



S. Craig

Greenshank

The greenshank is a regular passage migrant to Morecambe Bay, especially during the mid July to October period, but is less common in spring on northward migration; a few occasionally over-winter. As a summer visitor to Britain it breeds in the remotest highlands and islands of Scotland and Scandinavia. When the breeding season ends small parties move to the coast to commence their long migration to Africa. In late summer the greenshank is a regular passage migrant to the gravel pools and Lighthouse Bay at South Walney where there are records throughout the year. At Leighton Moss Reserves the reed-fringed muddy edges are favoured but it is the Eric Morecambe complex that consistently sustains large flocks of up to 40 birds during peak late summer migration and offers the best viewing conditions around Morecambe Bay.

Greenshank are often seen in association with the commoner redshank. It may be distinguished from the redshank by its larger size, greyer mantle, contrasting white under parts and head, green bill and green legs. It has a distinctive call – 'kyu kyu kyu' – that is usually given by an alarmed bird taking to the air. In flight it displays a plain wing bar and white rump.

Walk numbers 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29

WALK TWELVE

Sunderland Point



Walk 12A

Start: Potts Corner car park at the end of Carr Road, Middleton

Grid reference: SD 413572

Distance: 5 km (3.1 miles)

Time: Allow 4 to 5 hours

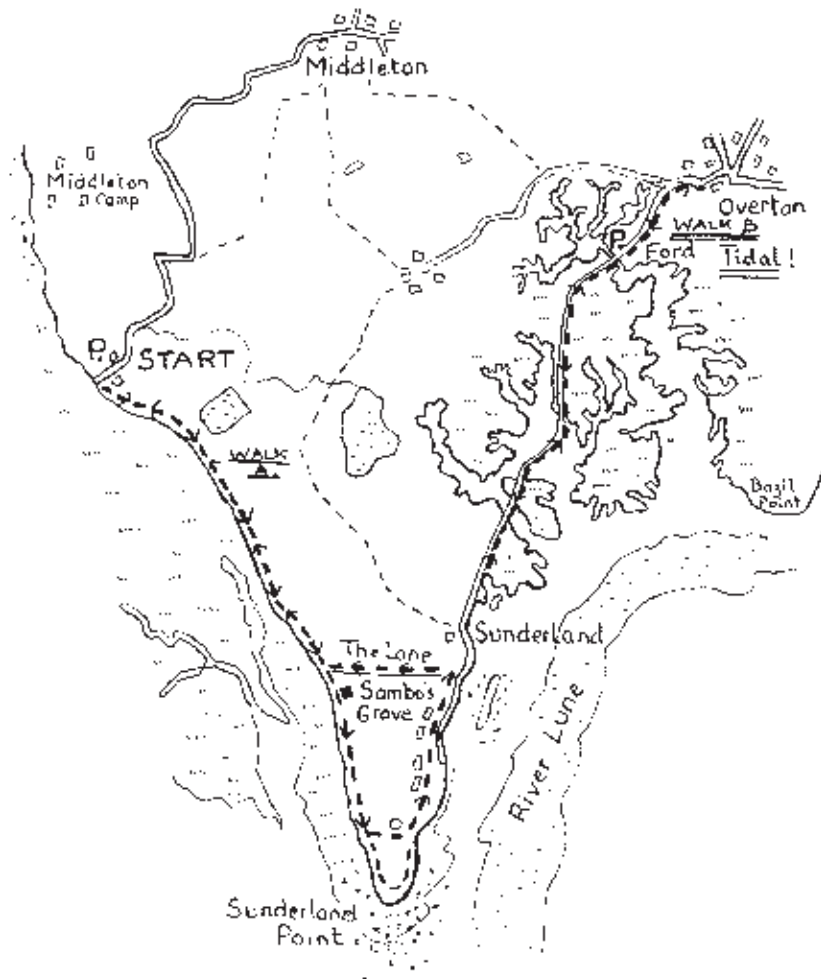
Grade: Easy

General: Toilets at Sunderland Point village by car park.
Refreshments at Potts Corner or Overton

THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST YEAR-ROUND birding areas on Morecambe Bay. Not only does it have one of the largest high tide wader roosts on spring tides but it is also an excellent area on both the lower tides and at low water. Because the start points differ depending on the tide heights the walks are described separately. It is vital not to park at Sunderland Point itself on anything but the lowest tides as the parking area is covered on most tides. Walk 12A is best done on tides above 9.2m (Liverpool height) and it is recommended to start the walk at least two hours before high tide.

