

Accessible birding sites in Essex for those with mobility issues

(Compiled by Essex Birdwatching Society)

INTRODUCTION:

The following is a range of birding sites in Essex that are suitable for wheelchair users, and by definition accessible by everyone. Details of contacts for more information, an overview of access and available facilities are given for each location. The information is correct at the time of printing (February 2019), but could change over time.

There are other wheelchair accessible sites within Essex, however those chosen are where it might be possible to locate the birds often reported on the 'latest sightings' page of the EBWS website - www.ebws.org.uk

Abberton Reservoir, Nr Colchester (CO2 0EU)

Disabled badge holder car park is 20 metres from the visitor Centre, the main car park is 40 metres from the centre.

The visitor Centre has a shop, toilets (including disabled) and café on this 4.9 sq km site

The 900-metre-long, wide, hard surfaced, circular path (some 5% gradients) takes in 3 accessible hides at 150 metres, 300 metres and 425 metres from the centre.

The woodland area beside the entrance gate can be viewed from the hard-surfaced old road and is accessible from the car park (approximately 100 metres) or the outer car park off the entrance road (approximately 20 metres, 5% gradient).

The causeway nearest the Centre (Layer-de-la-Haye) is hard surfaced and accessible via a level, hard surfaced path from the outer car park.

Billets Farm is 800 metres south of the visitor centre which has a car park and a 120-metre-long hard surfaced path to a viewpoint screen overlooking part of the reservoir.

The western end of the reservoir is viewable from the roadside on Layer Breton causeway, approximately 3.2 Km from the visitor Centre.

Contact: Tel. 01206 738172, email: abberton@essexwt.org.uk
Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/abberton-reservoir

Bowers Marsh, Nr Basildon (SS13 2HG)

There are no facilities at this site.

There three trails available starting at the car park on wide, level, hard surfaced paths. Kissing gates are situated on all trails which can be opened by radar key holders: The trails are 1, 2 or 5 km in length. The 5 km trail has steep access to the East Haven viewpoint.

Contact: Tel: 01268 498620, email: southessex@rspb.org.uk
Website: www.rspb.org/reserves/bowers-marsh

Canvey Island Seafront (SS8 0DA)

The car park is located beside Labworth Memorial Gardens off Western Esplanade.

Toilets are located within the car park and cafes can be found on both Eastern and Western Esplanades.

The sea wall is reached via a 75 metre long, hard surfaced ramp beside the car park at 10% gradient. The top of the sea wall is level, wide and hard surfaced.

There is also a disabled badge holder only car park situated at the top of the sea wall off Western Esplanade (opposite St James Court).

Chigborough Lakes, Heybridge (CM9 4RE)

There are no facilities at this 46 acre flooded gravel pits reserve.

The unmade car park provides access to a hard-surfaced path that runs for approximately 100 metres to a view point overlooking Gadwall Lake.

Note that the car park is sometimes locked, check before visiting.

Contact: Tel. 01621 862950, email: admin@essexwt.org.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/chigborough-lakes

Coalhouse Fort, East Tilbury (RM18 8PB)

Toilets and a café are situated 100 metres from the car park via a hard-surfaced path with a 5% gradient.

Two wide, hard surfaced paths lead from the car park. Either a 700-metre circular route around the fort and moat or 650 metres to the sea wall, both include gradients of 5%.

Contact: Tel. 01375 844203

Website: www.coalhousefort.co.uk

Fingringhoe Wick, Nr Colchester (CO2 7DN)

Disabled badge holder car park is 20 metres from the visitor Centre, the main car park is 40 metres from the Centre.

The visitor Centre has a shop, toilets (including accessible) and café on this 48-hectare reserve.

There is a 175-metre-long easy access trail from the visitor Centre on a wide, level, hard surfaced path to the central area which has a number of picnic tables/seats. The less able can request permission from the visitor Centre to drive their vehicle to this area.

It is more challenging to reach the managed retreat area along unmade paths, especially in wet and muddy conditions.

Contact: Tel. 01206 729678, email: fingringhoe@essexwt.org.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/fingringhoe-wick

Frinton Esplanade (CO13 9DN)

Car parking is available on the roadside with disabled parking spaces at the southern end of the Esplanade.

Toilets are located 100 metres from the disabled parking at the southern end; several cafes are to be found in the nearby high street.

A 150-metre-long, wide, hard surfaced footpath beside the southern end disabled parking bays passes the toilet block and leads to the sea wall which links Frinton to Holland on Sea. The sea wall path is wide, level and hard surfaced.

Gunners Park, Shoebury (SS3 9FD)

There are no facilities at this 25 hectares site.

Toilets and café facilities can be found nearby on Shoebury Common Road at SS3 9HG

There are three main trails available from the car park on wide, hard surfaced paths: 500-metre-long trail southwards with three gradients of approximately 5%; 550-metre-long trail eastwards with one gradient of approximately 5%

A circular trail of 2 km with four gradients of approximately 5%.

