

# Habitats

**TRAMORE'S** habitats have been shaped by the great variety in the local landscape, which has been influenced by land, sea and human activity. Inland, farming has created a network of fields, meadows, hedgerows and woodland while the built fabric of Tramore town provides wildlife habitats in stone walls, hedges, urban gardens and old buildings.

The sea has been a major influence, as it has gradually gouged out and widened Tramore Bay from a weak point, or fault, between the volcanic rocks of the western side of the bay and the sandstone rock of the eastern side. This process has added to the variety of habitats in the area. The sea cliffs on either side of the bay at Newtown Head and Brownstown Head provide nesting places for sea birds and Cough, shelter for seals in sea caves and a habitat for coastal plants such as Sea Thrift.

The shallow, sandy Tramore Bay is made up of a number of different habitats. Porpoises, dolphins and seals feed on fish in the main part of the bay. The sand dunes of the Burrow provide a habitat for rare plants and act as a breakwater protecting the Back Strand. The Back Strand provides food for thousands of migratory birds in the winter on its mud flats, and the salt marshes fringing it contain plants adapted to the salty conditions there.

# Marine Life

**GREY SEAL**



and shrimp, all of which are common in the shallow and sandy Tramore Bay. Seals are less common on the south-east coast of Ireland than they are in the west, but the nearby Saltee Islands off County Wexford act as a safe haven for a breeding colony of Grey Seals, away from human disturbance; they may also breed in isolated sea caves along the Waterford coast, including those in the cliffs at Newtown Head. Seals often use quiet beaches, caves and offshore rocks to “haul out” of the sea and rest.

## WHALES & DOLPHINS



Head. Further out to sea, but also occasionally entering the bay, are the larger Common Dolphin and Bottlenose Dolphin, which have been found stranded on the beach.

Of the larger whale species, Humpback Whales and Fin Whales are also common, and may be seen off Brownstown Head.

The Grey Seal is the larger of the two seal species commonly found in Irish waters, the other being the Common Seal. Grey Seals eat a wide variety of fish and crustaceans, including sand eels, flatfish, crabs are common in the shallow and sandy s common on the south-east coast of e west, but the nearby Saltee Islands a safe haven for a breeding colony human disturbance; they may also s along the Waterford coast, includ- ewtown Head. Seals often use quiet e rocks to “haul out” of the sea and rest.

# Mammals

## OTTER



water streams to wash their fur clean of salt and secluded areas to hide during the day in their dens or “holts”. The most commonly seen signs of otters are their pungent droppings full of fish scales and bones, which they deposit on prominent rocks and other landmarks around the strand. An early morning visit to the strand might reward you with an otter sighting with some luck. Other potential sites are Newtown Cove, Garrarus and around Brownstown Head.

## BATS



sects, diving closer to the ground when they spot their prey. It is often possible to see them soon after sunset. The Soprano Pipistrelle is Ireland's smallest bat, smaller than a wren. It feeds on tiny midges and mosquitoes, foraging around hedgerows and fields. Both bats can be found in urban areas, as they often sleep in attic spaces of houses and other buildings by day.

Tramore Bay is home to a resident population of these large nocturnal mammals. The Back Strand provides an excellent habitat for Otter with good hunting grounds for fish and crabs, access to fresh water, their fur clean of salt and secluded away from humans in their dens or “holts”. The most obvious signs are their pungent droppings called sprags, which they deposit on prominent landmarks around the strand. An early morning walk might reward you with an otter sighting. Other potential sites are Newtown and Brownstown Head.

# Birds

## PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE



to overwinter in Ireland, often stopping in Iceland along the way. Tramore has an internationally important population of pale-bellied Brent Geese (more than 1% of the world's population of this sub-species), which come here every winter to rest and feed on the large amounts of eelgrass and seaweeds on the mudflats, as well as occasionally grazing in the fields around the edges of the strand.

## MIGRATORY WADERS



ity of these are waders, small long-legged birds with long bills that forage for worms and snails on the mudflats. Some of these undertake long journeys to Tramore from their breeding grounds in the Arctic: Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa lapponica*) from northern Scandinavia, and Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*) and Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis apricaria*) from Iceland.

Tramore Back Strand is a particularly good place to see these migratory birds, which are a sub-species of the Brent Goose. They fly 2,500km from their breeding grounds in eastern Canada, often stopping in Iceland along internationally important populations of Geese (more than 1% of the world's species), which come here every year to graze on the large amounts of eelgrass and seaweed, as well as occasionally grazing in the sand of the strand.

