

# BAT TRAIL-10

## The Donkey Sanctuary



Photo: View of bat country

The Donkey Sanctuary provides a home for over two thousand donkeys across 6 farms in Devon and Dorset. The charity manages its farmland in a sustainable way that enhances wildlife habitats and enriches the environment for donkeys and people, and continually explores ways in which it can integrate donkey welfare and wildlife conservation.

This walk takes you through Slade Farm in Sidmouth, the main visitor site and home to over 200 donkeys. The farm is a brilliant place for bats. The woodlands, hedgebanks, ponds, gardens, meadows and buildings provide roosts and foraging grounds for

several bat species. Greater horseshoe bats visit the Sanctuary to eat dung beetles which live in donkey dung. Bats are important indicators that the environment is healthy and some species can help out the donkeys by eating the flies which may bother them.

On this walk you will see some of the habitats that the bats rely upon and the donkeys that are resident here. Take the time to visit the Bat Beacon in the Nature Centre and find out more about the fabulous bats that live in this area.

DEVON  
GREATER  
HORSESHOE  
BAT PROJECT



### ROUTE INFO

Start:	Car park at Donkey Sanctuary
Distance and timings:	2.5 miles (approximately 1.5 hours)
Circular Walk:	Yes
Terrain & Description of paths:	Steep slopes and steps. Not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs
Obstacles and Gradients:	Steep steps
Public Transport:	Buses 899, 52A, X53 & X54 Coastlink
Toilets:	Toilets at The Donkey Sanctuary
Refreshment & other Facilities:	Restaurant at The Donkey Sanctuary
OS Map:	Explorer Map 115, Landranger 192
Grid Reference and postcode:	SX 161 893 EX10 0NU