Contact: Tel. 01621 862950, email: admin@essexwt.org.uk
Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/gunners-park

Hanningfield Reservoir, Nr Chelmsford (CM11 1WT)

Disabled badge holder car park is 20 metres from the visitor Centre, the main car park is 50 metres from the centre.

The visitor centre has a shop, toilets (including disabled) and café.

There is a 100-metre-long easy access trail from the visitor centre on a wide, level, hard surfaced path and board walk to the Lyster hide. The reservoir can also be viewed from the causeway (Hawkswood Road) that runs across its south-western end.

Contact: Tel: 01268 711001, email: hanningfield@essexwt.org.uk
Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/hanningfield-reservoir

Hatfield Forest, Takeley (CM22 6NE)

The main car park is 50 metres from the café and toilets on this 400 hectare site.

There are few easy access paths, however the road to/from the main car park runs through the forest and there are some stop-off points for viewing from a vehicle. The end of the lake past the café/toilets is accessible via a wide and level hard path.

A 'Tramper' all terrain buggy is available for free of charge hire but must be booked in advance using the contacts below (instruction provided).

Contact: Tel. 01279 870678, email: hatfieldforest@nationaltrust.org.uk
Website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hatfield-forest

Highwoods Country Park, Colchester (CO4 5JR)

Disabled badge holder car park is 20 metres from the visitor Centre, the main car park is 50 metres from the centre.

The car park (off Turner Road) is adjacent to the visitor centre which has a shop, toilets (including disabled) and café.

There is a 550-metre-long easy access trail from the visitor centre on a level, hard surfaced path.

Contact: Tel: 01206 853588, email: countryside@colchester.gov.uk
Website: www.highwoodscountrypark.co.uk

Hornchurch Country Park, Ingrebourne Valley (RM12 6DF)

Disabled badge holder car park is adjacent to the visitor Centre. The main car park is 200 metres from the centre.

The visitor Centre has a shop, toilets (including disabled) and café on this 105-hectare site.

There are three circular trails available from the visitor centre on generally level, wide, hard surfaced paths:

Two trails southward from the visitor centre, 1.8km and 2.4km in length. One trail northward from the visitor centre, 1.8km in length.

Contact: Tel: 01708 520364, email: ingrebourne@essexwt.org.uk
Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/ingrebourne-valley

Jaywick Beach (CO15 2HZ)

The car park is located off Tamarisk Way, there is a café opposite to the car park.

The sea wall path, which is level, wide and hard surfaced, is accessed via a 10-metre long hard surfaced ramp adjacent to the car park at 10% gradient.

Lee Valley, Fishers Green, Nr Waltham Abbey (EN9 2EF)

Toilets and an information board are located beside the car park at the end of Stubbins Hall Lane. There is a café (and more toilets) at the adjacent Lee Valley Park Farm.

Starting from the car park there is a 230-metre-long trail to the Bittern Watchpoint hide.

A 2.75 km circular trail around the lake on a wide hard surfaced path commences 150 metres from the car park.

Contact: Tel: 03000 030610, email: info@leevalleypark.org.uk
Website: www.leevalleypark.org.uk

Mistley (CO11 1AS)

Riverside parking is available along The Walls, view from the footpath.

There are no facilities. However there may be a mobile catering vehicle parked at the roadside at certain times.

Norsey Wood, Billericay (CM11 1HA)

Toilets and an information centre are located beside the car park on this 175-hectare site.

Starting from the car park there is a 1 km circular trail on a surfaced path.

Contact: Tel: 01268 208090, email: norsey.wood@basildon.gov.uk

Website: www.norseywood.org.uk

Phyllis Currie Nature Reserve, Gt Leighs (CM3 1PE)

There are no facilities at this 9 hectare reserve.

A wheel chair friendly path from the car park takes a 400 metre circular trail including the lake with some gradients of approximately 5%.

Contact: Tel. 01621 862950, email: admin@essexwt.org.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/phyllis-currie

Rainham Marshes, Purfleet (RM19 1SZ)

Disabled badge holder car park is 100 metres from the visitor centre (access is via a ramp with a 5% gradient adjacent to the disabled badge holder car park), the main car park is 60 metres from the centre (access via a stairway).

The visitor Centre has a shop, toilets (including disabled) and café.

The 3.8 km long, wide, hard surfaced and boardwalk, circular path takes in 4 accessible hides at 300 metres, 750 metres and 1.9 km clockwise from the centre and 1.1 km anti-clockwise from the Centre. There is a 5% gradient on the exit from the centre thereafter the paths are level.

Contact: Tel: 01708 899840, email: rainham.marshes@rspb.org.uk

Website: www.rspb.org/reserves/rainham-marsh

Roding Valley Meadows (IG7 6DP)

There are no facilities at this 19 hectare site.

There is a 1.6 km long, generally level, hard surfaced trail from the car park.

Contact: Tel: 020 8500 3094, email: roding@essexwt.org.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/roding-valley-meadows

Southend Pier (SS1 2EL)

Parking is available along the seafront in the vicinity of the pier (best avoided in peak season!). There is a lift for access to pier level.

Toilets and cafes are located at both ends of the pier (and along the seafront).

