

Welcome to the RSPB's Stour Estuary nature reserve

The Stour Estuary is one of the most important estuaries in Britain for wading birds and ducks, geese and swans (with internationally important numbers of grey plovers, knots, redshanks, dunlins and pintails) but most significantly for the number of black-tailed godwits. Within the estuary, Copperas Bay offers the spectacle of masses of wading birds and wildfowl between September and March.

Stour Wood is leased from the Woodland Trust by the RSPB. It has a long history of coppice management, with an annual cut being taken in the winter months. In the past, the timber has been used for the furniture trade. In the spring and early summer, the woodland areas are at their most attractive with a mass of flowers, nightingales and other birds singing and many different species of insects.

Visiting Stour Estuary

Stour Estuary nature reserve is five miles west of Harwich and includes part of the Stour Estuary and the adjacent woodland. The reserve is open to visitors at all times. Two bird hides and a viewing point overlook the Deep Fleet saltings and Copperas Bay. They can be reached by well-marked footpaths from the car park. A round trip of about five miles is involved to visit both hides, although shorter walks are possible.

Although no charge is made for visiting the reserve, a donation from non-members would be appreciated. Donations are used to help maintain the reserve. There are no toilet facilities at the reserve. Dogs are welcome, under close control, through much of the reserve. They are not permitted in Copperas Wood, farther east, or along the shore (see map). Fishing and cycling are not permitted on the reserve.

- **By train:** from Wrabness on the main London to Harwich line. The reserve is half a mile east of the station.
- **By bus:** buses from Colchester to Harwich via Wrabness will stop at the reserve entrance on request.
- **By road:** a car park: height barrier, max height 2m, is located at Stour Wood, close to the B1352 Manningtree to Harwich road, about one mile east of Wrabness village. Grid ref TM 189309.
- **By cycle:** cycle racks are provided in the car park.
- **By foot:** the Essex Way long distance footpath passes along the edge of Copperas Bay and connecting paths lead to Stour Wood.

Important safety notice

- This nature reserve is a working wood.
- Please do not enter areas where timber operations are under way and observe safety notices on the visitor trails.
- The reserve may close at short notice during high winds because of the danger of falling trees/branches.
- Please wear stout footwear and dress appropriately for the time of year.
- Please do not walk out onto the mudflats, saltmarsh or onto railway property.

www.rspb.org.uk



The RSPB is the UK charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife, creating a better world for us all.

Front cover picture: grey plover by G Downey, left by A Hay. Inside: nightingale by R Wilmhurst, horse chestnut by J Burton, shelduck by C Gomersall, white admiral by R Revels, black-tailed godwit by C Gomersall, dunlins by B Glover and redshank by M Lane (rspb-images.com). Wood anemone by A Cushley (RSPB).

