Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

BIRDWATCHING IN LANCASTER AREA

Lancaster Civic Vision Guide 25



Hen Harrier (male), emblem of the Forest of Bowland AONB

The Lancaster area has a very wide range of habitats and hence of birdlife, all in a compact area. The extensive stretches of coast, marsh, moor, woodland and farmland provide breeding and feeding resources for many resident and migratory species.

Some of the birdwatching sites are internationally famous, such as Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve. Others are known nationally and regionally.

In this guide we suggest some locations for seeing different assemblages of birds. Unfortunately success in seeing them on a particular day is not guaranteed! This guide has the space to tell you about only a selection of the many birdwatching sites you can choose from.

The sites selected are those with usually good spotting prospects under the right conditions. Access to the sites by the public should always be possible but check locally. Be aware that sites near the coast, marshes, moorland and rivers each have their own dangers and so do bear in mind your safety at all times.

Moorland weather can be fierce. Never venture out into Morecambe Bay; stay on the shoreline, remembering the Bay's quicksands, deep channels and fast-incoming tides.

The locations of the sites are given using the National Grid Reference for the site, a nearby car park or a starting point for your visit. Addresses, directions and postcodes are given where appropriate.

The best Ordnance Survey maps for this area are as follows:

- the north of Lancaster district – Explorer OL7 (The English Lakes SE);
- the east of the district – Explorer OL41 (Forest of Bowland);
- the west of the district – Explorer 296 (Lancaster, Morecambe & Fleetwood).

Coastal areas

Morecambe Bay is the largest inter-tidal area in the UK. Although the Bay is full at spring high tides, low tide exposes a complex patchwork of channels, sandbanks, mud, stony areas and mussel and cockle beds. There are also extensive marsh areas on either side of the bay.

The bird life here is strongly seasonal with major influxes of over-wintering species from the Arctic, Scandinavia and Russia. The best viewing sites are on the promontories into the Bay, such as these:

- Jenny Brown's Point (near Silverdale) SD 4604735.
- Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve (near Silverdale) SD478750; LA5 0SW.
- Hest Bank (car park across the railway line) SD SD469666.
- Stone Jetty, Morecambe SD425648.
- Heysham Head SD 408618.
- Sunderland Point SD 423553; note that the only access road (from Overton) is tidal and accessible only at low tide. You must check tide times.



Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve - marsh, woodland, lakes, farmland and coast

Estuaries and rivers

- The Lune estuary at Glasson SD445561 (the marina, canal and estuary); and at nearby Thurnham and Conder Green SD 459557.
- Bank End (near Cockerham) SD440528.
- Bull Beck (near Caton) SD542650 (a car park).
- Freeman's Pools (in Lancaster) SD 455616.
- Aldcliffe (near Lancaster) SD 459601 for access to the footpath along Dawson's Bank; no public access to the marsh itself; keep to the bank path.

Woodland

- Roeburndale Woods (near Wray) SD606675.
- Littledale Woods SD554623 (the bridge over Artle Beck on Littledale Road).

- Williamson Park and Lancaster Cemetery (in Lancaster) SD488610 (the main car park).
- Lawson's Wood (between Halton and Aughton) SD540661.
- Knots Wood (between Lancaster and Caton) SD514621.
- Crook O'Lune (between Lancaster and Caton, A683) SD 522643.
- Gait Barrows National Nature Reserve SD484776 (you must keep to the trails and footpaths; take precautions for ticks and Lyme Disease).
- Warton Crag SD 492723 (car park).

Moorland

- Clougha (the large Access Land area can be entered from the car park at Jubilee Tower SD 542573).
- Roeburndale Road, for example SD572629.

Useful websites

- Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve –
- Leighton Moss & Morecambe Bay Nature Reserves - The RSPB
- Lancaster and District Birdwatching Society – www.lancasterbirdwatching.org.uk This website gives a very comprehensive list of the many other birdwatching sites in the Lancaster and South Cumbria area.
- A blog from the Aldcliffe area – http://birdingaldcliffe.blogspot.co.uk/

Text – Gordon Clark. Photographs RSPB (hen harrier); Google Earth (Leighton Moss)
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