Tramore Back Strand has one of Ireland's largest concentrations of wetland birds, with an average 10,000 birds staying here every winter, and a peak of 14,800 counted in 2006/2007. The major-

# Plants

## GOLDEN SAMPHIRE



town Head, but is frequent in the salt marshes around the Back Strand. It grows in clusters of plants dotted around the marshes, which are recognisable by their tall stature compared to other marsh plants, their thick, leathery leaves that prevent drying out, and their large bright yellow daisy-like flowers that bloom from July to September.

## ORCHIDS



Spotted-Orchid and the Common Spotted-Orchid, as well as the rather rare Autumn Lady's-Tresses. The dunes contain other species adapted to their special conditions, including the showy pink Pyramidal Orchid and the rare Bee Orchid. Some orchids are becoming rarer due to habitat loss and collecting for gardens. If you come across one, please leave it in its native habitat for others to enjoy.

Golden Samphire is a rare plant in Ireland, and has its stronghold in County Waterford. The plant is a member of the Aster family. It can be found on the sea cliffs at Newtown Head and Browns- at in the salt marshes around the clusters of plants dotted around the nisable by their tall stature com- ts, their thick, leathery leaves that heir large bright yellow daisy-like uly to September.

Tramore is home a number of orchid species, some of which are rare in Ireland. The countryside surrounding Tramore Bay is known to contain two rather common orchid species, the Heath Common Spotted-Orchid, as well as Lady's-Tresses. The dunes contain, under their special conditions, including the Heath Common Spotted-Orchid and the rare Bee Orchid. As the Bee Orchid is becoming rarer due to habitat loss and collection, please leave it in the wild for others to enjoy.

# Leave No Trace

**The habitats of Tramore are precious. Please take care and leave the area as you wish to enjoy it.**

- **Keep to established paths in sensitive areas,**  
e.g. sand dunes, salt marsh and cliff tops- excessive trampling causes erosion and damages wild plants.
- **Take your litter home with you.**  
Pick up or report litter you find along your way.
- **Keep your eye on the tides!** Water can creep in quickly on an incoming tide in the Back Strand - don't get stranded
- **Keep your dog on a lead-** they can disturb wild birds while they are feeding or on their nests.

## Further Information

If you come across any interesting wildlife in the Tramore area you may be interested in submitting records to some of the following websites.

- [www.waterfordbirds.com](http://www.waterfordbirds.com)
- [www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie)
- [www.iwdg.ie](http://www.iwdg.ie)
- [www.batconservationireland.org](http://www.batconservationireland.org)
- [www.miseproject.ie](http://www.miseproject.ie)
- [www.waterfordcoco.ie](http://www.waterfordcoco.ie)

