



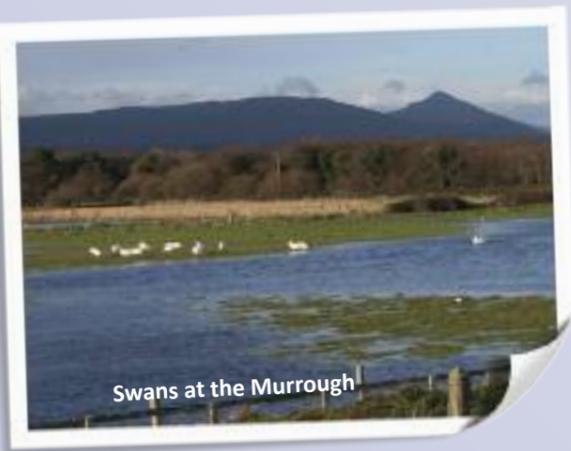
Kingfisher

Welcome

A visitors' guide to The Murrough Wetlands

'The Murrough' stretches for 15 km along the east coast, from Wicklow Town in the south to Ballygannon, north of Kilcoole. This area can be explored in distinct segments or walked in one long trek. At any time of the year you may enjoy stunning scenery, with the Wicklow hills as a backdrop, and a rich diversity of habitats with a wealth of wildlife to view.

The coastal walk is dominated by an extensive ridge of shingle which forms a natural barrier from the sea and carries the main Dublin to Rosslare railway line. Inland of this ridge you can enjoy wild habitats with salt marshes, mudflats, freshwater and brackish marshes, reed beds, wet grasslands, wet woodland, and alkaline fen, while offshore are the sandbanks of the Codling and India Banks.



Swans at the Murrough

What's Special about the Murrough Wetlands?

The Murrough is the largest wetland complex on the East Coast of Ireland, containing a mosaic of habitats which in turn support a rich diversity of plant and animal life. Its significance for biodiversity is recognised by its inclusion in the Natura 2000 network of EU designated sites.



Brent Geese

Three special places to visit at the Murrough

Broad Lough is an intertidal lough that is fed by the Vartry River and drains out to sea at Wicklow Harbour. A two hour walk along the eastern shore will provide the visitor with a great variety of waterbirds and the chance to see Otters fishing and playing. Breeding birds include Little Egrets, Water Rails, Reed Warblers and Kingfisher and in winter Hen Harriers hunt over the reed beds. Waterfowl include Greylag Geese, Wigeon, Teal, Curlew and Golden Plover. In autumn, you can expect passage migrants such as Common Sandpipers and possibly Osprey availing of an abundance of Mullet that drift in with the tide. Access the lough by crossing the railway line at XR022 (see map) and walk due west on the grassy track to access the lake shore.



Birds-foot Trefoil



Yellow Horned Poppy

East Coast Nature Reserve is close to the mid point of the complex of wetlands. Apart from the coastal walk, the BirdWatch Ireland Nature Reserve features circular walks through fen and wet woodland with raised boardwalks and observation hides. The 90 ha. reserve can be explored in 3-4 hours. As well as an array of wetland birds such as Snipe, Grasshopper Warbler, Shoveler, Teal and Wigeon, you can expect to see a great variety of Butterflies and dragonflies from spring to autumn. The reserve holds a selection of raptors, with Buzzard, Kestrel and Sparrowhawk the most commonly recorded, but also Merlin and Hen Harrier in winter and scarce migrants such as Hobby and Marsh Harrier in season. The boardwalks can reveal basking Lizards and signs of Otters foraging.

Kilcoole Marshes are close to the northern end of the wetlands. There are two nature reserves in this section, with a small holding owned by BirdWatch Ireland flanked by a 60 ha. wet grassland reserve owned by NPWS. There is great bird interest here in winter with the regular Brent Geese building up in numbers through the season and sometimes joined by smaller numbers of Greylag geese and Whooper Swans from Iceland. The flooded grasslands hold a variety of duck and waders such as Black tailed Godwits, Lapwing and Golden Plover. Keep an eye on the sea. Auks and divers occur on passage and Manx Shearwaters, Gannets and Kittiwakes often pass close by in late summer. Terns are the summer stars. Little Terns have a long established colony at the Breaches, near the outlet to the sea about 2km south of Kilcoole station. Visit the colony from May to August and meet the wardens who will fill you in on all the goings on at this important conservation project, operated by BirdWatch Ireland and supported by NPWS. Sandwich Terns are almost daily visitors from spring through autumn, but have not bred, as yet. Other regular passage migrants are Whimbrels, best seen and heard in late April and in May, along the green pastures grazed by cattle. Yellow Wagtails are infrequent visitors at this time and the air is filled with sounds of displaying Lapwing and Skylark, a truly memorable experience.

