

Cumbria  
Wildlife Trust



Great places to see

# Sand Dunes

in Cumbria



▲ Photo: Cumbrian Images

# Great places to see sand dunes in Cumbria

Our sand dunes are home to an array of rare wildlife, yet are constantly changing environments. Meander through them on hot sunny days to see blooms of orchids, skittering lizards and natterjack toads or experience them move and transform after strong winter storms.

The most threatened environment in Europe for biodiversity loss, Cumbria Wildlife Trust has put together this guide for great places to see dunes in Cumbria to help you enjoy the wonders of these special places.

These great places will be supported by Dynamic Dunescapes, a partnership project in England and Wales, restoring the biodiversity on our dunes for the benefit of wildlife, people and communities. See below for more information.





① **Grune Point**  
Solway AONB

A long spit of land protruding out into the Solway Firth. Old maps and measurements of the relative positions of Roman milecastles add evidence that longshore drift is still adding to the coastline here. Conversely, the large bite taken from the northern side of the spit is evidence of the erosion caused by the succession of large storms of 2018. A truly dynamic piece of coastline! Grune Point provides protection to an expanse of saltmarsh and mudflats - great for the bird spotter. The dunes here are also home to a small natterjack population and little terns. A hotspot for history – a unique pill box sits at the end of the point, sometimes known as ‘Cumberland Machine Gun’.

**\*\*Please be careful at high tide in this area – pay attention to the warning signs and keep your eye on the water levels\*\***

**Where is it?**

Nearest public amenities can be found at Solway Discovery Centre in Silloth.

*By car:* Head north out of Silloth towards Skinburness. Nearest public parking is just south of Skinburness on the promenade on the left.

*By bicycle:* Grune Point is 2.7 km north of National Cycle Route 72 Hadrian’s Cycleway. *By public transport:* buses run from Wigton and Silloth to Skinburness.



② **Mawbray Banks**  
Solway AONB

Extensive views stretch across the Firth to Criffel. The vegetated shingle banks here are home to breeding and roosting birds such as the rare little tern and bartailed godwit. Amongst the mobile dunes, the rare Isle of Man cabbage grows. Hidden away in the dune grassland and slacks, rare breeding natterjacks can also be found and willow warblers, song thrush and linnets can be spotted in the dune heath - a habitat becoming ever rare in Cumbria. Look out for the two large concrete arrows in the centre of the reserve, these were used as bomb aiming targets for trainee pilots from Silloth Airfield during World War II.

**\*\*Please be careful at high tide in this area – pay attention to the warning signs and keep your eye on the water levels\*\***

**Where is it?**

Access to the car park, reserve and beach is via a gravel track. The nearest toilets are available in Allonby to the south and Silloth to the north.

*By Car:* Mawbray Banks is five miles south of Silloth and two miles north of Allonby beside the B5300 coast road opposite Mawbray village.

*By bicycle:* Mawbray banks is 2.3 km north of National Cycle Route 72 Hadrian’s Cycleway. *By public transport:* Buses run from Maryport and Silloth to Mawbray village.

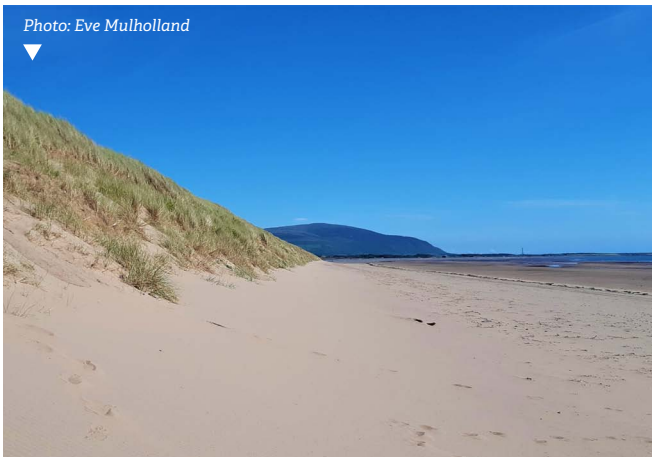


Photo: Eve Mulholland

### ③ Drigg Dunes Muncaster Estate

Part of the 11 km designated Drigg coastline, Drigg dunes are the most extensive dune systems in Cumbria. Home to the rare northern dune tiger beetle, the dunes here cover almost 400 hectares and provide an important habitat for reptiles and breeding birds. From the dunes you can walk for miles northwards on the superb sands up to St Bees head.

#### Where is it?

*By car:* From Drigg village follow Shore Road (signed beach and station) to the end where there is a parking area. The dunes can be explored by walking south from the car park. Please be aware that cattle and sheep graze here as part of conservation management.

*By bicycle:* The dunes are 1.75 km off National Cycle Route 72 Hadrian's Cycleway, following Shore Road. *By public transport:* Trains run from Whitehaven and Millom to Drigg Station. Buses run from Ravenglass and Seascale to Drigg.



