

Bowers Marsh (RSPB)

Location: Bowers Gifford, Essex

Directions by public transport:



Pitsea station (London, Tilbury and Southend line) is around 3.3km from the reserve. On leaving the station walk to the end of Station Approach and turn right to follow the path around 0.5km to the underpass beneath the A13. On the other side of the underpass turn right past Lidl onto London Road which stretches 1km until a right turning onto Church Road (you will come across a Bowers Marsh RSPB sign at this point). Follow the footpath over the A13 and then turn left. With Pitsea Cemetery on your right walk along the road another 0.5km until you reach a right turning

which leads down a continuation of Church Road a further 1km towards the reserve. Once past St Margaret's Church walk under the railway bridge and you will see the reserve entrance on your left.

Birds

Bowers Marsh can host a wide range of waders including Avocet, Redshank, Greenshank, Lapwing, Dunlin, Grey Plover, Oystercatcher, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Snipe, Green Sandpiper and Ruff. Occasional rarer species have also occurred in recent years including Red-necked Phalarope, Black-winged Stilt, Spoonbill, Black-necked Grebe and Little Stint. Recurrent duck species include Garganey, Pintail, Gadwall and Shoveler with Wigeon present in large numbers through the winter months.



The reserve is a notable haven for Corn Buntings with Bearded Tit, Skylark, Stonechat, Reed Bunting and Meadow Pipit also present throughout the year. Barnacle Geese can occasionally be found amidst the large gatherings of Canada Geese while Rooks and Jackdaws sometimes feature amidst a mixed flock of corvids. The marsh offers fertile ground for raptors with Sparrowhawk, Marsh Harrier and Short-eared Owl all possibilities.



Approaching the reserve on foot can have its advantages as a pleasing range of species can often be seen en route including Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Greenfinch, Song Thrush, Kestrel, Buzzard and Pheasant. A winter visit is likely to bring Fieldfares and Redwings in the adjacent fields while you might be fortunate enough to find a Lesser Whitethroat in the hedges lining the road during the late spring.

Other wildlife

Bowers Marsh hosts a wide range of standard butterflies including Brown Argus while Small Tortoiseshells can be notable for their abundance early in the season. As at nearby Vange Marsh, Wall Browns occur in small numbers though can be elusive. It is worth keeping an eye out for moths including Clouded Silver and the more common dragonflies including Common Darter and Black-tailed Skimmer. Once within the reserve it is not unusual to find a Red Fox trotting along the path ahead.



Pros and cons

As RSPB wardens will helpfully point out, it is a long walk from Pitsea to Bowers Marsh. Once familiar with the route however it is a far from disagreeable one as once across the A13 flyover the approach to the reserve becomes ever more serene until the sound of traffic completely fades. If in need of recuperation there are benches within the peaceful grounds of St Margaret's Church a short distance from the reserve.



Few wildlife reserves provide the same sense of quietly enjoying a vast open space and being at one with nature as Bowers Marsh. So remote is the setting that there is little prospect of an unwelcome diversion when viewing or photographing birds. While the walking involved in getting there and back via public transport may not be ideal (fatigue can begin to set in on the return leg), the effort involved can feel well worthwhile after a well-timed visit.