

# Exe Bait Collectors Code

A guide for crab collecting and bait digging on the Exe Estuary



## Exe Estuary

The Exe Estuary is a wonderful place to spend time outdoors, and those who work on the foreshore are perhaps most aware of the beauty and amount of wildlife that exists around our shores. There is a diverse mix of species that all belong to a complex ecosystem.

This code has been drawn up following consultation with those that have an interest in the practice of collecting bait within the Exe Estuary.

### Crab Tiles

The definition of 'Crab Tiles' for this Estuary code means any form of artificial habitat, structure or shelter to aid the collection of shore crab.



## Safety

Remember that estuaries are dangerous places with fast moving tides, strong currents and soft mud. Check tide times at [tidetimes.co.uk](http://tidetimes.co.uk) for Exmouth Dock, and see the Exe Water Users and Shore Codes for more information.



## Watch Out For Wildlife

The mudflats, sandbanks and marshland of the estuary are of international importance as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for thousands of birds and the valuable habitats which support them and other wildlife. The estuary is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Ramsar Site. It is not an unlimited resource.

The reason for the Code is to:

- Help reduce the risk of conflict between those who collect angling bait and other estuary users, and
- Help crab tilers and bait diggers 'farm' the estuary in a way that respects nature, sustaining stocks, both now and in the future.

The organisations responsible for regulating bait collection on the estuary will be monitoring this code. If it is not adhered to, regulations will be introduced to control and manage these activities.



Shore crab

To make sure the site can be enjoyed by future generations please:

- ✓ Avoid Wildlife Refuges, unless you have permission to crab tile (see map for details).
- ✓ Keep noise to a minimum.
- ✓ Wait for birds to disperse before walking out on mudflats and keep your distance to avoid disturbance.
- ✓ Do not park vehicles on the foreshore.

In using nature's resource responsibly, you can help maintain the source of bait stocks and allow nature to thrive at the same time.

**Prevent litter:  
Bin it or take it home**





## Crab Collectors Code

- Through voluntary agreement of existing crab collectors it has been agreed that no more tiles should be placed on the Exe Estuary.
- No crab tiles are to be placed outside of the area marked on the map (overleaf), due to D&SIFCA's Byelaw 24.
- Be aware that permission of the landowner should be given before accessing the foreshore or placing crab tiles.
- Make sure you are aware of D&SIFCA, Local Council and Harbour Authority Byelaws, by contacting the appropriate authority.

- To avoid causing difficulty or damage to other estuary users, if tiles need to be moved:
  - Avoid placing crab tiles in awkward or dangerous positions (e.g. near slipways).
  - Place crab tiles at a low angle. Crab tiles should be no more than 20cm in height above the mudflat.
  - Avoid using or placing crab tiles within 5m of commercial oyster and mussel beds and leave a 10m wide access route to each bed.
- Only take crabs from tiles that you own, unless you have permission from the owner.
- Never use materials such as asbestos or sharp metal which could have a detrimental impact on the environment or people.
- Only take crabs that are fit for use as bait and return immature, berried (egg carrying) and non-moulting crabs.



## Bait Diggers Code

- Avoid entering the Wildlife Refuges where safe to do so (see map).
- Avoid waste, only take bait for planned trips.
- Eelgrass is an important feeding ground for protected birds, do not dig near eelgrass beds.
- Back-fill any holes that you dig to restore the estuary and make it safe for other users.
- Avoid collecting rare or unusual bait such as the rare bristle worm.
- Give consideration to other users, avoid digging near slipways, moorings and commercial fisheries.

Avoid disturbing wildlife and ensure any dogs are kept on leads (dogs are not allowed anywhere on the Warren mudflats).



Please be aware that it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb the wildlife in an SSSI or to damage or disturb land known to be an SSSI. It is also an offence to take down, damage or obstruct an SSSI notice or sign.



## Want To Know More?

**EXE ESTUARY MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP**  
Exe Estuary Officer 01392 382236

**SAFETY/POLLUTION**  
Coastguard 999

**HARBOUR AUTHORITY (River & Canal Office)**  
Office hours 01392 265791  
Out of hours emergency 0845 3511060

**FISHERIES**  
Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (D&SIFCA) 01803 854648  
07740 175479  
The Angling Trust 0343 5077006

**WILDLIFE**  
Dawlish Warren Visitor Centre 01626 863980  
Exmouth Local Nature Reserve 01395 516551  
Natural England – Devon Office 0300 060 3900  
Marine Biological Association recording@mba.ac.uk  
(to report non-native species, e.g. Chinese mitten crab)  
SEDHRP Mitigation habitatmitigation@eastdevon.gov.uk  
Officers

For further information, Exe leaflets and other codes of conduct, visit the Exe Estuary Management Partnership website at [www.exe-estuary.org](http://www.exe-estuary.org) or contact the Exe Estuary Officer at [exeestua@devon.gov.uk](mailto:exeestua@devon.gov.uk).



These codes have been produced by the Exe Estuary Management Partnership and South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership, supported by local users and organisations.

