

The Stour

Things to do:
Eels are amazing
 Eels are very mysterious fish. Find out about where Eels migrate to find mates and where they lay their eggs. How long do Eels live? Do males live longer than females? There is so much to find out about Eels! Write a story about an Eel's journey.

The Stour estuary is 10 3/4 miles long. The south bank of the Stour is in Essex, and the north bank in Suffolk. The head of the estuary is at Manningtree, and it meets the open sea at Harwich. The name Stour comes from the Celtic word sturr meaning "strong".

The River Stour was one of the first improved rivers or canals in England. Parliament passed an act in 1705 to make the river easier to use from the town of Manningtree, to Sudbury. Horses pulled boats called lighters carrying cargo of pitch, tar, soap, vinegar, resin, glass, butter and apples.

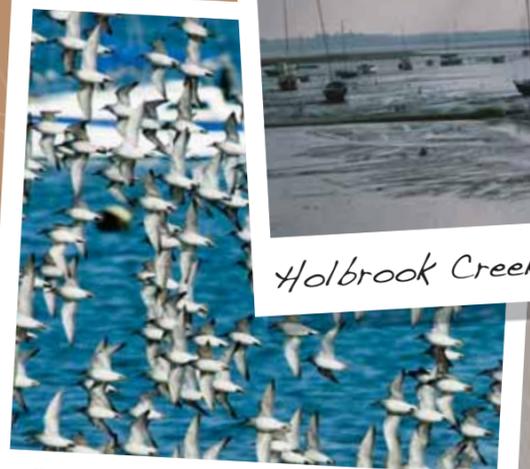
The Stour is now used by smaller boats mostly for fun and large ferries that leave Harwich to take passengers to Holland.



"Did you know baby Eels called Elvers travel past Manningtree though the sluice at Cattawade. The Environment Agency have put in special Eel passes so they can get past the sluice to get to the top of the river."



Holbrook Creek



Flock of Knot on the Stour

Things to do:
Help Barn Owls and their chicks
 Barn Owl numbers are now increasing due to farmers helping to provide habitat but the owls need nesting sites. Get your school or village to adopt a barn owl box or buy a box. Contact Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Community Barn Owl project www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org

Produced by EFMS Design & Print
 The Coastal Knowledge Fact Sheets have been produced by the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB with co-funding from our partners.
 Photographs by Malcolm Farrow, Tony Pick, Steve Plume and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.
 Cartoons: Gladys Glacier © Simon Reid



www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org

Estuaries



"Hi I'm Gladys Glacier - I made the five estuaries 470,000 years ago!"

Estuaries

Suffolk has five estuaries; the Blyth, Alde and Ore, Deben, Orwell and the Stour estuary which is in Essex and Suffolk.

What is an estuary?

An estuary is where the sea and a river meet. This is where you get a mixture of salt and freshwater called brackish water. Brackish waters are high in sediments and nutrients which have come from the land and sea providing food for many plants and animals.



Port of Felixstowe and important saltmarsh habitat Orwell Estuary

Why are they important?

Estuaries are very important feeding areas for wildlife. The mud is full of worms and other invertebrates which are fed by the tides, bringing in new food twice a day.

Estuaries are also important for shipping in cargo from other countries and lots of people sail and fish on estuaries in their spare time. The landscape is beautiful and people like to walk and cycle along the estuary taking in the fresh air.

"20,000 years ago the sea was 60 metres lower than it is now because rain water was locked up as land ice! This meant that people and animals could walk across the dry land between Britain and Holland, the area that is now covered by the North Sea."



Things to do:

How high has the sea risen?

In your school hall get your class to lie down in a straight line and measure how long the line is. Work out how many lines of your class mates would show how high the sea has risen!

The Blyth estuary

The Blyth estuary is 4 miles (6.5Km) long starting at Blythburgh and finishing at its mouth at Southwold Harbour. You can catch a ferry across the Blyth estuary at Southwold or Walberswick. This ferry has been running since the 13th Century - over 700 years!

The harbour at Southwold is still an active fishing harbour. Every year a crabbing competition is held at Walberswick where 100s of people come to try and win a trophy for the biggest crab.

Minsmere and Walberswick have a wonderful National Nature Reserve where you can hear Bittern "booming" in spring and see Natterjack Toads.



Southwold Harbour and ferry crossing in the distance

The Alde and Ore

The Alde and Ore is Suffolk's longest estuary at nearly 16 miles (25.5Km) long. It is separated from the sea by a narrow shingle spit (see Tides and Waves fact sheet for more details). The river changes its name between Aldeburgh and Orford even though it is one estuary. The head of the Alde estuary is at Snape, where you can visit Snape Maltings, the music venue made internationally famous by Benjamin Britten. The mouth is at Shingle Street where you can find a small group of cottages built for fishermen in the 1800s and a Martello tower. See the History fact sheet for more details. The town of Aldeburgh was built around a port that sent four ships to fight the Spanish Armada!

The estuary has important coastal marshlands where you can see Avocet and Marsh Harriers. Orford Ness is an internationally important nature reserve because of the shingle habitat and the birds and seals that live there. Orford Ness is Europe's largest vegetated spit - 10 miles (16km) long! The spit formed almost entirely of flint deposited by waves through the process of long-shore drift.



Snape Maltings

The Deben

The Deben estuary is 10miles (16km) long starting at Wilford bridge and ending at the mouth at Felixstowe Ferry. The mouth is very interesting as it has moving islands of shingle called the Knolls that change with the weather and tides.

The ancient market town of Woodbridge was once a major ship building town providing ships for the English fleet fighting the Spanish Armada in 1588. Smugglers used to land their stolen goods at Woodbridge to sell. Today there are still many boats in the river, some working, but the majority are used for fun!



Walkway across the saltings at Waldringfield

Did you know:

Visit the King

Did you know the Deben is home to an Anglo-Saxon King who was buried at Suttton Hoo with his treasures! Why don't you go and visit him?

Did you know:

Dinosaurs at Levington

In 1718 Fossilised Dinosaur dung "Coprolite" was dug in a farmer's yard in Levington. Coprolite is a very good fertilizer for growing crops and the farmer started a business shipping thousands of tons all around the UK, this still happened until quite recently.

The Orwell

The Orwell is 11½ miles long starting at Ipswich where the dock has operated since the 7th century and meeting the North Sea at Felixstowe after joining with the Stour estuary at Shotley. It is a very narrow estuary but is home to the largest port in Britain. This estuary is by far the most commercialised of all of Suffolk's estuaries. Alongside all of this activity the estuary has nationally important habitats for birds. There are nature reserves at Trimley, Levington and Nacton which you can visit. Peregrine Falcons nest on the Orwell Bridge and Barn Owls can be seen at Levington!

You can fish for Bass, Mullet and flat fish all along the river.



Jacques Bay