

## NC36.1 - Camel Estuary

Camel Estuary and River System



### SITE INFORMATION

Location:  
Estuary north of Wadebridge

Grid Reference:  
SW938752

Parish:  
ST MINVER LOWLANDS CP

Area:  
1070.7 Ha



### Important note about access to CWS

The County Wildlife Site designation does not confer public access.

### What does the designation County Wildlife Site mean?

County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are the most significant areas for wildlife in Cornwall outside Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). County Wildlife Sites contain features that are of substantive nature conservation value at a county level of significance. There are over 490 sites in Cornwall under both public and private ownership and they range from small ponds, copses and linear features, such as river valleys, to wetlands, ancient woodlands and large moors. They make up approximately 10% of the county's land area.

CWS were identified and selected in the 1980s and 1990s using a combination of aerial photograph data, local knowledge and, where possible, ground based surveys. CWS are selected through the application of a set of criteria agreed by Cornwall's Local Sites Partnership.

### The benefits and implications of owning a County Wildlife Site

Owning a CWS brings both implications and benefits to the landowner:

- CWS can attract grant aid through Defra's Environmental Stewardship schemes
- Cornwall Wildlife Trust can provide free management advice for landowners
- As the CWS designation is non-statutory, there are no restrictions placed on agricultural operations
- Landowners/Managers remain in control of all land management decisions
- Access is by landowner permission, no rights of access are created.
- Where substantial land use changes are proposed on a CWS, the Local Authority will take wildlife into account along with all other planning considerations

### Progress towards achieving National Indicator NII97 Improved Local Biodiversity

Active conservation management is being achieved on this site ☒

### Activity

20 September 2011

Surveyor: N/a

Site extension to include Treraven and Clapper Marshes (20 ha) approved for designation as a County Wildlife Site by Cornwall's Local Sites Partnership

19 May 2011

Surveyor: Sue Hocking, CWT

20ha surveyed beyond CWS boundary at Treraven and Clapper Marshes to assess eligibility for CWS designation.

April 2005

Surveyor: Alex Staddon, CWT

18.9ha (Camel Trail) surveyed as part of LPSA work (Site Number 15) - condition of site reviewed and report outlining management recommendations produced and discussed with landowner/s.

## Site Description

The site extends from Stepper Point and Hayle Bay near the mouth of the estuary, inland to Wadebridge - a distance of almost 7 miles. Apart from the River Camel itself, a number of tributary streams and rivers flow into the estuary. For most part the sides of the estuary are gently sloping, but Brea Hill and Cant Hill rise steeply on the northern bank. As the estuary nears the sea it consists of wide sandy bays and rocky points. The Camel Estuary is the largest and most sheltered inlet on the north coast of Cornwall and is surrounded by a diverse range of important habitats which support many species of note. The site contains at least one of Cornwall's Key Bryophyte Sites, a Key Odonata Site and two areas are also designated as County Geology Sites.

The eastern, lower reaches of the site contain extensive intertidal mudflats and sand bars and areas of saltmarsh. Small inlets including Pinsons Creek and Little Petherick also contain small patches. Species here include sea arrow grass, sea aster, sea purslane and cord grass, with red fescue and thrift on slightly higher ground, and glasswort colonising mud in more open areas. Saltmarsh and mudflats attract large numbers of wintering waders, wildfowl and gulls, such as oystercatcher, golden plover, curlew, wigeon and black-headed gull, and are also important for many passage migrant species.

Areas of sand dune are present at Rock; these are badly eroded with large areas of bare sand but vegetated areas are dominated by marram grass, with patches of scrub and a range of associated species such as kidney vetch, lady's bedstraw, wild carrot, eyebright and viper's bugloss. A large number of rare and scarce plants have been recorded from this area; part of the dune system outside the CWS is designated as a SSSI.

Maritime grassland dominated by red fescue fringes both sides of the estuary towards its mouth. This occurs more extensively on wind-blown sand at Brea Hill and includes some species-rich areas. Elsewhere the main fringing habitats are scrub and broadleaved woodland, which also occupy many of the small tributary valleys and comprise a range of species including gorse, blackthorn, bramble, oak, ash, grey willow and sycamore.

Other features include: damp unimproved grassland, including a meadow at one of the inlets supporting unusual communities of both salt-tolerant and freshwater plants; several disused quarries including Trevorrack Quarry and Stepper Point, which are important for bryophytes and Odonata respectively; a small area of willow carr/reed marsh; and grassy cliff tops near the mouth of the estuary.

A disused railway line running along the southern side of the estuary between Wadebridge and Padstow has been developed into the recreational Camel Trail. It supports a range of scrub communities together with grassland alongside the track, plants colonising bare ground and ferns and mosses in cuttings.

Treraven and Clapper Marshes extend the site to the south, linking with Hustyn and Grogley Woods CWS and the River Camel and Estuaries SSSI. They occupy the river's floodplain and were previously improved pastures protected by floodbanks. Sluices were put in place by the Environment Agency in 2007 to allow the sea to flood the area at high tide. Elevated ground is rarely inundated and retains the semi-improved pasture but flooded areas have an element of saltmarsh vegetation and floodplain grassland is developing, a rare and local habitat in Cornwall. Both areas support significant populations of wintering waterbirds at the county level.

**BAP Priority Habitats:** [Intertidal Mudflats](#), [Coastal Saltmarsh](#), [Coastal Sand Dunes](#), [Maritime Cliff and Slopes](#)

**BAP Priority Species:** bryophyte interest includes *Tortula cuneifolia*; several butterfly and moth records including small heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*, grayling *Hipparchia semele*, grey dagger *Acronicta psi* and white ermine *Spilosoma lubricipeda*; bird records include dunnoek *Prunella modularis*, linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, skylark *Alauda arvensis*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos* and curlew *Numenius arquata*; important for otter *Lutra lutra*.

**Other notable species:** many Nationally Scarce plants have been recorded here which include babington's leek *Allium Babingtonii*, Little-robin *Geranium purpureum*, musk storksbill *Erodium moschatum* together with several of county importance such as spring vetch *Vicia lathyroides*, adder's tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and knotted pearlwort *Sagina nodosa*. Notable Odonata species include Nationally Scarce scarce blue-tailed damselfly *Ishnura pumilio* and county important keeled skimmer *Orthetrum coerulescens*. Amber Listed birds include oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and black-headed gull *Larus ridibundus* together with many other rare wintering or passage migrant species.

## Management

A wide range of statutory bodies have responsibility for the management/environmental well-being of the estuary. Camel Estuary Initiative, established in 1994 and lead by Padstow Harbour Commissioners, has produced the Camel Estuary Management plan on behalf of the many users of the estuary.

The Camel Trail is managed by Cornwall Council.

## Further Information

This summary sheet was produced using information held by the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS). For further details or a comprehensive/notable species search please contact the Wildlife Information Service, email: [wis@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:wis@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk).

For further information regarding Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats and Species refer to UKBAP. Note that species listed may be subject to more than one conservation status and may also be protected under legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Refer to JNCC for full current taxon designations.

## Contact Us

To make a comment regarding this County Wildlife Site, please fill in a [feedback form](#).

To submit a species record to ERCCIS, please use the online recording system at [www.orks.org.uk](http://www.orks.org.uk)

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