

Tring Reservoirs (Wilstone)

Wilstone Reservoir is an artificial water-body fed by natural springs and surrounded by ancient marshes, reedswamp and willow carr.

Wilstone Reservoir is one of the four Tring Reservoirs, owned by British Waterways. Wilstone is managed by HMWT in conjunction with the Friends of Tring Reservoirs. Built in 1802, the reservoir supplies water to the Wendover arm of the Grand Union Canal. It is up to 18 feet deep and has a capacity of 240 million gallons.

The reservoir was made famous by the first nesting in this country of black-necked grebes in 1918 and of little ringed plovers in 1938.

Wilstone is one of the most famous birding spots in southern England. A walk round the reservoir's edges gives good views, and there's always a surprise in store, whether it's the impressive summer duck moult, rare passage migrants or the superb wintering water birds.



Surrounded by one of Hertfordshire's largest reedbeds and set in the lovely Chilterns countryside, Wilstone is a very special place. The other three Tring Reservoirs (Little Tring, Startops and Marsworth) are all nearby and also have footpaths and viewing areas.

Summer

Despite this time of year classically being considered a quiet period there is still plenty to be seen at Wilstone. There are many young birds hiding away in the reeds and woodland and these provide a challenge to identify.

This year little egrets have bred on the reserve for the first time, with 2 chicks currently being fed by adults (w/c25/7) still be seen around the reservoir, often calling and passing food amongst each other (most likely from adult to juvenile). You could also try spotting them perched in the tall trees that border the edge of the reservoir, where they often take a break.

Common Terns can also still be seen at the reservoir, with great views as they glide past hunting for fish. They nest on rafts which are put out to attract them

With many birds beginning to migrate now is a perfect time to visit the reserve. If the water levels are low and there is exposed mud waders can be expected and there is always the chance of something rare turning up.

Recent sightings have included common sandpiper, green sandpiper, dunlin, redshank and little ringed plover. A juvenile marsh harrier was seen briefly towards the end of July, they are often seen during migration periods hunting over the reed beds. Keep a look out over the next few weeks for flocks of yellow wagtails, they often feed around the edges of the reservoirs and fly into the surrounding fields if disturbed.

4 juvenile water rails could be seen in the reedbed (27/7) and 2 pairs have bred at Wilstone this year.

Spring brings passage and summer migrants. Breeding duck include Gadwall and Shoveler, and the reserve has one of the county's three regular heronries. Flowering plants include celery-leaved and goldilocks buttercups.

The summer moult flocks of Tufted Duck and Pochard are of national importance.

Autumn passage again brings terns, gulls and other vagrants.

In winter waterbirds include nationally important levels of Shoveler as well as Teal and Wigeon. The nightly gull roost can be in excess of 20,000 birds, and corn buntings roost in the reedbed.

- [Get driving directions](#)

- [Find nearby public transport](#)

How to Get Here

Location

Near Tring

Directions

Wilstone lies along the B489 between Aston Clinton and the village of Marsworth, and about 3km NW of Tring. From Aston Clinton, turn north onto the Lower Icknield Way (A489). From Tring, follow Little Tring Road from the B488, and turn left on meeting the A489.

Public Transport Links

Tring Station is 4km away, and buses serve both Tring and Aston Clinton.

Walking Links

Map Reference

SP 903135

Visitor Guide

Size

55 hectares

Access to site

Access around site

There are very steep steps from the car park to the top of the reservoir banks. Flat access is available via public footpath from the east of the reserve - please park considerately.

Walking time

Advice on what to wear/bring

The high banks of the reservoir are often exposed to cold winds - please wear warm clothing. Wellingtons are advised during autumn and winter.

Map of site (if available)

- [Tring Reservoirs map](#)

A site map of Tring Reservoirs Nature Reserve