

# Wild Walks

# South Efford Marsh

Visit one of Devon's newest nature reserves in this beautiful South Hams valley



## Birds of the Avon Valley

South Efford Marsh is one of the South Hams' premier birdwatching sites, where a tidal sluice gate is creating new saltmarsh habitat. Redshank and curlew are regulars, while exotic visitors include spoonbill and glossy ibis. After a there-and-back walk over the River Avon to visit the reserve's bird hide, enjoy four miles of the valley's fine views, woodlands, undulating bridleways and meandering streams.



Photo: Kevin McDonough

## Essentials

- Approx time: 3.5 hours including time spent wildlife-watching at the nature reserve.
- Approx distance: 4 miles
- Use Ordnance Survey map OL20 South Devon
- Terrain: Woodland and farmland paths, bridleways, minor roads. Short section on main road A379. Stepping stones over one stream. **First and last sections of walk on tidal road so check tide times for Avon Estuary at Bantham/Bigbury before embarking on this walk. Road is impassable approx. one hour either side of high tide.**
- Start: Timbers car park next to A379 roundabout at Aveton Gifford
- Child friendly? Suitable for older children but care should be taken on the tidal road next to the river, and on the bridge over the A379.
- Dog friendly? **Dogs not allowed in the reserve.** Several stiles on the walk.
- Public transport: Plymouth-Kingsbridge bus, no 3. Aveton Gifford stop.

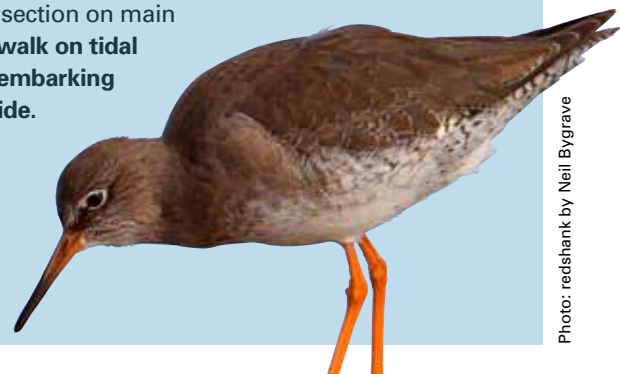


Photo: redshank by Neil Bygrave

## Directions

To visit South Efford Marsh first, leave the car park and turn right at the roundabout. (1) Follow the A379 over two bridges, over a creek and the River Avon. A footpath covers two sections but there are also two stretches with no path or pavement. Turn right following the Avon Estuary Walk (AEW) sign, and follow the minor road to the nature reserve entrance through a gate on the right opposite South Efford House. Follow the gravel path round the perimeter of the reserve until it runs alongside the riverbank as far as the bird hide. (2) Retrace your steps through the reserve and back across the two bridges on the A379.

Turn left at the roundabout passing the car park on the right. Follow the tidal road for half a mile. Turn left at the AEW fingerpost for Bigbury. Cross the stony area for 30 yards then climb the grey stone steps on the right up to a stile. (3) Follow the path uphill through the field to another stile from which excellent views can be had over the River Avon and South Efford Marsh.

Continue uphill and a few yards later the grassy path joins a better-defined one parallel to the river. At a fork in

paths bear right and go through a wooden gate. Follow the upper path through several gates and through one corner of a wood, then cross the next two fields towards the Bigbury road. Just before the road, turn right following a public footpath sign (4) and follow a wide track round the edge of several fields. Before passing two large barns on the right, turn left, down the steps to a minor road opposite some cottages.

Turn right along the minor road and go round two sharp bends to a T-junction. Here turn right and immediately left on to a public footpath, over a field to a stile and another minor road. Turn right here and walk downhill to a bridge over a small stream. Follow the road round to the left then bear right on to a bridleway signposted AEW and Drunkards' Hill. (5) At the top of the hill bear right following the AEW signs over a couple of stiles and go past one waymarker down to another at the left side of a small copse, then over a stile.

Ignore the AEW sign pointing left, instead turn right (6) and walk 200 yards to a public footpath sign on the left. Follow the path down the steps,



over a stile. After two further stiles the path enters an open area with three public footpath signs. Go straight ahead, crossing a stream on stepping stones, then follow the path back to the tidal road. Turn left to return to the car park.

(If tidal road is impassable then at (6), turn left to follow the AEW signs, turning right to join another minor road, over a bridge and uphill to join the A379. Turn right to follow the main road downhill to the roundabout).