Top things to do at the Murrough Wetlands

Spring/Summer

- 1 Watch and learn about Little Terns at the wardened colony 2 km south of Kilcoole.
- 2 See Emperor Dragonflies patrol ponds on the East coast Nature Reserve.
- 3 Listen to Skylarks sing on high along the low coastal dunes and meadows.
- 4 Watch butterflies in woodland glades and along the shingle bank.
- 5 Look out for Lizards basking on sun-warmed boulders.
- 6 View the colourful wildflower display north of the Murrough car park. Look out for Red Clover, Birdsfoot Trefoil, Kidney Vetch, Rest-harrow, Yellow Horned-poppies and Pyramidal Orchids.



Painted Lady



Pyramidal Orchid

Autumn/Winter

- 7 Look out for flocks of Brent and Greylag Geese on coastal fields.
- 8 Watch Otters feeding in the marshes or in the seawater lough.
- 9 Spot a Kingfisher waiting patiently on its perch.
- 10 Enjoy the trumpeting calls of Whooper Swans.
- 11 Watch wheeling flocks of Golden Plovers and Lapwing, perhaps disturbed by a hunting Peregrine



Little Tern



npws.ie

For further details of its priority habitats and birds and site descriptions, visit www.npws.ie and select 'protected sites', 'County Wicklow' and 'Murrough SPA'.

How to get there

By train

The Dublin Rosslare main line rail service runs the length of the Murrough and stops at Wicklow town. Broad Lough is a short distance from the station. On exiting the station, walk 100 m until you reach a track on the left signposted 'River Walk and Nature Trail'. Take this trail and cross the lough via the metal footbridge, keep left and walk under new road bridge to the Murrough car park on your right. Walk due north along the coast to access lough at XR022.

By bus

The Murrough is served by Dublin Bus services, route number 84 to Kilcoole (Sea Road) and Newcastle village. In both cases walk east down the Sea Road until you reach the coast. Both roads are bordered by BirdWatch Ireland properties when you reach the coast. Wicklow town is also served by Bus Eireann.

By car

Public car parks are situated at Kilcoole Station, adjacent to the wetlands and at Wicklow town, Murrough car park, a 2 km walk from Broad Lough. On-road car parking is available at the end of the Sea Road at Six Mile and Five Mile Point, serving Newcastle and the East Coast Nature Reserve. Access and parking is currently free of charge.

On foot

The whole of the 15 km coastline has a pathway of variable quality, running parallel to the shore and the railway line. Walkers must at all times keep to the seaward side of the fence line. There are designated crossing points which allow access to the main wetland areas. At all times beware of trains and keep well clear of the line!



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Photo credits: Cover; Little Egret, Ger Roche; Kingfisher, Shay Connolly; Swans at the Murrough, Oran O'Sullivan; Brent Geese, Oran O'Sullivan; Birds-foot Trefoil, Deirdre Burns; Yellow Horned Poppy, Deirdre Burns; Painted Lady, Stephen Mc Avoy; Pyramidal Orchid, Niall Keogh; Little Tern, John Fox. Main map: Oystercatcher, Kevin Murphy; Viviparous Lizard, Shay Connolly; Six-spot Burnet, Stephen Mc Avoy; Sunset at the Murrough, Niall Keogh; Otter, Stephen Sheridan; Merlin, Shay Connolly. Design and map by Michael O'Clery.



The Murrough

Enjoy the largest wetland complex on the East Coast



- Kilcoole Marshes
- East Coast Nature Reserve
- Broad Lough

OPEN 24 / 7 / 365
ACCESS IS FREE!



The Murrough Wetlands



Oystercatcher



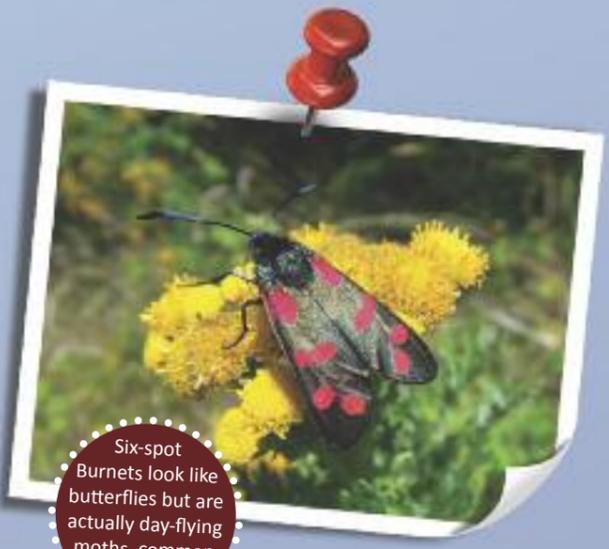
Did You know?
The name Murrough comes from the Irish word 'murbhach' which means a saltmarsh along the sea.



A large variety of plants, animals and birds live in the many habitats of the Murrough



Common Lizards are common in the Murrough, often seen along the boardwalk in sunny weather



Six-spot Burnets look like butterflies but are actually day-flying moths, common in summer



Otters are shy so are rarely seen, but they are reasonably common on the Murrough



Merlin is a scarce winter visitor to the coast



SCALE