

Car parking and toilets can be found at Earnse Bay.

For more information contact:

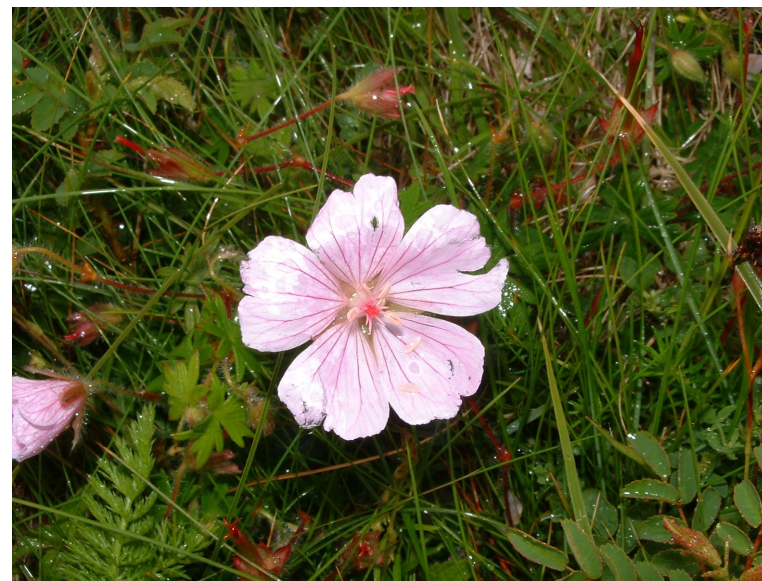
Natural England
Telephone 015395 31604
or visit

www.naturalengland.org.uk



Natterjack Toad

NORTH WALNEY NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE



Unique Walney Geranium

Location

The Reserve is situated to the north end of Walney Island, extending from 150m north of Walney Airfield to the tip of the Island. Having crossed Jubilee Bridge from Barrow onto Walney, turn right onto the Promenade. After half a mile turn left onto Mill Lane and proceed west for half a mile. Then turn right onto West Shore road and follow the road through the West Shore estate to Earnse Point (Grid reference SD 170 700). The National Nature Reserve (N.N.R) lies one mile to the north. Please note that land south of the N.N.R. boundary is part of an operational airfield. Visitors are not allowed to walk through the airfield without the permission of BAE Systems.

This leaflet is produced by Barrow Borough Council (January 2012)
www.barrowtourism.co.uk

Background

The area has been used since prehistoric times as evidenced by the many Mesolithic, Neolithic, bronze and iron age finds. Flints, broken pieces of pottery, and the rare stone axe have been found through archaeological observation.

A rabbit warren was established at the north end of Walney Island, probably when it was held by the monks of Furness Abbey. Grazing by cattle and sheep continued for hundreds of year until ceasing with the establishment of the airfield during World War II. Extensive sand and gravel extraction in recent times have left permanent ponds in the south-west of the Nature Reserve which are now becoming habitats in their own right.

It extends down the Mean High Water, but excludes the two fields on the eastern side still in use. Its 350 acres exhibit a great variety of habitats, including sand dunes, heath, hay meadows, salt marsh, sandy beach, shingle and scrub. It is a nationally important wildlife site as well as being important archaeologically, geologically and geographically.

Flora

Within the rich variety of habitats over 300 species of plant have been recorded. The dunes are full of colour in the late spring with the unique "Walney Geranium", rest harrow, burnet rose, wild pansy and ladies bedstraw. The salt marsh and heath are at their best in the summer. The marsh is alive with thrift, sea aster and two species of sea lavender, the heath with ling, tormentil and cross-leaved heath. On the damper parts of the heath are found sundew, marsh cinquefoil and sphagnum.

Several species of orchid can be found around the edges of the ponds, including early and northern marsh orchids. Yellow bartsia may also be found here – the only site in Cumbria. Other parts of the Reserve are equally rich, with many uncommon and rare plants.

Fauna

One of the main reasons for the Reserve is the presence of natter-jack toads, Britain's rarest amphibian. There are only about 40 remaining sites, and one of their main strongholds is the Cumbria coastline. The calling of males in the breeding season is very impressive. Visitors are reminded that it is illegal to capture or keep natter-jack toads without a licence.

Over 130 species of bird have been recorded on and around the Reserve. Large numbers of wildfowl and waders can be seen throughout the year including kestrel, sparrow-hawk, merlin, peregrine and hen harrier. Short-eared owls are also frequent visitors, to be seen hunting before dusk. Visits by rare species include the beautiful golden oriole.

Butterflies and moths are abundant in good years and on warm, sunny days put on a colourful show of aerobatics. Several species of dragonfly, both large and small, may be seen hunting around the ponds in the summer.

Access

Public access is permitted at all times on foot only. Please observe any notices and keep all dogs under strict control, especially during the breeding season (April-July).