are harvested and sold for thatching.

The sedge beds are cut on a four year rotation during the summer months. 4,000 bunches are harvested each year from the reserve, cut with a specially designed light-weight machine. Both reed and sedge are carried off the beds by hand and loaded into small boats for transport along the dykes to West Somerton parish staithe, where local thatchers collect the materials.

In summer management includes the mowing of pathways which create ideal open, sheltered conditions for grass snakes, adders and common lizards to bask in the sun.



Yellow flag iris

Visiting the Nature Reserve

NWT Martham Broad lies on the extreme east of Broadland near West Somerton. Approach Martham village from the A149 Stalham to Caister-on-Sea road. Follow the road through Martham to West Somerton. Turn left and head for West Somerton staithe, which you will find behind the last houses in the village on your left. Limited parking is available at Somerton parish staithe, but visitors are requested not to park in Staithe Road or along the main road through West Somerton.

Good views across the reserve can be obtained from raised public footpaths which skirt the Broad to north and south, but may be muddy during wet weather.

Please note: a circular walk is not possible and you will have to return the way you came.

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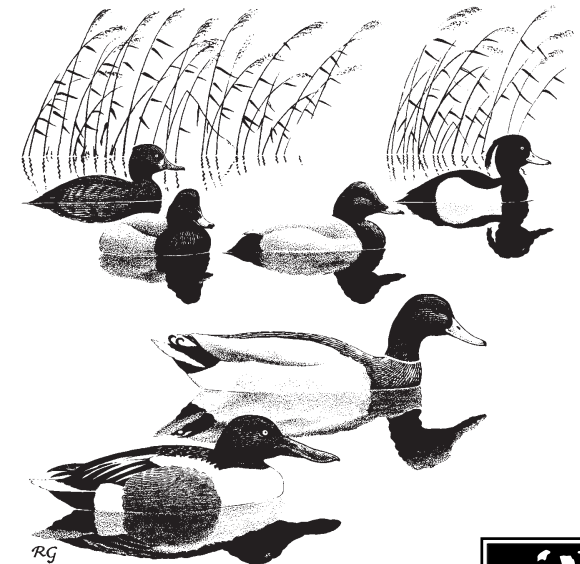


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National Nature Reserve



NWT Martham Broad NNR



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Introduction

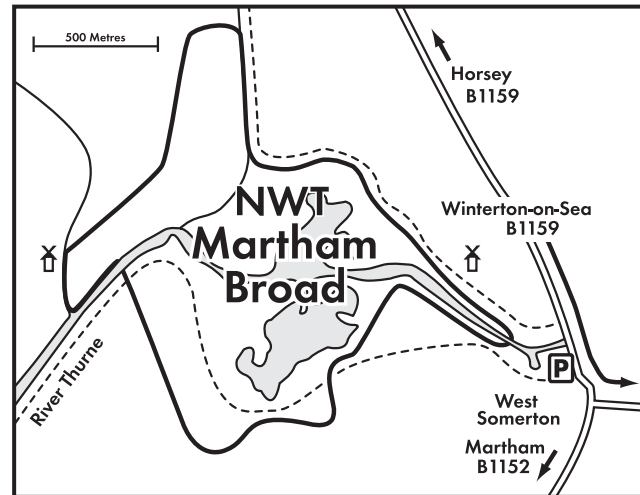
NWT Martham Broad lies in the valley of the River Thurne. These 59 hectares are of national importance for wildlife, with some of the clearest water in the Norfolk Broads and a rich assemblage of aquatic plants. Part of the land here was acquired by NWT as early as 1928, making it one of the first wildlife reserves in the Norfolk Broads, but the majority of the nature reserve was secured for wildlife conservation with the help of the Cadbury family in 1971.

History of the Site

The Broads were made during the Middle Ages by local people digging peat for fuel. The peat was dug by hand, creating shallow pits between 1 and 4 metres deep. It is thought that peat digging ceased at Martham prior to the thirteenth century, earlier than elsewhere in the Broads, as rising sea-levels and a wetter climate caused the pits to flood. As a result the open water here is comparatively shallow.

Plants

Part of the special interest of this nature reserve is a number of rare aquatic plants found. These include nationally rare stoneworts, pondweeds, holly-leaved naiad, and whorled water milfoil. The well managed sedge beds support a good range of wetland flowers including milk parsley, hemp agrimony, purple loosestrife, marsh bedstraw, greater water-parsnip, brookweed and parsley water dropwort. Close to the public footpaths look for the tall yellow flowering marsh sow thistle and spot yellow flag iris and both purple and yellow loosestrife growing amongst the sedges.



Birds

NWT Martham Broad is an excellent place to look for three Broadland specialities: bittern, bearded tit and marsh harrier. As the sun sets listen for the squealing notes of the water rail, a shy and elusive inhabitant of the reedbeds, or with luck you may spot a barn owl, silently quartering the marshes on ghost-like wings, as it seeks its prey. In spring you may be lucky and hear the distinctive boom of the male bittern. In summer reed, sedge and Cetti's warblers sing noisily from the edges of the Broad while swallows and martins hawk for insects over the water and noisy common terns dive for fish. In winter the area is good for wildfowl with shoveler, pochard, tufted duck, goldeneye and gadwall regular visitors.



Mammals

The elusive otter is regularly recorded here, though usually signs such as tracks, a half eaten fish, or its distinctive, cigar-shaped, sweet smelling droppings known as spraint, are the only clues to its presence. NWT Martham Broad is a good place to spot Chinese water deer in the early morning or evening when they emerge from cover to graze the surrounding fields. Red and muntjac deer can also sometimes be seen. Water voles and harvest mice are also present, though difficult to see. Sadly the population of water voles is in decline since the recent arrival of mink to the site. At twilight look for bats dipping over the water; pipistrelle, brown long-eared and Daubenton's bats are found here.