

Newcastle – Edinburgh

From the vibrant city of Newcastle and its majestic Tyne bridges, this route travels along the stunning coastline of Northumbria and across the border towards Scotland's capital city, Edinburgh. Trains on this section of the East Coast Mainline are operated by GNER and Virgin Trains.

Endangered **red squirrels** are now retreating from the suburbs of Newcastle, threatened on all sides by the invasive **grey squirrel***, a North American native. Other mammals more commonly found along the railway line in these suburban areas include **foxes***, **hedgehogs** and **moles** (look out for molehills, especially on low-lying ground).

The line is particularly scenic, running near to the coast for much of its length. Look out for our largest bird and one of the heaviest flying birds in the world, the **mute swan**. Swans can be seen in good numbers as the train passes over the mighty river Tweed or on many of our other rivers. The stretch between Berwick and Dunbar is a great place to see **fulmars**, which nest on the cliffs along this coast. These seabirds look like gulls being whitish underneath with grey wings. If you do see them, you'll notice that their wings are held straight and stiff, particularly obvious when they flap.

Looking out to sea as you are approaching Dunbar, you may catch a glimpse of a pod of **bottlenose dolphins** playing in the North Sea waves. Their neighbours, the **common** and **grey seals** may also be spotted as they haul themselves out and lay on sand banks and rocky outcrops. As your journey continues, look north over the Firth of Forth and you will see the long, flat Isle of May, a National Nature Reserve and home to many seabirds, including over 70,000 pairs of **puffins** and a significant population of **grey seals***, which give birth there in the autumn. Around 34,000 **gannets** are also found in this area, nesting on the Bass Rock near North Berwick.

*Grey squirrel – picture on page 7

*Fox – picture on page 5

*Grey seal – picture on page 19



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Common seal - this seal has a more rounded and dog-like face than the grey seal.



© Paul Sterry/NPL

Fulmar - Fulmars spend much time feeding on the open sea before returning to their nesting cliffs.

Edinburgh

Dunbar

Berwick-upon-Tweed



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Mute swan - so called because it rarely utters a sound - except for the occasional hiss when agitated.

Alnmouth

Morpeth

Newcastle



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Red squirrel - once widespread across the UK, they have been largely displaced by the larger introduced grey squirrel.

