

# WOODLAND WANDER

## Woodland Wander

Distance approximately ½ a mile (800m)

This is a short woodland trail following the pine cone symbol on the marker posts. The route is approximately ½ a mile (800m) and takes approximately twenty minutes to complete.

1. On leaving the Centre turn right over the bridge and follow the gravel path by the trees at the side of the pond.



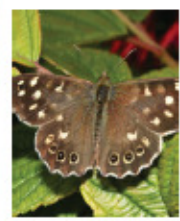
2. The area around the Discovery Centre pond has been planted with grasses and wild flowers. Willow and Birch trees have also been planted along the edge of the pond. The Willows are coppiced each winter with new shoots appearing during the summer months and the cut stems being used for sculptures and art projects.

3. Continue past the play park and towards the woodland.

4. The area of woodland you are about to enter is fairly young, with most of the trees having been planted within the past 40 years. The trees are mainly alder, a species which grows well in the wet soils close to the Lough shore. Alder trees are unusual in that they are the only deciduous broadleaved trees which have cones. The seeds found within the cones are an important food source for many species of woodland birds such as Blue Tits, Siskins, Redpolls and Chaffinches. Some Willow and Oak trees are intermixed amongst the Alders.



5. Take a detour to Croaghan Hide. This hide looks out over Croaghan Island, an important nesting and sheltering site for many species of wildfowl. Cormorants, Black Headed and Black Backed Gulls are regularly seen on the rocks to the right of the islands. The Cormorants are most notable as they stay motionless with their wings outstretched as they dry. Tufted Duck, Coot, Great Crested Grebes and Golden-eye (winter months only), may also be seen from this hide.



Rejoin the main path and continue to point 6.

6. Take the path to the left at this point.

7. The former shoreline of Lough Neagh can be seen here as the gradient of the path increases. The ridge running across the path denotes the former shoreline of the Lough prior to the lowerings of the water

levels which have taken place since 1850. The original water level of Lough Neagh would have reached the top of the slope.



8. From April to May, the woodland floor is densely covered with Bluebells, Lesser Celandine and Lords and Ladies. These flower and set seed before the leaves are on the trees, making maximum use of the sunlight reaching the woodland floor. The dense thickets of Blackthorn and Hawthorn are home to a wide range of nesting song birds usually in fine voice throughout early summer.



9. Oak, Maple, Birch and Beech are found on the higher areas of ground where the soils are drier. This area of woodland is home to many species of woodland bird, numerous insects and butterflies and some larger mammals such as rabbits and foxes.

10. Following the path around to the left there are some piles of branches and dead wood from fallen trees. These are known as habitat piles and provide sheltering and nesting sites for small birds such as Robins and Wrens. They are also home to many insects feeding on the dead and decaying timber. Look out for fungi growing on the dead wood and amongst the leaf litter. Extensive drifts of Bluebells cover the ground in spring accompanied by their wonderful scent.



Make your way back to the Centre. If you have seen anything unusual or have any questions about Oxford Island National Nature Reserve please feel free to ask at reception.

For further information please telephone or e-mail us.

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## WALKING GUIDE

# OXFORD ISLAND



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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

## WOODLANDS

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

## DISCOVERY HIDE

Good view across bay. Mute Swans, Coot and Mallard

## Trail Key

Woodland Wander

## 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



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