

Welcome to St Cyrus National Nature Reserve, managed by Scottish Natural Heritage.

With its breathtaking displays of wildflowers and unbelievable variety of insects and birds, St Cyrus is one of the richest and most diverse nature reserves in Britain.

Set at the mouth of the River North Esk, the Reserve sweeps around the sandy shore of the Aberdeenshire coast, just north of Montrose. From its towering volcanic cliffs, to swathes of beautiful beach, set off by an ever-changing landscape of sand dunes and flower-rich grasslands, this is a stunning landscape.



Beautiful beach

## Getting there

The Reserve is 4 miles/6.4km north of Montrose, off the A92, and some parking is available.

There is a bus service from Aberdeen and Montrose to nearby St Cyrus village. At the end of Beach Road, past the church, a steep path leads down to the Reserve.

The Visitor Centre, housed inside the old lifeboat station, has toilets and is open daily from April to October, and Monday to Friday, from November to March.

## Need to know

Please give wildlife a fighting chance by making sure you don't trample on plants or start fires. At certain times of the year parts of the Reserve may be closed to protect breeding birds. Please keep dogs on a short lead or under close control at sensitive times, and respect any notices you see. Owners must clear up after their dogs at all times.

### For more information please contact:

The Old Lifeboat Station, Nether Warburton, St Cyrus, Montrose DD10 0AQ. Tel: 01674 830736

[www.nnr.scot](http://www.nnr.scot)

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# St Cyrus National Nature Reserve



# VISIT

  
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## What makes St Cyrus so special?

Plants and insects are superbly protected at St Cyrus, with the cliffs and sand dunes providing vital shelter from the wind.

More than 300 different plant species have been found here, with many, such as the delicate pinkish-white flowers of night-scented Nottingham catchfly, at the absolute extreme of their northern range.

Others such as meadow saxifrage and hairy violet are more common on chalk and limestone soils in southern and eastern England but grow here thanks to the fertile soils produced by the volcanic rocks.

The abundance of plants encourages invertebrates too. If you're lucky you can see all four of Scotland's grasshopper species on the Reserve. This huge diversity of invertebrate life attracts large numbers of insect eating birds too, such as stonechats, yellowhammers and whitethroats. Common lizard can also be seen frequently basking in the sand dunes.



Male stonechat



Towering cliffs

## The cliffs

The cliffs at St Cyrus are all that remains of vast sea cliffs formed 375 million years ago. During the last ice age the sea battered these cliffs and then, when the ice melted around 8,000 years ago, they were left high and dry.

Today they form the backdrop to the Reserve and are a place where only specialist plants that can cope with thin soils and unreliable water supplies, can survive.

Sea pink, or thrift, forms low cushions in crevices, together with white cascading sea campion, while white stonecrop is easily recognised by its fleshy leaves, which store water like desert cacti.

Fulmars nest on sheltered nooks towards the top of the cliffs, along with peregrine falcons.

## The beach

Among the first plants to grab a place at the top of the beach are the lilac flowering sea rocket and white flowered scurvy grass. These strand line-hugging plants have amazing staying power when you consider that high tides, drying winds and stinging sands continually buffet them.

The fleshy, oval leaves of scurvy grass are rich in vitamin C, which is why sailors used to eat them to make up for the lack of fruit and vegetables on board ships.

You may also be lucky enough to see common and grey seals, which occasionally bask on the sand banks at the mouth of the river, while dolphin, porpoise, minke, humpback and killer whales have all been sighted offshore.



Bottlenose dolphin



## The sand dunes

Only a few plants, like spiky marram grass and grey-green sea-lyme grass are able to cope with the extreme conditions of the sand dunes, their roots helping to bind the sand together.

Other plants gain a foothold once the sand has stabilised, such as purple spring vetch, which you'll see near tracks and among the rabbit warrens, along with the pastel blues of early forget-me-nots and wall speedwells, which provide a burst of colour in the spring.



Clustered bellflower

## The grassland

The grasslands also benefit from the shelter of the cliffs and the dunes, making them warmer and allowing wildflowers to thrive.

Visit in summer and you'll find a riot of colour, from the deep violet of clustered bellflower to the delicate maiden pink. Over 400 species of butterflies and moths have been recorded feeding on this floral feast, including some rare ones that rarely venture this far north.

Watch out for red and black six-spot burnet moths flitting over purple knapweed heads and common blue butterflies dancing in the lee of the gorse.



Six-spot burnet moths



Common blue butterfly

## Tyrie Trail

There are several paths across the Reserve, some of which are steep in places.

The Tyrie Trail is a 1.5km/0.9 mile walk around the Reserve, suitable for most abilities (not wheelchairs).

Leaflets are available at St Cyrus.

-  Reserve boundary
-  Bird breeding area — no access April to August
-  Visitor centre
-  Parking
-  Toilets
-  Bird hide
-  Tyrie Trail
-  Footpath/steep section
-  Main road
-  Minor road
-  Track
-  Woodland
-  Cliffs



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Waterfall

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