Photo: Meadow



Photo: Donkey Sanctuary

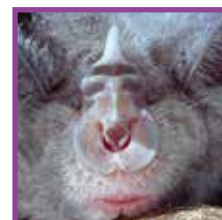


Photo: Phil Richardson



Photo: Frank Greenaway



Photo: Path through woodland

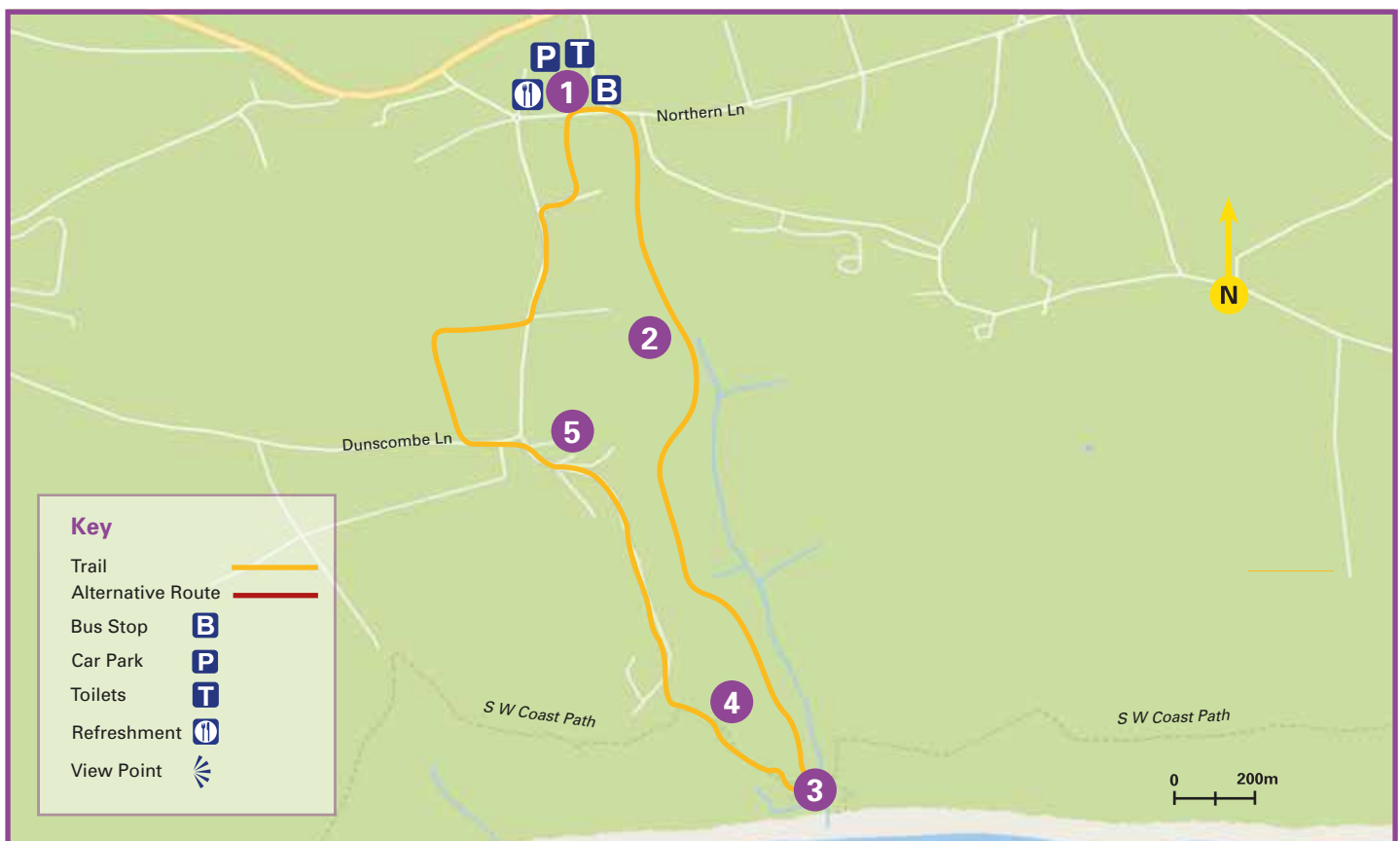


**Devon**  
Wildlife Trust



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## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Set off towards the 'Field of Dreams' area (signposted), which has wildflower meadows to one side and woods to the other. This is a perfect hunting ground for greater horseshoe bats; they forage along the edges of meadows, close to woodland edges, hedges or rivers, looking for some tasty insects. The path slopes gradually down towards the coast. Listen for the sound of running water close by. Greater horseshoe bats are really sensitive to light, so they love it here where it's really dark at night. Visit the Bat Beacon (in a small building on your right after about 5 minutes) to find out more about greater horseshoe bats!
- 2 Keep walking along the path through the valley – it will get steep in places – this takes you through unimproved grassland, which is important for bats as it provides a home for many different insect species. Did you know that dung beetles are one of the favoured foods for greater horseshoe bats?
- 3 When you reach the coast stop for a rest and look out along the coastline. The coast here contains lots of cracks and caves that bats might roost in, particularly in the winter. Beer Quarry cave, a bit further inland from here, is an internationally important roost for hibernating bats. They like to overwinter in caves as they generally have a constant temperature and humidity allowing the bats to expend minimal energy, and not dry out whilst they hibernate.
- 4 Turn right to continue along the coastal path for a short distance, and then turn right to go up the steep steps and into the wood towards the caravan park. Woodlands are perfect for some bat species, with the trees providing the perfect roosts – under flaky bark or in holes and crevices. Greater horseshoe bats need to be able to fly straight into their roost and hang upside down, meaning that they can't roost in trees or bat boxes. But churches, barns, caves and mines make great homes for them. The path here is quite rough and care should be taken on the steps and slopes.
- 5 Near the caravan park the path becomes concrete passing through woodland. Follow the road through the caravan park. The path then heads back into the Donkey Sanctuary - follow the road for a short distance then turn right on the track, turn left near the end of the track and follow the path back to the car park.