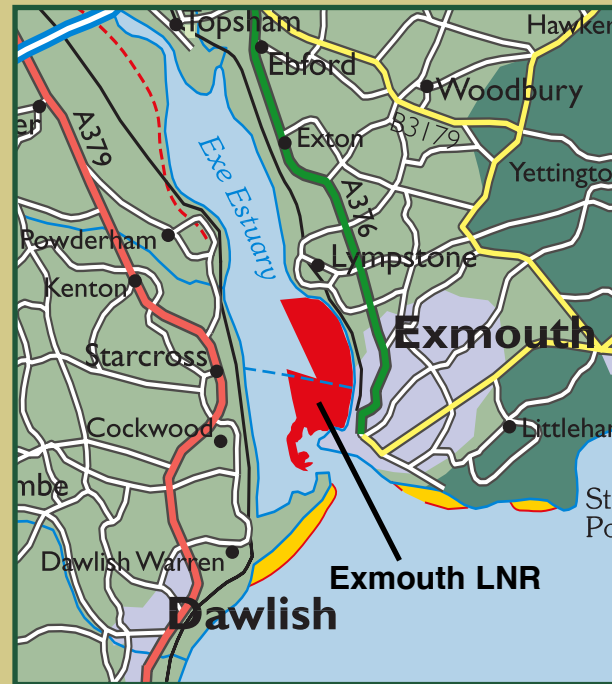


Exmouth Local Nature Reserve is a massive area of tidal sand and mud at the southern end of the Exe estuary – in fact, it's one of the biggest Local Nature Reserves in Devon. It's also a globally important area for winter birds. In the autumn thousands of birds fly from the freezing Arctic to spend the winter months on the estuary, one of Devon's most impressive natural spectacles.

Walking out over the sandbanks at low water offers you the chance to get away from the town and explore a wilderness in the middle of the estuary.



Little Bull Hill



### How to get there:

On the A376 to Exmouth, follow signs to the town centre and docks and park in the Imperial Road car park located next to the swimming pool. From here you can venture out onto the LNR and explore this beautifully wild place.

The Local Nature Reserve is very close to both Exmouth railway and bus stations and is easily accessed from any bus or train service to the town.

For more information about other Local Nature Reserves and a range of activities for you to enjoy in East Devon, please contact the Countryside Service.

**East Devon District Council**  
Knowle  
Sidmouth  
Devon  
EX10 8HL  
Tel: 01395 516551  
[www.eastdevon.gov.uk](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk)

### *East Devon District Council LNRs*

East Devon District Council manages a number of Local Nature Reserves, for the protection of wildlife and for public enjoyment.



*An East Devon District Council  
LNR for you to enjoy*

Black headed gull,  
T Hyde



## Exmouth

The spectacle of thousands of birds feeding on the estuary in the winter is a truly special sight.

Dark-bellied brent geese make their way to this place every year in September, to feed on the lush growth of eel-grass growing on the estuary mud. Three percent of the global population of these geese visit the Exe – this may not sound much at first, but imagine three percent of the human population all visiting one place each year to feed!



Wigeon

Also during the winter months, other wildfowl crowd into the estuary to make the most of its glut of food. Look out for huge flocks of wigeon in flight over the water, and graceful pintail ducks feeding on submerged plants.



Cormorant,  
D Atkinson

Part of the nature reserve is a mussel bed, known as Little Bull Hill, on which can be seen a remarkable bird behaviour. Gulls and crows have learnt to drop mussel shells from height to break them and get to the soft animal inside. They fly up about 10 metres with the mussel in their beaks, before dropping it onto the rocks and quickly stooping down to feed on the insides.



Dark bellied brent goose,  
M Powell



Another behaviour you can see black-headed gulls doing is 'puddling' where the small gulls can be seen jogging on the spot in a sandy puddle to bring food items to the surface.

Although the sand may at first glance seem open, empty and unappealing it is in fact brimming with life. Each cubic metre of sand is teeming with minute snails, grazing the surface of the sand particles like miniature cattle. While

hoards of worms burrow through the sand cleaning it as they go. It is these tiny animals that attract many of the wading birds, like curlew and black tailed godwit. Plenty of food = plenty of birds.

### Access:

The weasel run, part of the East Devon Way, runs alongside the nature reserve. It is accessible to wheelchairs and offers great views across the nature reserve. Out on the sand there are no formal access routes, so you are free to explore this wild area. Please be careful when walking out on the mud, as it can be very deep in some places, if you are at all unsure about whether it is safe, turn back immediately and retrace your steps – wellington boots are an absolute must for Exmouth Local Nature Reserve! Crossing creeks between sandbanks can be dangerous as the incoming tide can quickly isolate large areas. Always be aware of the tide for your own safety – will it be coming in or going out during your visit? Dogs are welcome on the nature reserve but please keep them under close control.



A lugworm cast