

About The Broads

ROLLESBY BROAD

Along with Filby and Ormesby, Rollesby Broad is part of the Trinity Broads system, recognised as a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) in 1998. The whole Broads system is a unique ecosystem, which is home to a rich diversity of wildlife, some of which are found nowhere else in the UK e.g. Swallowtail butterfly and Norfolk Hawker Dragonfly.

Rollesby Broad is not accessible by boat from the rest of the broads network but this makes it an extra special place to visit away from the rest of the Broads and hire boat industry. Only electric engines, rowing boats and sailing boats are permitted, and public launching of canoes is not allowed.

If canoeing is your thing then how about taking to the water with The Canoe Man for a guided canoe trail. Because canoeing is silent and low in the water it is the perfect way to get close to the rare, and sometimes shy wildlife of the Broads.

From the boats, the terrace or from the specially designed bird hide, observe the incredible range of wildlife – here's just a taster of the wildlife to be spotted!

[Click here for species information](#) - we guarantee you'll be surprised at just how many species can be found – right on our doorstep.

Binocular hire is available.

ABOUT THE BROADS

A magical place where land and water, people and nature meet – there's nowhere quite as special as the Broads.

- This wonderful protected wetland – England's largest – has over 125 miles of safe, enchanting waterways, carefully managed over centuries for people and for nature
- The big skies and sparkling landscape are a perfect canvas for adventure and relaxation – time to reflect, space to explore, a magical opportunity to enjoy a real family break
- An intricate maze of rivers, tributaries and smooth, reed-fringed waters, the Broads invites exploration by boat, whether by Norfolk wherry, Canadian canoe or comfortable cabin cruiser. Tuition for beginners, safe moorings and our Ranger patrols ensure that everybody enjoys holidays afloat
- You can get so close to nature whilst boating on the Broads. Each turn reveals a new secret – dancing dragonflies, a chorus of birdsong from the reed beds or the tail of an otter sliding below the water, leaving a tantalising trail of bubbles
- The Broads inspires and delights at any time of year. Summer is a time for lazy holidays, family fun and messing about on the water, but the vast skies, ever-changing light and wealth of wildlife draw artists, photographers, anglers, walkers, birdwatchers and nature lovers year-round
- Leisure time can be as relaxed or energetic as you like: river trips, sailing, angling, cycling and watersports are all easily found in the Broads. Visit a Roman fort, a country market or village fete; break for a long lunch at a waterside inn, or treat yourself to a local ice-cream

HISTORY OF THE BROADS

The Broads lies in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. At 303 sq km it is Britain's largest nationally protected wetland and a member of the international family of national parks. Pretty towns and villages are surrounded by rolling farmland, woods and marshes – and the nearby coastline is spectacular.

The Broads are man-made waterways created by peat digging. The first written evidence of this dates back to the 12th century when much of east Norfolk had been cleared of its woodland for fuel and building materials. For the next 200 years peat digging was a major industry.

Historical records show that the pits gradually began to fill with water, making the peat more difficult to extract. Peat diggings were abandoned by the 14th century. They flooded, and this partly man-made landscape became a wetland, rich in wildlife.

Man's influence on the Broads landscape continued as windpower was harnessed to drain the marshes of water and make it suitable for farming. Marshmen and women made their living cutting reed and sedge for thatching. And, in the Victorian era, the rich boating heritage of the Broads led to boating holidays becoming a popular pastime – and they've remained so ever since.

For more information of the history and heritage of the Broads go to www.enjoythebroads.com

SPECIES

There's always something to see at The Waterside – both afloat and ashore! Here's just a taster.

In Spring and Summer, Reed and Sedge Warblers are to be found and the explosive song of the Cetti's Warbler may be heard, although notoriously difficult to actually see! Great Spotted Woodpeckers are to be found in the surrounding woodland and Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps add their songs to the resident species in Spring. Common Terns fish here and Arctic Terns have been recorded passing through, as have Black Terns after easterly winds in late April and May.

A good selection of dragonflies are to be found, including Southern Hawker, Brown Hawker, Four-spotted Chaser, Common Darter and possibly the rare Norfolk Hawker (listed in the Red Data Book of threatened species), all of which have to be wary of the Hobby which catches dragonflies in flight and is regularly seen here.

Marsh Harriers regularly fly over and sometimes an Osprey (mainly in Spring and Autumn) may pass through, diving into the Broad to catch an unsuspecting fish. Along with Mute Swans, Coots and Moorhens, Great Crested Grebes are a regular feature on the Broads and may be seen doing their elaborate mating displays, including the 'penguin dance', in the Spring and later carrying their black and white 'humbug' young on their back.

The Kingfisher is also present and The Waterside Bird Hide and the area in front of the hide is currently being improved to encourage kingfishers to fish there and subsequently provide excellent views and photographic opportunities.

In Winter the Broad is home to good numbers of wildfowl, including Pochard, Tufted Duck, Teal, Wigeon and Mallard. Goldeneye regularly occur and the resplendent drakes can be seen 'throwing' back their heads in a courtship display to the slightly dowdier ducks. Along with the Great Crested, some of the rarer Grebes occur, including Slavonian and Red-necked Grebe and in January 2012 a Great Northern Diver was found here and could be seen from The Waterside.

The magical sight and sound of skeins of Pink-footed Geese flying over is another feature in the Winter here and along with Marsh Harriers, a wintering Hen Harrier may well be encountered. The alder carr surrounding the Broad attracts wintering flocks of Lesser Redpolls and Siskins which feed on the catkins and wandering mixed Tit flocks including Marsh and Long-tailed may also include a Goldcrest or two.

Chinese Water Deer (an introduced species) can be seen in the area and, if not seen, will be heard (a pretty 'blood curdling' sound!), particularly during December and January, during their rutting season. Another maybe peculiar sound (like a pig squealing) you may hear coming from the reed edges is that of the Water Rail which is quite a secretive bird but can be seen, particularly in the Winter, when freezing conditions force them out to look for more accessible food.

Otters are now widespread in the Broads and, therefore, there is always a chance of seeing what used to be a very rare mammal.