

Site Guide

by **Brendan Black**

Broadmeadow Estuary, Co Dublin

Broadmeadow, Swords, Co Dublin. The Mute Swans by the roadside (at Stop 1) are a big local attraction. **Photo: John Fox**

Brendan Black introduces the best birding spots in Broadmeadow Estuary and Corballis, Co Dublin.

Broadmeadow Estuary is one of three large estuaries in north Dublin – the others being Rogerstown and Baldoyle. The best time to visit it is from autumn to late spring, and on a rising tide.

It can be approached from the south using the coastal road from Baldoyle, through Portmarnock to Malahide. However, most birders approach via the M11 motorway from Dublin and turn off the motorway at the exit for Donabate, then turn left onto the R132 at the top of the slipway for Swords. From here, drive south for about 1 km and turn left at the first roundabout, signposted 'Estuary Roundabout.'

(If you are coming up the R132 from the south, from Santry direction, turn right at the Estuary Roundabout.)

Goldeneyes are present all winter.



JOHN FOX

Now drive for about ½ km, cross over Lissenhall Bridge and turn right. Here, a narrow road runs along the northern side of the inner estuary and can be driven for about 1 ½ km, depending on the state of the tide.

1 Broadmeadow North

Little Grebes occur in the river and, with luck, you will see a **Kingfisher**.

Teal, Mallard, Redshank, a variety of gulls and a bachelor herd of **Mute Swans** can be seen about 1 km from the bridge.

Now return to Lissenhall Bridge and turn sharp left onto a narrow road that leads along the southern shoreline.

2 Broadmeadow South

This winding road leads to a small roundabout with limited parking shortly beyond the motorway bridge (but you may have to find parking further on and walk back). This is the second most important wader and gull roosting site on the estuary and anything can turn up here.

Here, you will get perhaps the best views in all of Dublin of waders, gulls and **Brent Geese**. Regular waders include **Redshank, Greenshank, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Lapwing, Grey and Golden Plovers**. Passage migrants include **Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint and Spotted Redshank**. Rarities have included **Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Phalarope, Stilt Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper** and **White-winged Black Tern**.

Mediterranean and Ring-billed Gulls are occasional while **Franklin's and Bonaparte's Gulls** have occurred.

Merlin, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine and Buzzard are regular, with the occasional **Osprey** seen on passage. **Grey Heron, Little Egret** and **Snipe** are usually present.

3 'Rugby club' shore

Continue east and find a number of lay-bys from which to view the open water. **Great Crested Grebes, Goldeneyes and Red-breasted Mergansers** are present each winter, with **Scaup** and **Pochard** possible. Rarities have included **Slavonian, Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes, Long-tailed Duck, Black Brant** and **Leach's Petrel**.

The road turns sharply right at Swords Sailing Club. You can continue along this road, turning left at the traffic lights and left again at the next traffic lights, to bring you back to the estuary; or, if you are walking the estuary, you can enter the park behind Swords Sailing Club and follow the track to Cave's Marsh, a small inlet between Swords Sailing Club and Malahide Sailing Club.

4 Cave's Marsh

Cave's Marsh is good for **Snipe** and **Little Egret** and has held **Water Rail**. It can also be accessed via the shoreline from Malahide Sailing Club.

Back at the waterside, the road (Cave's Strand) has a number of lay-bys to park in;



this is a good area for **Long-tailed Duck** and to photograph **Red-breasted Mergansers**, as they tend to come close to the shore here.

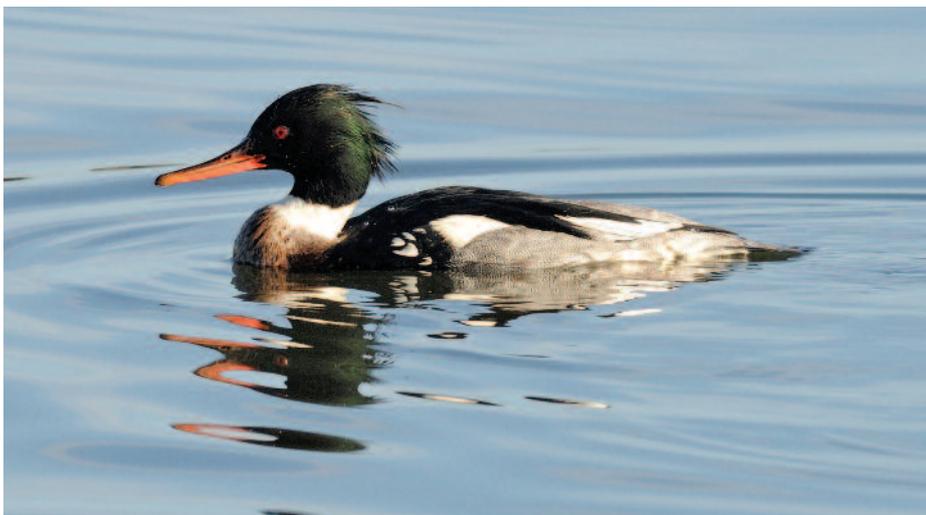
Drive under the viaduct to enter the outer estuary. Drive through the next set of traffic lights and a short distance further on the road bends right; continue on and turn left at the T-junction.

5 Malahide

You can park on this road using the metered spaces or continue on for ½km to a public car park on your left and walk back to view Malahide Point, the main roosting site, across the mouth of the estuary.

Here you can view the largest roost of **Oystercatchers** in Dublin; also **Brent Geese**, **Curlew**, **Bar-tailed** and **Black-tailed Godwits**,

Red-breasted Merganser: can be viewed up close near Malahide Sailing Club. **Photo: John Fox**



Knot, Redshank, Greenshank, Grey Plover, Golden Plover, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Mallard, Teal, Shelduck, Shag, Cormorant and possible rarities. **Peregrine, Kestrel** and **Merlin** can be present.

Walk back towards the marina for distant views of the outer estuary (Corballis). A flock of **Turnstones** roosts on the gang-planks.

6 Corballis

To reach the northern side of the outer estuary, retrace your steps, turning right at the first crossroad in Malahide and left at the next crossroads. Then drive under the viaduct again and return to the Estuary Roundabout, where you turn right onto the R132. Drive north and take the exit for Donabate.

Follow Hearse Road until you reach a



Ruff at Broadmeadow. It is regular on passage in autumn and early winter. Photo: John Fox

signpost for Island Golf Club, turn right, pass under the railway viaduct and the outer estuary opens out in front of you. There is limited parking about 100m on. Look for **Pintail, Wigeon, Teal, Curlew, Redshank** and **Greenshank** in season; **Little Stint** and **Curlew Sandpiper** occur annually.

Further along there is a settlement where **Tree Sparrows** occur in the hedgerows. The road then narrows; park at the end of the narrow stretch to view waders, **Brent Geese**, **Shelduck** and other ducks. Where the road splits, keep right to reach a small car park with further good views of the estuary.

For an alternative route back, make your way to Donabate and visit the well-wooded Newbridge Demesne. For a closer look at the northern shore of the inner estuary, turn right (from the Donabate Road) for Kilcrea and follow the road for about 1km.