

# Your guide to the summer night sky

## Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire is famous for its big skies and they don't come much bigger than at Wicken Fen; the National Trust's first Nature Reserve. Enjoy the tranquillity and discover a low-lying landscape, offering the broadest sky possible, perfect for star gazing.

**Start:** National Trust car park    **Grid ref:** TL565706    **Maps:** OS Landranger 154

### How to get here

**By bike:** National Cycle Network route 11 passes the reserve boundary. Visit [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) for more information.

**By bus:** Service 12, Cambridge to Ely. Alight Soham High St, then 3 miles on footpaths to Wicken.

**By train:** Ely station (9 miles from Wicken Fen)

**By road:** 17 miles north-east of Cambridge and 3 miles west of Soham, just off A1123.

### Introduction to dark skies

Big open skies are a wonderful feature of our countryside and on a clear night, you can see over 4,000 stars sparking in our universe. July and August are great months for star gazing and we have given you a helping hand by providing a separate star chart and constellations fact sheet to discover the wonders of the night sky. **Please remember to print off and take with you!**

This dark skies guide is aimed at families and anyone unfamiliar with astronomy and will introduce you to a tried and tested star gazing venue in the National Trust countryside.

### Our favourite night time wonders for summer

- ☀ The *Summer Triangle* is made up of three bright stars positioned in a triangle, directly overhead. Look out also for the *Plough* and *Great Bear*.
- ☀ The *Perseid meteor shower* is due on the 23 July, reaching its peak on 12 August.
- ☀ The *Milky Way*, a ribbon of millions of stars threads its way across the night sky.

So why not follow Galileo Galilei's footsteps! Choose a clear night, binoculars and a torch for a spot of summer star gazing!



Wicken Fen, one of Britain's few surviving ancient 'wild' fens, is a habitat of ponds, reeds, grasses, wetland trees and marshy fields, intersected by a network of waterways. To help maintain this unique wetland Konik ponies and Highland cattle graze the scrub.

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Listen out for the eerie bark of the Muntjac deer, or the Tawny owl's familiar *toowhit-twhoo*. In June and July, glow worms might light your way and from March to August Lapwing and Redshank (pictured) call. You may also hear a chorus of Widgeon and Teal from October to March.

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Reeds frame the Moon on a clear night at Wicken Fen. With its dark skies, away from the intrusive lights of towns, the fens offer a great place to view the thousands of stars and other objects in our universe.

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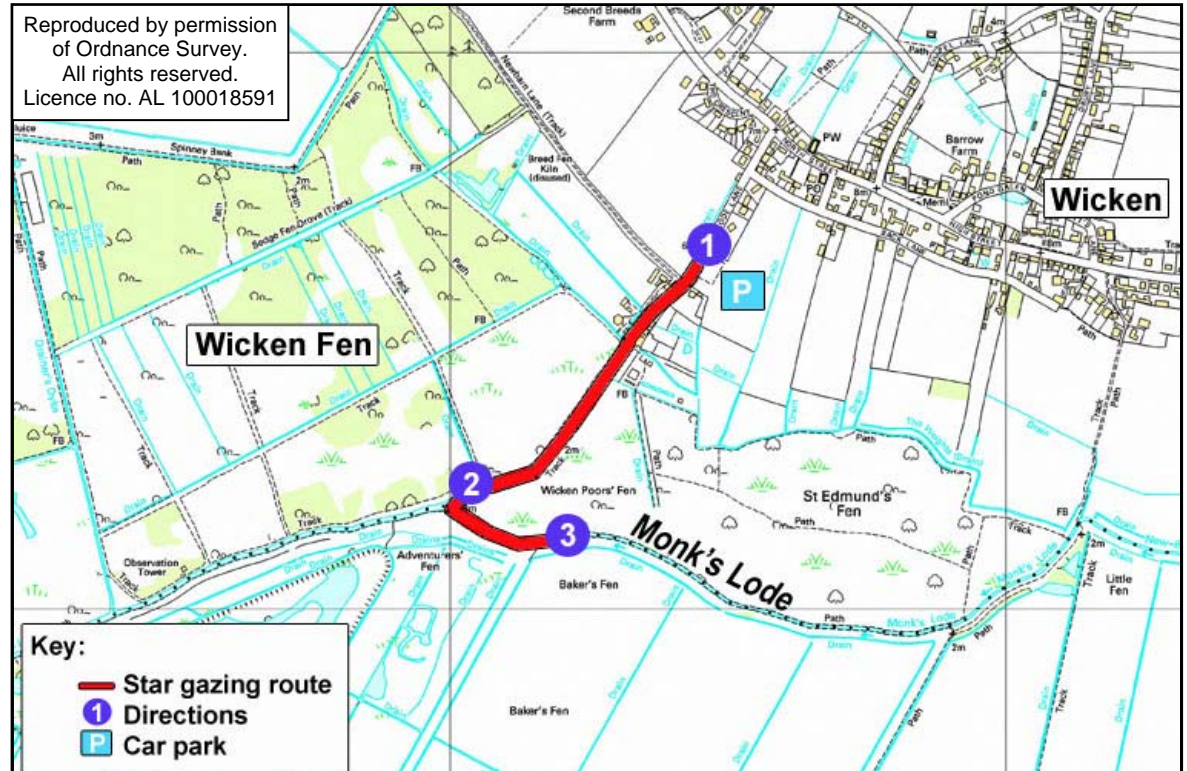
### Distance, terrain & accessibility

The star gazing spot is 875yd / 800m from the car park, along a very accessible route. The terrain is flat and, apart from the last 10m, the route follows a hard-surfaced path. Be aware the path is parallel to waterways and there is a foot-bridge to cross, so **please bring a torch and take care.**

### Directions

1. Turn left out of the car park. Continue in a straight line past the entrance to the Visitor Centre along the hard-surfaced path (waymarked NCN11).  
  
Shrubs and trees are on your left; the reed-edged water of Wicken Lode is on your right – take care to stay on the paths.
2. After 450m follow the path round to the left, and then turn right across the footbridge of Monk's Lode. The bridge is wide, but has no hand rails, so again take care.
3. Turn left to follow the path, keeping Monk's Lode on your left. After 100m, turn right off the hard-surfaced path onto the grass path. Within 10m the landscape broadens to give you views over Baker's Fen.

Find a comfortable spot and settle down to an evening of star gazing. Retrace your steps to return to the car park.



### Contact us

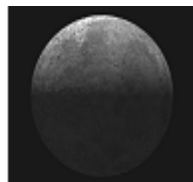
01353 720274 / [wickenfen@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:wickenfen@nationaltrust.org.uk) / [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wickenfen](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wickenfen)

Wicken Fen is well worth a visit during the day too. Download our 2¾ mile (4.5km) wildlife walk at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/walks](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/walks)

### August Moon Calendar

When the moon orbits the Earth, the surface is lit by sunlight. At different times in the month, a different shape is lit, called a "phase". Phases are repeated every 29.5 days.

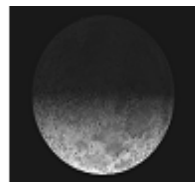
*Thank you to At-Bristol Planetarium for supplying the moon calendar.*



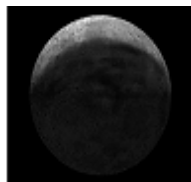
30 July  
Half Moon



6 August  
Full Moon



13 August  
Half Moon



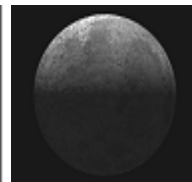
17 August  
Crescent Moon



20 August  
New Moon



24 August  
Crescent Moon



28 August  
Half Moon



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Find out more at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)