



OLD SHORELINE WALK

Old Shoreline Walk

Distance approximately 1¼ miles (2km)

WALKING GUIDE

This is a short woodland trail of approximately 1¼ miles (2 km) following the fish symbol on the marker posts and should take about half an hour. The route follows the shoreline of Lough Neagh and for the most part was once part of the Lough bed. Successive lowerings of the Lough over the past 150 years have exposed this area of land which has now become colonised with vegetation.

1. Leaving the Discovery Centre head over the bridges and across the car park to the edge of the woodland. (Markers 2 and 3.)



2. The area of woodland that you are about to enter is composed mainly of alder and willow, two species of tree which grow well in the wet soils close to the waters edge. The seeds found within the cones of the alder trees are an important food source for many of the woodland birds. Some Willow, Hazel and Oak trees are found throughout this area also.

3. At this point you can take a short detour to Croaghan hide. This hide looks out over Croaghan Island and a shallow rocky area to its right. Look out for cormorants on the rocks along with Black Headed and Black Backed Gulls. Tufted Duck, Coot and Great Crested Grebe may also be seen from this hide along with Golden Eye in winter.



Rejoin the main path, continuing past points 4, 5 & 6 and follow the fish symbol to point 7.

7. Hawthorn and Blackthorn grow densely along parts of this path and form an excellent wildlife haven. They attract many insects to their blooms in spring. Nesting birds feed on insects found in their branches during summer and resident and migrant birds feed on the berries they provide in autumn and winter.

Dense areas of scrub exist along the former shoreline of the Lough on your left. A steep ridge has been left behind following three successive lowerings of the water levels of the Lough Neagh, beginning in the 1850's and ending in the 1960's. Hawthorn and Blackthorn together with some taller trees have colonised the ridge and have become an important nesting site for birds during the spring and summer. This area is alive with song birds from mid February onwards. Species to look out for are Long-Tailed Tits, Chaffinches, Bullfinches, Willow Warblers, Blackbirds, Thrushes and Wrens.

8. Continue path 8 to point 9.
9. Before heading up the steps take a short walk to Closet Hide. The peninsula of Raughlan lies across the bay. Its mature trees provide an important nesting site for Herons which may be seen

high up in the trees from February to May.

Retrace your route back to the steps back through the Willow trees and proceed up the steps. In the 1850's the water levels of the Lough would have reached the top of the steps, the levels were lowered to prevent surrounding farmland from becoming flooded during the winter months.



Between here and point 10 you will pass an area of more open and mixed woodland of Birch, Horse Chestnut, Scots Pine and Oak. The drier soils of this area can support a wider variety of trees. From this part of the path there are good views over Closet Meadows. From October to March, Whooper Swans (from Iceland) and our resident Mute Swans are often seen grazing in the fields at the Closet River.

10. The reed beds of Kinnego Bay are visible from here. Listen for the sound of the Great Crested Grebe and the Coot and the chattering noise of the Little Grebe.



Kinnego Bay attracts several thousand birds during the winter months. These are mainly Pochard and Tufted Duck, two species of migratory bird which visit Lough Neagh to escape the cold of northern Europe, Russia and Iceland.

Summer birds in the bay include Great Crested Grebes, Little Grebes, Mallard, Gadwall, Coots and Moorhen, many with their young.

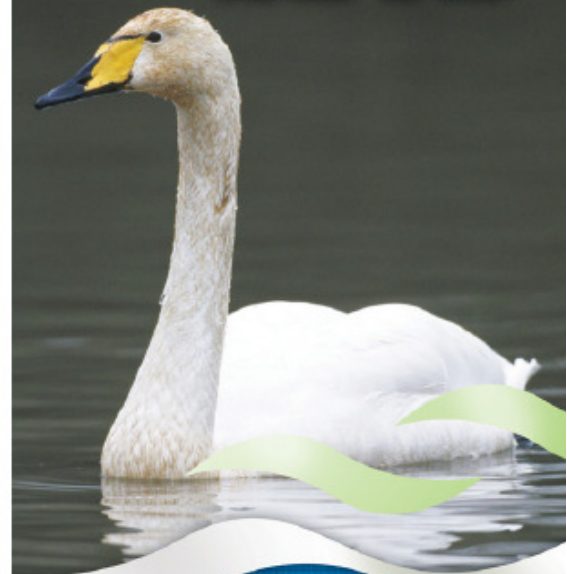
11. Follow the grass path back towards the Centre. The sandy soils on this part of the reserve are well drained and nutrient rich supporting dense areas of nettle. These are an important habitat for butterflies and their caterpillars such as the Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral.

If you have seen anything unusual out on site or have any questions after your walk, please feel free to contact our staff at reception.

For further information please telephone or e-mail us.

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OXFORD ISLAND

CROAGHAN HIDE
Looks out towards the rocks and reeds of the far island. Cormorants, Terns and Goldeneye

PLAY AREA AND SUMMER PADDLING POOL

DISCOVERY HIDE
Good view across bay. Mute Swans, Coot and Mallard

WOODLANDS
Mostly native trees. Woodland flowers such as Bluebells and Lords & Ladies

Trail Key
— Old Shoreline Walk

CLOSET HIDE
Panoramic view across Closet Bay. Herons, Terns, Grebes and Mallard

KINNEGO HIDE
Our best hide with great views of the reedbeds. Great Crested Grebes, Little Grebe and a range of ducks