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TRAIL GUIDE



Stour Estuary nature reserve



Wonderful waders and wildfowl

for birds • for people • for ever

Seasonal highlights

Spring



Nightingale



Wood anemones

Summer



Shelduck



White admiral

Autumn



Horse chestnut



Black-tailed godwit

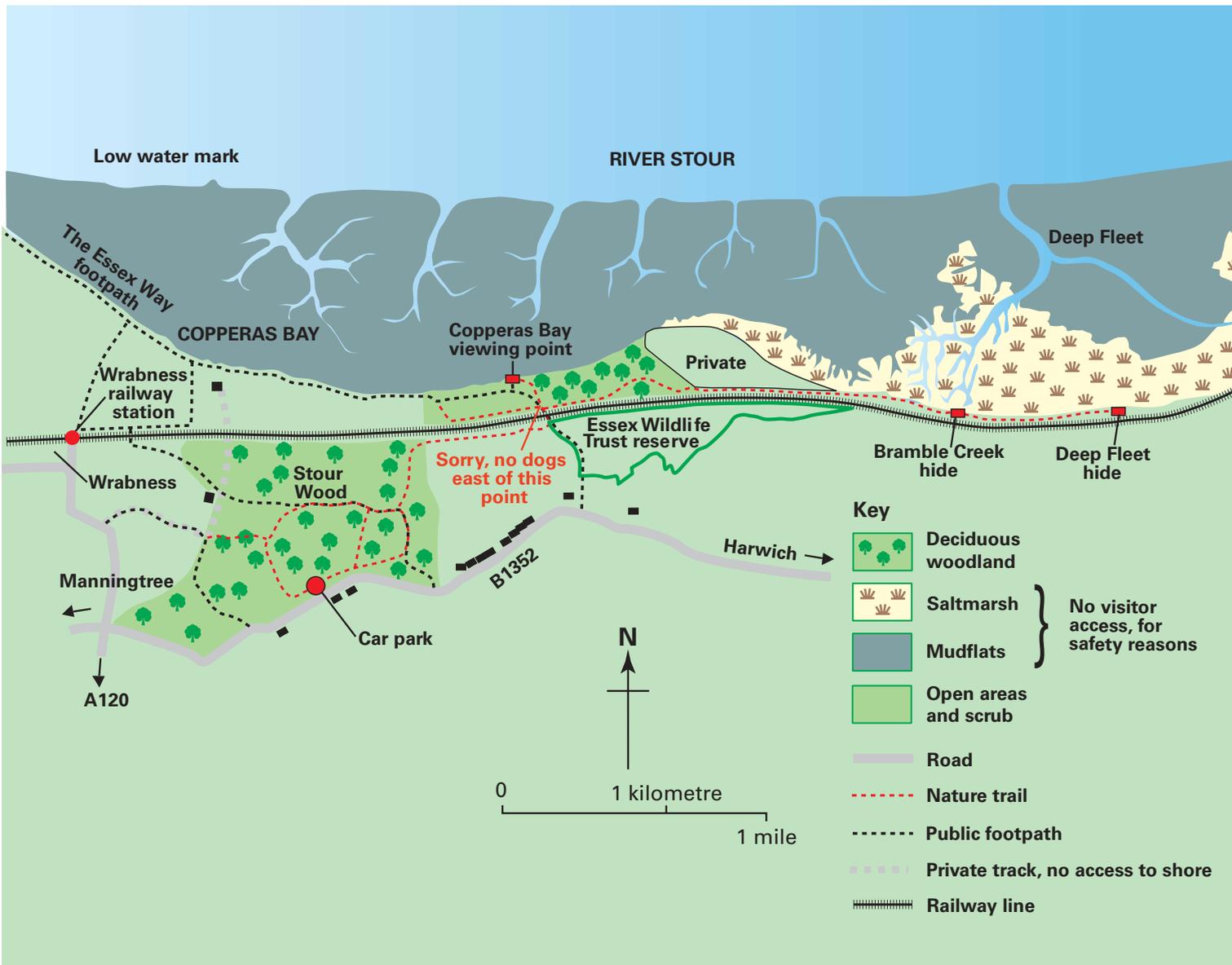
Winter



Dunlins



Redshank



Reserve information

The Stour Estuary nature reserve covers 446 hectares (1,105 acres), and is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Vast areas of intertidal mud and saltmarsh make up Copperas Bay, and the Deep Fleet saltings are fragmented with a complex network of creeks and channels. Stour Wood is an ancient coppice woodland made up primarily of sweet chestnut, and a complex system of rides and glades, with several ponds, creates a range of habitats.

The RSPB owns a major part of Copperas Bay and the adjacent foreshore and saltings. We lease additional land from the Crown Estate Commission and Stena Sealink Ports Ltd.

History and management

Copperas Bay takes its name from copperas gathering, which took place in the bay until the mid 1800s. Copperas (bisulphate of iron) was dredged from the mud, processed and used in the manufacture of dyes, inks and sulphuric acid.

The RSPB is working with many other organisations to ensure the future protection of this estuary and its wildlife. Stour and Copperas Woods are coppiced annually, and the rides and glades are maintained for the benefit of invertebrates such as the white admiral butterfly. The main threats to the reserve come from port expansion, erosion of the mud and saltmarsh and rising sea levels.