Photo: Eve Mulholland

### ④ Eskmeals Dunes Cumbria Wildlife Trust

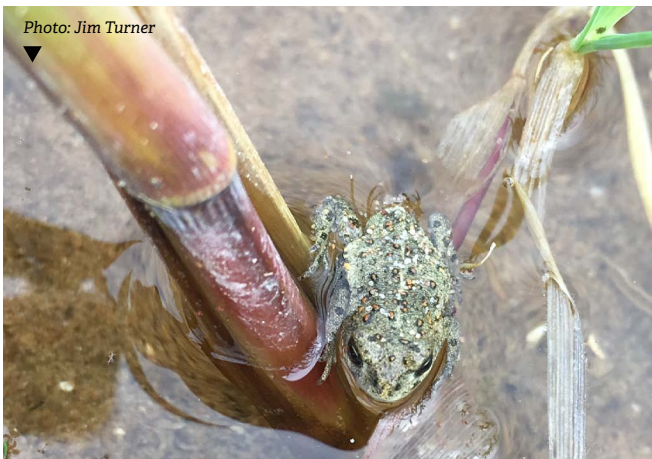
Built upon a shingle spit at the mouth of the Esk, dunes formed here over 5,000 years ago. Specialities of these dunes include wild pansy, Portland spurge and lady's bedstraw. Summertime attracts a variety of insects including the dark green fritillary, gatekeeper and meadow browns. If you're lucky, you might see an otter! There are a number of unmarked paths on the reserve and a circular route of 4 km.

If the yellow flag is flying, firing is taking place on the gun range and there is no access to the reserve. Please ring the gun range on 01229 712200 before visiting to check the reserve is open.

#### Where is it?

*By car:* From the A595 at Waberthwaite, take the minor road through the village and continue for a further 2.3 km. Park on the left-hand side, just past the viaduct and walk along the saltmarsh onto the reserve. At high tides, this route may not be passable, in which case take the minor road signed for Bootle Station from Bootle village. Follow the road to the coast then turn north and continue for a further 3.7 km. Park just before the viaduct on the right-hand side.

*By bicycle:* The reserve is 16 km from National Cycle Route 72 Hadrian's Cycleway. *By public transport:* trains run from Whitehaven and Millom through to Ravenglass and Bootle. Buses run from Whitehaven through to Bootle.



⑤ **Haverigg**  
Millom Town Council

West of Hodbarrow Nature Reserve and Hodbarrow lagoon, Haverigg dunes sit tucked away at the end of the Duddon Estuary with a back drop of Black Combe. Great for bird spotting, the area is a haven for breeding terns and you can see multitudes of waders feeding out across the sands. It is also a hotspot for natterjacks. A site easily accessible from the car park and children's play area.

**Where is it?**

*By car:* From Millom, follow the A5093 to Moor Road and continue down to Palmers Lane. Follow Haverigg Road and Poolside to Sea View in Haverigg, continue straight and park in Haverigg car park, next to the playground on the left.

*By bicycle:* A variety of lanes and bridleways run between Millom and Haverigg. By public transport: buses run from Millom to Haverigg.



⑥ **Sandscale Haws**  
National Trust

Coralroot orchids and nationally scarce dune helleborine are a snippet of the diverse flora that grows here. The site holds one quarter of the UK's natterjack toad population where you can hear their mating calls come spring. A popular place for family days out, accessible pools full of wildlife are located close to the car park a short walk along the boardwalks. Great crested newts can be spotted on the reserve too. Roanhead is another dune system just east of Sandscale which leads you around the estuary towards Askam pier.

**Where is it?**

*By car:* Take junction 36 off the M6, then head west on the A590. Drive through Ulverston towards Barrow-in-Furness. After passing Dalton, take Oaklea Road on your right, signposted to Roanhead.

*By bicycle:* Regional Route 20 runs from Barrow to the mouth of the River Wear on the North Sea. There are cycle paths and marked cycle lanes from Barrow along the A590, which are a mixture of on and off-road. By public transport: There are no local bus routes but you can catch a bus to Dalton and Barrow.



Photo: Steve Benn

**7 North Walney**  
Natural England

With views stretching up the Duddon Estuary and across the Irish Sea, North Walney boasts some spectacular scenery and feeling of wilderness in contrast to its local industrial heritage. Home to the Walney geranium, a wildflower native to Walney Island and natterjack toads, North Walney also supports waxcap grassland and dune heath bursting with colour throughout the seasons. Perfect for the naturalist. Just south of the reserve is West of Airfield, also home to an abundance of wildlife which will be supported by Dynamic Dunescapes.

**Where is it?**

The reserve can be accessed from Earnse Bay and is approximately 1.2 km north of the car park and facilities there. Due to the remote nature of the site, North Walney can only be accessed by pedestrians by foot.

