**Explore Cothill: the most diverse wildlife area in Oxfordshire**

Starting in Wootton, this 5 kilometre circular walk takes in three BBOWT nature reserves: Dry Sandford Pit, Parsonage Moor and Lashford Lane Fen

- 5.3 km/3⅓ miles (about 2 hours)
- Optional extension of 3.2 km/2 miles (about 1¼ hours)
- There are paths around each of the reserves for additional exploration

**How to get to the start**

Postcode: OX13 6DN  Grid ref: SP 474 012

By bus: there is an hourly service from Oxford (including the train station) and Abingdon to Wootton Monday–Saturday; Traveline: 0870 6082608 or www.traveline.org.uk

By car: there is parking at Wootton shops, and limited parking at Dry Sandford Pit and Lashford Lane Fen Nature Reserves

By bike: the start of the walk is 8 miles from Oxford train station

_Dry Sandford Pit has been created out of an old limestone quarry. A ring of sandy cliffs create a secluded spot where nature and geology are both on show. The cliff face reveals ancient fossils laid down during the era of the dinosaurs. Now the cliff is used as a home by hundreds of solitary bees and wasps. The foot of the cliff is carpeted with lichens, wild flowers and fungi._

_Dry Sandford Pit Nature Reserve_

_Free from the cliff, Parsonage Moor supports more than 300 species of plant, including water mint. The peaty ground and calcium-rich water create a mix of soil types that allow this huge number of plants to flourish. A combination of fen, reedbed, open water and wet woodland provides the right conditions for insects like the scarlet tiger moth, and birds like the cuckoo._

_Parsonage Moor Nature Reserve_

_This small, but amazingly diverse, wet valley is a great place to explore all year round. The bird hide provides views over the reedbed, where reed buntings overwinter. If you are lucky, you might hear the pig-like squeals of water rail. The large quantities of dead wood support all manner of insects. Listen out for the ‘plop’ of the water vole along the brook._

_Lashford Lane Fen Nature Reserve_

_Hitchcopse Pit is an old sandpit which hosts a diverse range of plants and insects. In summer, marbled white and common blue butterflies flit between the flowers, while solitary bees and wasps burrow into the sand. Sand-loving plants like viper’s-bugloss flourish here. The picturesque pond also has thriving populations of newts and dragonflies._

_Hitchcopse Pit Nature Reserve_

_Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)_

BBOWT relies on the support of our members to help us look after local wildlife. By joining BBOWT you can help to secure the future of special landscapes like Cothill Fen. [Join us today!](http://www.bbowt.org.uk)
The walk starts and ends in Wootton on Besselsleigh Road. Start by taking the bridleway between the shops and community centre.

**Stage 1: setting off**

Take the bridleway between shops and community centre. Where a road comes in from the right, turn left. As the path becomes a road, continue straight to pass ‘Arthur Evans Close’ sign on your right. Turn right onto the footpath to Lashford Lane. When you come to a road (Lashford Lane), cross and take the tarmac lane ‘The Field’. Behind Dry Sandford School, turn left onto a footpath. Leave Dry Sandford Pit by the entrance. Turn left and continue into Cothill village. When you come to a pub on your left, turn right onto the footpath opposite. Follow the edge of Cothill House School playing fields for 300 metres to find Parsonage Moor Nature Reserve on your right.

**Stage 2: to Dry Sandford Pit**

Come to a road and turn right. Follow the road through Dry Sandford village to Cothill Road. Turn right and after 100 metres, you will see Dry Sandford Pit Nature Reserve on your left.

**Stage 3: to Parsonage Moor**

To visit Hitchcopse Pit Nature Reserve go to Extension 1.

From Parsonage Moor, turn left to retrace your steps for 50 metres with the playing field on your right. Turn left along a footpath to continue to a brook, and follow the path that runs along the left of a fence. Come out of the woods into an area of reeds. Continue through the reeds into another wood (the ground becomes very uneven here). At the end of the log path, fork left and continue to a stile.
Stage 5: along the lakes
Go over the stile and continue along the path, keeping the conifer plantation to your right. Go through an opening in the fence to arrive on the edge of a field. Continue straight onto the track along the field edge. Just before you come to a small patch of trees to the right of the track (at the point where a path comes in from the left), take a sharp right off the track onto a footpath across a field.

Stage 6: through the fields
Continue straight ahead through a field, walking past the end of a row of trees. Climb over a stile into a wooded area. Cross a brook and then go over another stile into grassland. Follow the path to a gate. Go through the gate and continue until you come to the end of a driveway, which takes you to Church Lane. Turn left through Dry Sandford. As the lane bends to the right, take the footpath to the left, around the back of the school. At the tarmac lane, turn left and then right onto a footpath.

Stage 7: to Lashford Lane Fen
Follow the footpath between the houses. Go over a stile and continue in the same direction across grassland. Go over a stile onto Lashford Lane. Turn left, following the pavement for 150 metres to Lashford Lane Fen Nature Reserve.

Extension 1: Parsonage Moor
Leave Parsonage Moor and turn right to continue on the footpath. Follow the path along the edge of the woods. After the path bears right at Hitchcopse Farm, walk 100 metres to a junction of footpaths. Turn left and follow the path into the grassland, then turn right to follow the path along the woodland edge. After around 200 metres continue into the woodland. At a crossroads in the path continue straight over.

Extension 2: to Hitchcopse Pit
At a T-junction take the left hand turn and follow the path for around 100 metres until you see the entrance to Hitchcopse Pit on your left. Enter through the metal kissing gate and follow the path into the reserve.

Extension 3: return
Continue on for 500 metres, then turn turn left onto an asphalt track by a house. After 200 metres, turn right onto the footpath across the field to the wooded ponds. Go over a stile and continue to a track. Turn right, then after 20 metres, turn left onto a footpath. Go to Stage 6 above.

Leave Lashford Lane Fen and turn left. Continue to Besselsleigh Road and turn right to return to Wootton shops.