1. Park in the Potts Corner car park (charges may apply at certain times) and set out on the track which heads along the tide-line to Sunderland Point.

From the car park check the foreshore to the right to see if waders are starting to assemble. Most waders come in from the north so it is well worth checking occasionally to watch the build up of the flocks on the inter-tidal area. The track passes through salt marsh which is good for meadow and rock pipits,



skylarks and pied, and in spring, white wagtails. Snipe are regularly flushed and at times jack snipe, although to flush the snipe, which only takes off at the last moment, you will need to deviate from the track onto the salt marsh – wellingtons are recommended! The tide-line with its scattered bushes often holds flocks of finches, especially in late summer when good numbers of linnets, greenfinch and reed buntings can be seen. The bushes also hold migrant warblers in season, while the hedgerows with a thick undergrowth of reed often produce stonechats and the fields are well worth checking for curlew, lapwing and at certain times golden plover.

Close to the farm and just behind the high tide mark there is a small fresh-water pool and field well used by cattle. This occasionally attracts wildfowl, once even a long-tailed duck, but there are usually many pied wagtails and

meadow pipits and the occasional grey wagtails and some finches. Choose a good vantage point opposite the gathering waders and watch as the flocks of oystercatcher, curlew, knot, dunlin, redshank and grey plover gather. With them are smaller numbers of bar-tailed godwit, ringed plover and sanderling. Numbers, and to some extent variety, change with the seasons. At passage times this is the best area for whimbrel and greenshank. The sudden panic of the smaller waders usually signals the presence of potential predators, usually peregrine, merlin or sparrowhawk. In winter short-eared owls also frequent this marsh. They are day time hunters but spend a lot of time hidden in thick cover, but if the marsh floods they take flight into the fields where they will sit on fence posts giving excellent views. Wildfowl are mainly shelduck, wigeon, teal and mallard. Cormorants are regular, often sitting on the anti-invasion posts on the now covered sand flats.

2. Continue along the tide-line past Sambo's grave to the end of the point. Spring tides in the bay occur around midday so the end of the point is a good lunch spot. Here you can watch both the bay and the Lune channel.

If you time it carefully you should arrive here just after high tide and you can watch the wader roost start to break up as the waders return to feed. The stones just in front of you often attract the first birds, usually turnstone, grey plover and ringed plover. In May and very early June this is an excellent place to see the spring passage of numbers of sanderling, many in full summer plumage, and ringed plover. These migrants are heading for their breeding grounds in Iceland and in the case of the sanderling, Greenland. The Lune channel regularly has mergansers, goldeneye, great crested grebe and, especially in late summer and early autumn, common, sandwich and occasionally little terns pass up and down the channel. Further ebbing of the tide produces more waders, some of which cross the Lune towards Cockersands lighthouse but most head out following the quickly receding tide with the smaller waders leaving first, followed by the larger oystercatcher and curlew.

3. Follow the tide-line past the picturesque Sunderland Hall (dating from 1683) and on towards the small village of Sunderland Point, then up onto the narrow road in front of the houses. Depending on where birds are, there should be several stops before you reach the end of the village and the small informal car park and toilets.

Looking at today's tranquil scene with a scattering of small boats at anchor, it is hard to believe that Sunderland Point three hundred years ago was a hive of industry. Alongside the still surviving stone jetty, ships would be unloading their cargoes of cotton and sugar from Jamaica or Barbados. The dark side of this trade, of course, was its association with the slave trade. African slaves were captured and taken to the West Indies in exchange for