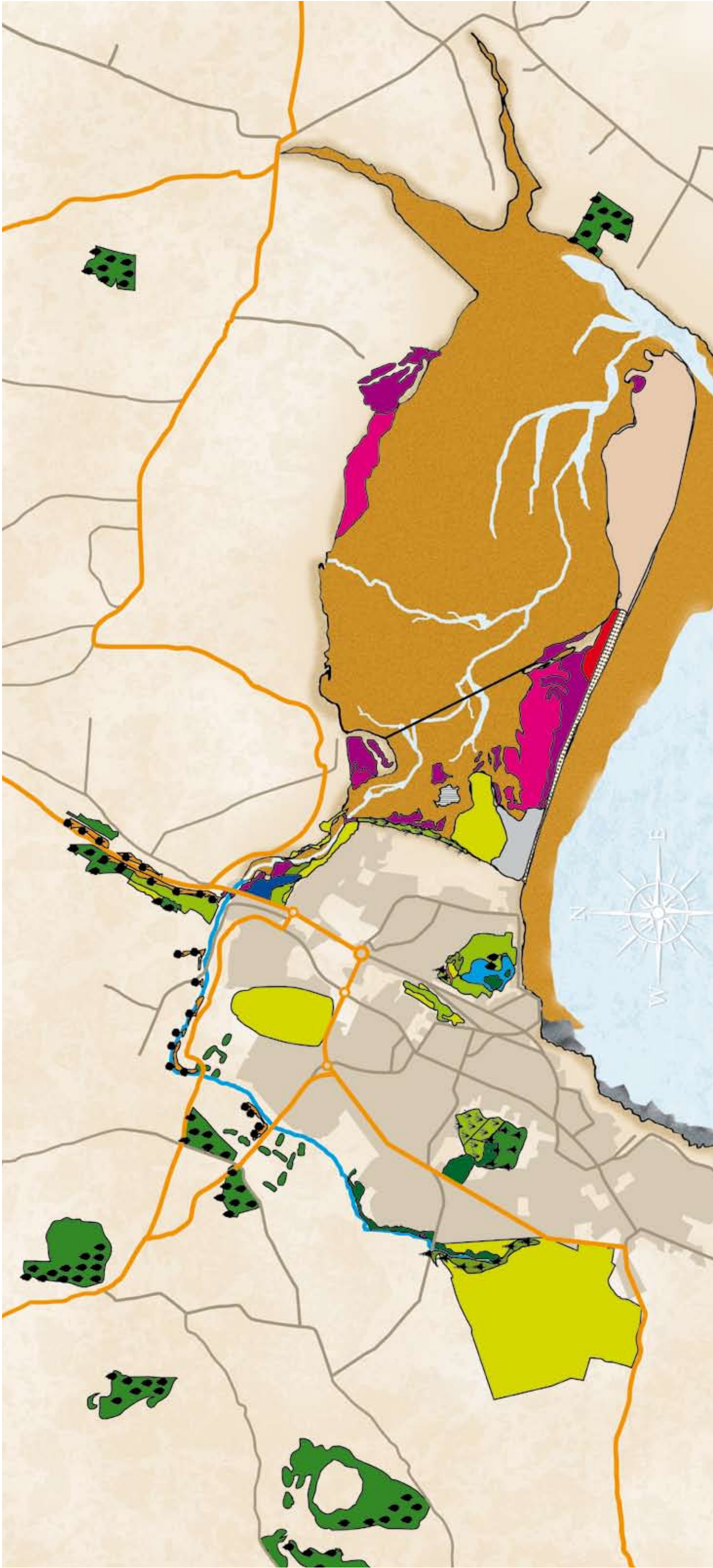
**Images courtesy of:**  
**Grey Seal** - Bernadette Guest, **Otter/Humpback Whale** - Andrew Malcolm, **Sea Thrift** - Mike Trewby,  
**Golden Samphire/Bee Orchid** - Jenny Seawright, **Redshank** - Brian White  
**Leisler's Bat** - Phil Richardson, **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** - Paul Kelly, [www.irishbirdimages.com](http://www.irishbirdimages.com).  
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## Notes:

### Why not record what you see:

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### STREAMS

The most notable stream in Tramore is the Garraun Stream which meanders from its source at Coolnagoppoge and creates a natural boundary between rural and urban land areas. This watercourse is fed primarily by natural and constructed drains from its source down to the mouth that feeds into the estuary at Grobally Lower. This stream is by far the richest, as well as the longest corridor in Tramore at 4.5 kilometers.

As a linear feature on the landscape, this stream links several habitats that would otherwise be isolated or fragmented. Both banks of the stream are wooded for nearly its entire length creating a sheltered passage for Otters, bats and birds. Kingfishers can also be seen in the lower reaches of the Garraun.

### WOODLANDS

Newtown Woods is a mixed broadleaved wood that is a popular area for walkers. A “Neighbourhood” Scheme was applied in 2003 with Oak, Ash and Scots Pine being interplanted under the forest canopy. Bat and bird boxes were erected throughout the woodland at around the same time by patrons of the Tramore Tidy Towns group and other local volunteers. Both of these actions increased biodiversity in this woodland. Newtown woods is easily accessible by foot or car as it is 1.5km from town along the Coast Road heading towards Newtown and the Metal Man.

### COASTAL HABITATS

Tramore Bay is surrounded by sea cliffs and rocky shores to the south of Tramore Town in the region of Newtown Head. Watch for the ever-present Fulmar as it glides effortlessly above the waves – these inquisitive birds often fly towards people simply to get a better look at you. Fulmars nest on the cliff face of Tramore Bay along with Choughs and Ravens. To the east of the town the land changes abruptly to a sandy shore for approximately 5km eastward. The northern extremity of the sandy shore is dominated by a shingle and gravel shore line and several species of terrestrial vascular plants inhabit this area such as Sea Holly and Sea Spurge. The landscape changes again upon the eastern perimeter of the bay and reverts back to cliffs and both sandy and rocky shores along Saleen and Brownstown Head.

There are over 57 hectares of dunes in Tramore that have been undergoing succession and changes for over 5,000 years. To the untrained eye the dunes may seem void of much life apart from the Marram Grass. However, there are around 100 species of plants growing there including the rare Sea Knotgrass and Wild Asparagus. Skylark, Stonechat and Meadow Pipit are birds that breed in the dunes and Short-Eared Owls and Snow Bunting are winter visitors.

