



CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS HERITAGE TRUST

A range of international, national and local nature conservation and landscape designations exist in the UK in order to protect and manage these areas sustainably. Some of these designations include Areas of Outstanding Beauty (AONBs), Ramsar sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) to name a few.

Every week the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust will be explaining some of the designated protected areas within Northern Ireland. This week we look at National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and give examples of where they can be found in the Causeway Coast and Glen's area.

National Nature Reserves are designated within the UK, in areas where there are nationally important populations of plants, animals, birds or where the area is of outstanding geological interest. The Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) are responsible for declaring nature reserves under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

NNRs were initially established to protect sensitive features and to provide 'outdoor laboratories' for research. Their purpose has widened since those early days. As well as managing some of our most untouched habitats, our rarest species and our most significant geology, most Reserves now offer great opportunities to the public as well as schools and specialist audiences to enable them to enjoy the rich heritage of this area.



There are 15 nature reserves within the area of the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust. These 15 areas are Altikeeragh, Ballymaclary, Banagher Glen, Binevenagh, Breen Wood, Garry Bog, Giants Causeway and Dunseverick, Glenariff Glen, Magilligan Point, Portrush, Rathlin Island, Keble, Roe Estuary, Slieveanorra, Straidkilly Wood and Swan Island.



Today we look at the Roe Estuary National Nature Reserve.



The River Roe is over 30 miles long, flowing through the towns of Dungiven and Limavady from its source high on the Glenshane Mountain, before twisting through the Roe Estuary Nature Reserve and onto Lough Foyle. The Roe estuary is home to large areas of eelgrass beds and salt marsh and is of immense importance to the thousands of migrating and wintering wading birds, geese, and ducks which feed and roost in the area.

Hidden in the mud flats are many small seashore animals such as shrimps, lugworms, periwinkles and large beds of mussels can also be found in the Estuary. These all act as the food sources that attract many of the thousands of migrating ducks, swans and geese that stop over on Lough Foyle each winter. Also found in the Roe Estuary, just inside the railway bridge, is an area of salt marsh vegetation; a habitat which is not common locally.



Don't miss next week's featured designation... **Ramsar Sites!**