Blaxhall & Tunstall
Explorer Guide

Blaxhall and Tunstall Commons are areas of heathland and other important wildlife habitats. They are part of the Suffolk Sandlings and partially surrounded by the mixed woodland of Tunstall Forest.

1 Tunstall Forest is a commercial forest planted by the Forestry Commission in the 1930s. The majority of the original trees have been felled, so today there is a mixture of new plantation, broadleaved trees and heathland. Many trees were lost in the great storm of October 1987, which allowed planting to be diversified. Although the dense areas of commercial pine forest are not very wildlife friendly, the more open areas are ideal for nightjar and woodlark. The ‘rides’ through the Forest are wildlife corridors linking the open heath of Blaxhall and Tunstall Commons. The forest is popular for recreation and you may meet walkers, mountain bikers or horse riders.

2 Tunstall Common is another great habitat for plants and animals. Tunstall and Blaxhall Commons are rare examples of the Suffolk Sandlings, lowland heath that once covered much of east Suffolk. The plant species are distinctive, with bell heather, milkwort, speedwell and sheep’s sorrel adding colour to the heath in summer. Some more invasive species, such as bracken and birch have to be controlled to prevent them smothering other plants.

3 Blaxhall Common is an ancient landscape with an Iron Age burial mound. The villagers of Blaxhall have a commoners’ right to graze animals and take turf for fuel. Some of the ditches across the Common were dug during World War II to prevent enemy gliders from landing.

Today, Blaxhall Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The Common provides a habitat for many species of plant, fungi and animal. Birds you might spot include woodlark, nightjar, nightingale and goldcrest. Reptiles such as common lizard and adder thrive on the dry sandy ground. The area is ideal for insects too. In 2007, the silver-studded blue butterfly was successfully re-introduced. This butterfly flourishes where bell heather grows.

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of Britain’s finest landscapes. It extends from the Stour Estuary in the south to the eastern fringe of Ipswich and then north to Kessingland. The AONB covers 403 square kilometres, including wildlife rich wetlands, ancient heaths, windswept shingle beaches and historic towns and villages.

Visiting Blaxhall & Tunstall

Ordinance Survey Map No. 212 (Woodbridge and Saxmundham)
Access via the A1152/A12 (south) or A1094/A12 (north). Walks start from car park on e side of B1069.
64 bus from Ipswich to Wickham Market & transfer to Coastal Accessible Transport (Suffolk Links Alde) – must book day before travel. Tel: 0845 604 1802. Normally a wheelchair accessible vehicle.
East Suffolk Line hourly train service between Ipswich and Lowestoft. Leave train at Wickham Market. Blaxhall is a 20 minute cycle ride.
Public transport information: www.suffolkonboard.com or call 0845 606 6171
Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB
01394 444400
www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org
Tourist Information:
Aldeburgh: 01728 433637
Woodbridge: 01394 444400
www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/tourism/ltsc/
**Time:** 2 hours
**Terrain:** Paths and tracks - can be very muddy after rain. Some sections on minor roads. We recommend high visibility clothing.

Stay on same side of road as car park (NGR: TM 383565). Follow path that leads away from car park and road across Blaxhall Common. Keep roughly straight. When path splits, keep left.

When you reach minor road, go straight across and continue on far side through forest. Keep on path, ignoring all exits and cross paths, until you come to cottage at cross tracks (turning left at cross tracks links to a longer walk to Alde estuary). Turn right and follow straight track through forest and across Tunstall Common.

When you reach main road, cross carefully and take track on opposite side. Follow straight track beside fields. When you reach end of second field, take path right and then left as it follows edge of woodland. When you reach junction with sunken path, turn right. Follow path across heath to road and car park.

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**Time:** 1 hour 15 mins
**Terrain:** Paths and tracks - can be very muddy after rain. Some sections on minor roads. We recommend high visibility clothing.

Follow 'Heath and Forest' route until junction with minor road.

Go straight across road and continue on far side through forest. When you reach track crossing obliquely from left to right, bear right. Continue straight for short distance, then turn right at cross tracks. Continue straight until next cross tracks, then turn right and follow path (with fence on left) to return to minor road.

Cross road and take unsigned path opposite that leads to right. Continue on path to junction. Cross path you followed earlier and take path opposite. Follow path, keeping forest on right. When you reach main road, cross and continue on far side.

Follow path uphill until you reach large hollow in ground on left. Just before hollow, take path left as it leads around hollow. On far side of hollow, take path left and continue straight when you reach junction with sunken path, turn left and return to road and car park.

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**Countryside Code**

The area has a network of footpaths and bridleways. We have shown suggested routes on this map. Here are a few simple suggestions to help you enjoy the area safely and assist our work in caring for it.

- **Follow the Countryside Code:**
- **Plan ahead and follow any signs:** Leave things as you find them.
- **Protect plants and animals:** Controll fires and take your litter home.
- **Dogs are very welcome**, but please keep them under close control at all times and on lead as advised.

Thank you.

Find out more about the Countryside Code, [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk).