

TOP PICKS

Best spots to visit

See the best of our wetland wildlife

Use the numbers with the map overleaf

1 Close Encounters

This is a great place to stop and see how many different types of birds you can see.

Which is the smallest and the largest bird you can see?

How many different feather colours can you count?

Can you spot how different types of birds feed?



2 Visit the Brent hide and see thousands of wild light-bellied brent geese

They are visiting here from the Arctic circle during autumn, winter and early spring.

Spot the geese on the salt marsh and mud.

What else can you see out there?



3 Get a bird's eye view across the reserve from the heated Limekiln observatory

Look at the spectacular panoramic views across the reserve and Strangford Lough.

How easily can you see the geese? They look tiny out on the mud and are camouflaged against it.



During the summer look closely at the carpets of wild flowers and the butterflies feeding on them. How many different types of wild flower can you see?



4 Discover more about the history of Castle Espie

You'll find lots of clues to how the area was used by people in the past.

Find out what people made here by visiting our history zones: Crannog, the Limestone pavilion and the Brickworks.



Why was this area so popular for making things?

Use the interpretation panels to find out what this area looked like in the past and what life was like.



5 Visit our duckery where we raise baby waterbirds

This is our specialist breeding nursery where we seasonally incubate and hatch eggs from our collection.



Some of the most endangered waterbirds on the planet are hatched and raised here.

Can you see any out on the grass? What are they doing?



6 If you have booked the Pond zone, this is the place to explore our ponds and discover real and amazing underwater life.

7 To burn off extra energy and get physical, visit our Brent play barn, Wild wood and Secret swamp play areas.



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MAP AND GUIDE

For schools and learning groups



Castle Espie
Wetland Centre



Answers to questions pupils love to ask

Where do the geese migrate from?

Light-bellied brent geese fly here from the high eastern Canadian Arctic Islands, travelling 3,000 miles (4,828km). If they have young, their goslings will fly with them.

How long do brent geese live for?

Brent geese live for around 11 years, although one has been recorded living to over 28 years.

What are the rings around the feet of the birds in the collection area?

We put special identification rings on the legs of the ducks and geese so we know who is who. This also helps us to monitor their health and keep a watch on particular birds.

What do ducks and geese eat?

They eat a variety of different foods. Some eat plants while others eat small animals such as fish, or insects living at the bottom of a pond.

Our brent geese are like lawnmowers and eat eelgrass in the lough; they eat crops and grass on local fields and golf courses when they have eaten all the eelgrass.

Why is that bird standing on one leg?

It is easier for a bird to stand on one leg than two. During cold weather tucking a leg up helps them to keep warm.