There is a train that takes you to the end of the pier (or a one and a third mile level boardwalk).

Contact: Tel. 01702 215620, email: contact@southend.gov.uk

Website: www.southend.gov.uk/pier

St Osyth Beach, Nr Clacton (CO16 8SG)

The car park is located off Beach Road, there is a café beside the car park.

The sea wall path, which is level, wide and hard surfaced, is accessed via a 20 metre long hard surfaced ramp adjacent to the car park at 10% gradient.

The Naze, Walton-on-the-Naze (CO14 8LE)

Although The Naze is not generally wheelchair friendly as there are no hard pathways, sea watching is possible from the public car park. Disabled parking is also available adjacent to the visitor Centre.

The visitor Centre has a shop, toilets and a café.

Contact: Tel: 01255 679379, email: naze@essexwt.org.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/the-naze

Thurrock Thameside Nature Park, Stanford-le-Hope (SS17 0RN)

Disabled badge holder car park is 60 metres from the visitor Centre, the main car park is 80 metres from the centre.

The visitor centre has a shop, toilets (including disabled) and café.

There are two circular trails available from the visitor centre both on wide, hard surfaced paths: 530 metres trail that has two 5% gradients, with a hide at 250 metres. The 1.65 km trail with one 5% gradient. Additionally, there is a wheelchair accessible roof-top viewing deck on the visitor centre.

Contact: Tel: 01375 643342, email: ttnp@essexwt.org.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/ttnp

Two Tree Island, Leigh-on-Sea (SS9 2GB)

The car park is located immediately after crossing the bridge onto the island.

There are no facilities at this site. However, there is a café at the adjacent golf driving range or at Leigh-on-Sea train station (which also has toilets).

The eastern side of the reserve is all grass pathways and not ideally suitable for wheelchairs, but the western side has a 2.4 km circular trail from the car park on wide, hard surfaced paths, the northern side of the loop has two slopes of 20% gradient. A spur at the western end leads to two wheelchair accessible hides at 1.0 km and 1.2 km clockwise from the car park.

A second car park at the southern end of island affords views over the river Thames but otherwise is not suitable for wheelchair users.

Contact: Tel. 01621 862950, email: admin@essexwt.org.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/two-tree-island

Wanstead Park (E11 2LS)

Disabled badge holder parking is available on site, adjacent to the Temple.

Car parking is also available outside the park in Warren Road on this 140-acre site.

The Temple has toilets and an information centre (a radar key is required to access the disabled toilets), refreshments are available from the nearby Tea Hut.

A number of surfaced pathways radiate out into the park from the Temple.

Contact: Tel: 020 8508 0028/2266, email: epping.forest@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Website: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/wansteadpark

Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea (SS16 4UH)

The main car park is adjacent to the country park visitor Centre which has a shop, toilets (including disabled) and a café while across the road the RSPB has a visitor centre with disabled parking adjacent.

There are two hides with disabled access overlooking the fleet, one is 80 metres from the park visitor centre with the second 30 metres from the Green Centre car park, 300 metres north of the visitor centre. A key for these hides is available from the RSPB visitor centre or when closed, the park visitor centre.

The 2 km circular walk, on a wide, hard, level surface, takes you around the perimeter of the park. Apart from the two hides mentioned above, there are two more accessible hides at 1.0 km and 1.2 km clockwise from the centre.

There is also a car park at the marina, 400 metres south of the visitor centre. The circular route can be accessed from both this car park and the Green Centre car park.

Contact: Tel: 01268 498620

Website: www.wattylercountrypark.org.uk

West Canvey Marsh, Canvey Island (SS8 0QR)

There are no facilities at this site.

Two trails available from the car park on wide, level, hard surfaced paths: A 3.2 km trail with 2 hides at 250 metres and 900 metres. With the exception of the seawall, all paths are hard surfaced. There are two kissing gates along the route which can be opened by Radar key holders. A 800 metre trail with one hide at 250 metres (no kissing gates on this trail).

Contact: Tel: 01268 208090, email: southessex@rspb.org.uk

Website: www.rspb.org/reserves/west-canvey-marsh

West Mersea (CO5 8BX)

A car park is located off Seaview Avenue or disabled badge holders can park on the yellow lines of Victoria Esplanade for 3 hours. There is a café beside the junction of Seaview Avenue and Victoria Esplanade, whilst public toilets are approximately 150 metres and 400 metres west of here on Victoria Esplanade.

Views of the sea and Blackwater Estuary can be found from various points along Victoria Esplanade.

There is also hard standing on the ramp between the beach huts 100 metres east of Seaview Road off the public footpath through the caravan park.

Wrabness Nature Reserve, Manningtree (C011 2TE)

There are no facilities at this 27-hectare reserve.

A Radar key is required to access the path from the car park which is wide and hard surfaced with some gradients of approximately 5%. The circular trail of 2 km includes a viewing hide at approximately 900 metre overlooking the Stour estuary.

Contact: Tel. 01621 862950, email: admin@essexwt.org.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/reserves/wrabness

All the above information and data was correct at the time of being compiled in February 2019, and are subject to changes.