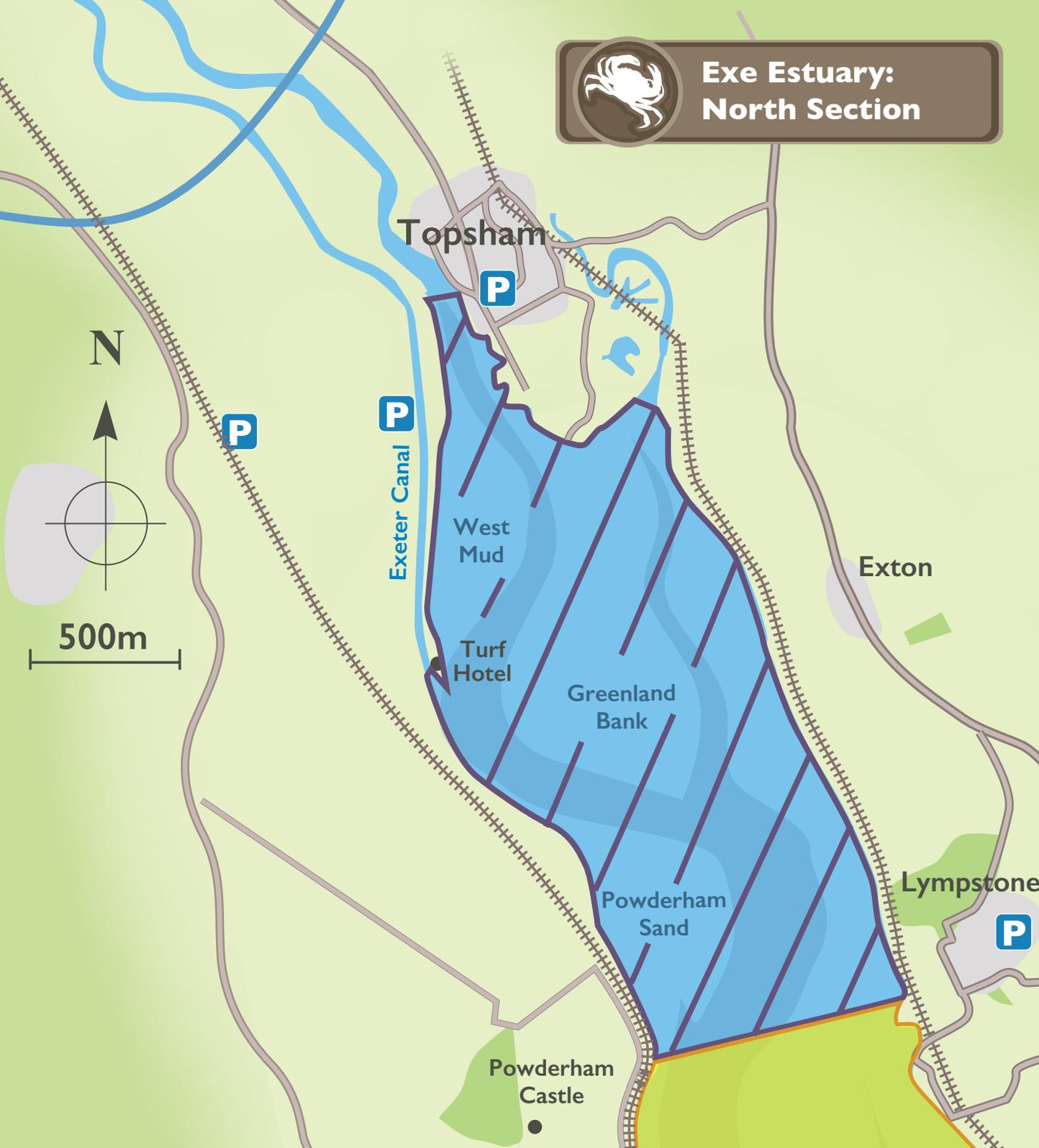


**SOUTH EAST DEVON  
HABITAT REGULATIONS  
PARTNERSHIP**





## Exe Estuary: North Section



## Key



**Wildlife Refuge**



**Voluntary Code applies**

- No more tiles to be placed
- Only replacement of broken, lost or asbestos tiles
- Monitoring and mapping is undertaken to ensure the code is adhered to



**No crab tiles, D&SIFCA  
Byelaw 24 applies (see below)**

### **D&SIFCA Byelaw 24**

For the purposes of conservation of marine resources the taking of shore crab is prohibited in the following areas:

- In the Exe Estuary north of a line joining Starcross Yacht Club Lat 50°38.8'N Long 003°27.00'W and Parsonage Stile Lat 50°38.99'N Long 003°25.90'W.
- In the vicinity of Dawlish Warren, south of a line joining Lat 50°36.65'N Long 003°26.62'W and Lat 50°36.62'N Long 003°25.74'W.

## Wildlife Refuges

Wildlife Refuges have been identified as vital areas for protected birds. Eelgrass beds in these areas are a valuable food source for migrating Dark-bellied Brent Geese, whilst Dawlish Warren Refuge is recognised as one of the most important high-tide roost sites on the estuary.

Disturbance is any activity or noise that could change behaviours of an animal, which can impact on survival of migrating birds.

**Exmouth Wildlife Refuge:** Please avoid from mid-September to end of December.

**Dawlish Warren Wildlife Refuge:** Please avoid all year round. A limited number of crab tilers are permitted to carry out their activity within part of the Wildlife Refuge, in adherence to the D&SIFCA byelaw and Bait Collectors' code of conduct.

These areas are voluntary. If a water user gets into difficulty and their safety is at risk, then the refuge areas can be accessed temporarily, until users can safely make their way out of the Wildlife Refuges.

More information can be found at [www.exwildliferefuge.org.uk](http://www.exwildliferefuge.org.uk)

### Why is it important to prevent bird disturbance?

When birds are disturbed they are prevented from resting and eating, which can mean they have to use lots of scarce energy. It can be a matter of life and death for the birds, who may already be exhausted from flying 3,000 miles or even more. Disturbance can cause extra stress because birds can be forced to visit areas which don't have as much food available.



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