*By car:* Cross Jubilee bridge onto Walney Island and turn right onto the promenade. After 1 km turn left onto Mill Lane. Follow Mill Lane for 0.5 km and turn right onto West Shore Road. Continue to Earnse Bay car park at the end of the road.

*By bicycle:* The reserve is 4 km from National Route 70 Walney to Wear and National Route 700 The Bay Cycleway. By public transport: Buses run from Barrow town centre to Earnse Bay.

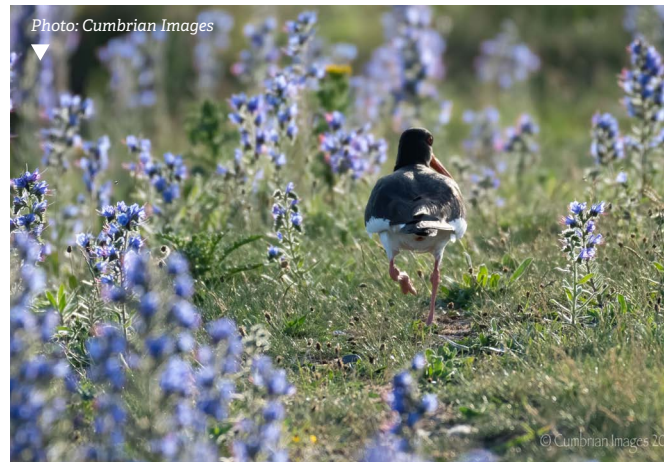


Photo: Cumbrian Images

**8 South Walney**  
Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Most popular for grey seal spotting, the site is also known for bird watching year round with a nationally important herring and lesser black-backed gull colony. There are bird hides around the reserve for those with a keen eye. A circular route takes you around the dune system passing the lighthouse, war and industrial remnants, with views across to Piel Island. Keep an eye out for yellow horned poppy and sea campion on the vegetated shingle.

**Where is it?**

*By car:* Cross Jubilee Bridge onto Walney Island and follow the brown signs left at the traffic lights. Follow this road for about 1 km then turn left down Carr Lane. Pass Biggar Village and follow the road to the South End Caravan site. Follow the road for a further 1 km until the reserve is reached. Public facilities are on site.

*By bicycle:* The reserve is 5 km from National Route 70 Walney to Wear and National Route 700 The Bay Cycleway. By public transport: Buses run from Barrow-in-Furness to Biggar.



Photo: Eve Mulholland

**9 Fleetwood**  
Wyre Borough Council

Walk along the promenade next to the dunes to Rossall Point Tower to enjoy the expanse of views across Morecambe Bay. Cumbria Wildlife Trust is also supporting the dunes here and its range of specialised wildflowers. Look out for sea holly on your wanders. A great day out for all. Nearby landmarks include The Mount, Marine Hall and gardens close to Pitch and Putt golf, Marine Boating Lake and play area.

**Where is it?**

*By car:* From Cleveleys head north on the A587 for 2.2 miles. At the roundabout take the 4th exit. After 0.9 miles turn left onto Carr Road which will lead you onto The Esplanade. From the M55, leave the motorway at Junction 3. At the roundabout take the 3rd exit onto A585/ Fleetwood Road. Pass through 6 roundabouts, keeping on the A585 leading straight onto Dock Street. Bear left onto Queen's Terrace. The road name turns into the Esplanade. Here there are several public parking areas along the promenade.

*By bicycle:* Fleetwood dunes sits on the National Cycle Route 62 Blackpool to Fleetwood. By public transport: trams run regularly from Blackpool to Fleetwood. There are regular bus services around Fleetwood.

**Dynamic Dunescapes**

Decades of conventional dune-stabilising land management, climate change, nitrogen deposition, loss of rabbit populations and change in land use and grazing regimes have caused vegetation on our sand dunes to overgrow. This has over-stabilised our dunes, reducing the amount of bare sand and habitat variety specialised dune species need to thrive. Here in Cumbria, we will be working to implement practical conservation measures to protect the biodiversity on our dunes.

Dynamic Dunescapes in Cumbria will:

- create bare patches of sand for rare and specialised plants and animals
- remove invasive species
- create and restore pools for breeding natterjack toads
- carefully remove scrub that's encroaching our dune grassland and heath
- introduce controlled cattle grazing to help maintain healthy dune habitat for ground nesting birds, wildflowers, insects, amphibians and reptiles to flourish

We will work with skilled local and national experts, and involve schools and local groups, volunteers and visitors of all ages and abilities to help rejuvenate our dunes.

Dynamic Dunescapes is a partnership project rejuvenating sand dunes in England and Wales, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the EU LIFE Programme. Project partners are Natural England, Plantlife, National Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Cumbria Wildlife Trust.

Find out more, visit:  
[www.dynamicdunescapes.co.uk](http://www.dynamicdunescapes.co.uk)  
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