

Sites of wildlife interest



11 The Coast: River Tyne to Trow Point

Mouth of River Tyne



ACCESS
There is good open access to most of the area, including the Groyne and South Pier, but the latter is closed to the public in rough weather.

TRANSPORT
There is a regular bus service along the Coast Road (no E1).

The river mouth is always full of excitement, with the constant coming and going of ferries, yachts and fishing trawlers. But the piers and beaches are also excellent places to enjoy the huge variety of marine life that lives along our coast.

The strand line on the beach at Sandhaven, with its sea weed and plant debris, is alive with insects that in turn provide much-needed food for wading birds. Look out in winter for up to 100 sanderling, a little white bird that feeds by running up and down the beach in front of the waves looking like a clockwork mouse.

When the sea is calm, at any time of the year, the end of the South Pier is a good place to scan for cetaceans (whales and dolphins). Sightings might include small groups of harbour porpoise hunting shoals of herring, or bottle-nosed dolphin straying from their home range in the Moray Firth. It is even possible to get views of the impressive, 10 metre long, minke whale. In winter, at high tide, there is a roost of purple sandpipers and turnstones on the pier.

PURPLE SANDPIPER



The sand dunes, at 15 hectares, are the biggest in Tyne and Wear. Formed in the last 60 years, they are battered by the sea and also eroded by large numbers of visitors. Despite this they are held together by tough plants like marram, lyme-grass, sand sedge and sand couch, and are home to many specialist plants and insects that are adapted to this demanding habitat.

In winter South Marine Park Lake plays host to waterfowl including over 150 mute swans and 200 tufted duck - the biggest gathering of each of these wild birds in the county.



MUTE SWANS AND TUFTED DUCK

