

Cothill Fen Wild Walk

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



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/3½ 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



To protect the wildlife, no dogs are allowed at Parsonage Moor or Lashford Lane Fen.



Please keep dogs on short leads at Dry Sandford Pit and Hitchcose Pit.



Cothill Fen: a Special Area of Conservation

Cothill Fen, the largest area of alkaline fen in central England, is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). As part of this SAC, BBOWT's nature reserves at Dry Sandford Pit, Parsonage Moor and Lashford Lane are a nationally important collection of wildlife sites.

Cothill Fen supports many species that depend on fen and are consequently very scarce, including over 100 rare or notable species. The southern damselfly, for instance, is nationally and internationally rare and has suffered a 30% decline in its UK distribution since 1960. It has been recorded at both Dry Sandford Pit and Parsonage Moor.

Fenland requires careful management with a specially tailored regime of grazing. Left alone, the fen would soon grow over with scrubby bushes and then trees, which would dry out the pools of water that support the fen wildlife. BBOWT has introduced livestock to keep the vegetation under control, so that the orchids and other special fen plants and animals will continue to thrive here.

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!](#)

Dry Sandford Pit Nature Reserve



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.

Parsonage Moor Nature Reserve



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.

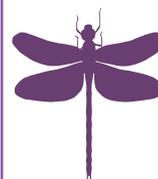
Lashford Lane Fen Nature Reserve



This small, but amazingly diverse, wet valley is a great place to explore all year round. The bird

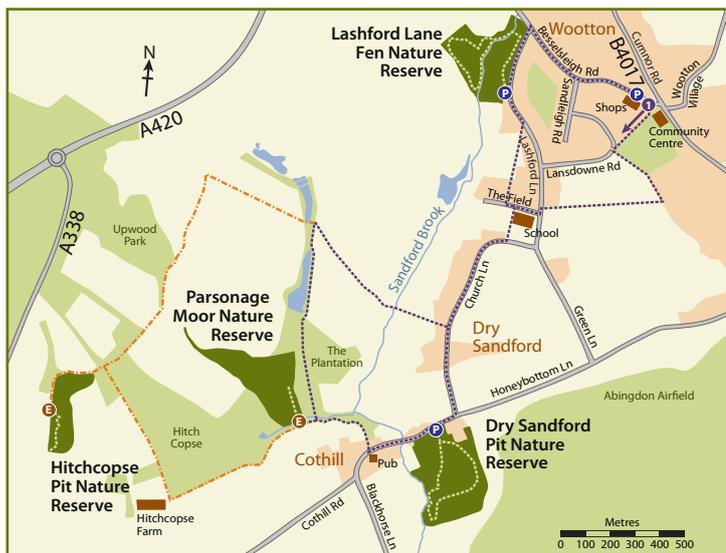
hide provides views over the reedbed, where reed buntings overwinter. If you are lucky, you might hear the pig-like squeals of water rail. The large quantities of dead wood support all manner of insects. Listen out for the 'plop' of the water vole along the brook.

Hitchcose Pit Nature Reserve



Hitchcose Pit is an old sandpit which hosts a diverse range of plants and

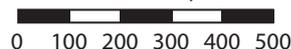
insects. In summer, marbled white and common blue butterflies flit between the flowers, while solitary bees and wasps burrow into the sand. Sand-loving plants like viper's-bugloss flourish here. The picturesque pond also has thriving populations of newts and dragonflies.



The walk starts and ends in Wootton on Besselsleigh Road. Start by taking the bridleway between the shops and community centre.

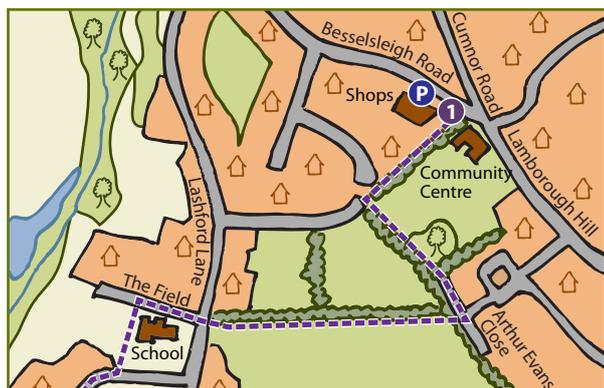
- Circular walk (5.3 km)
- Hitchcose extension (3.2 km)
- Nature Reserve Wildlife Walk
- Start of section described
- Parking
- Nature Reserve entrance
- BBOWT Nature Reserve
- Green spaces
- Town

Scale for small maps (metres)



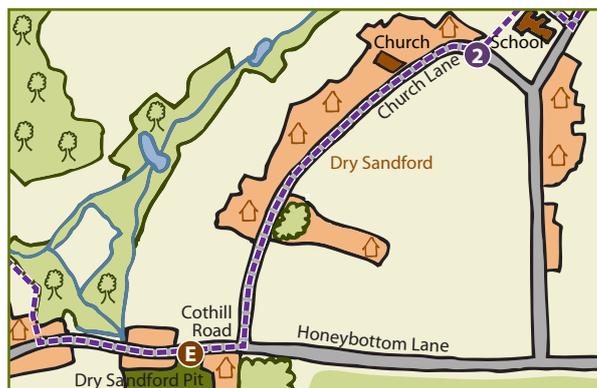
Stage 1: setting off

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.



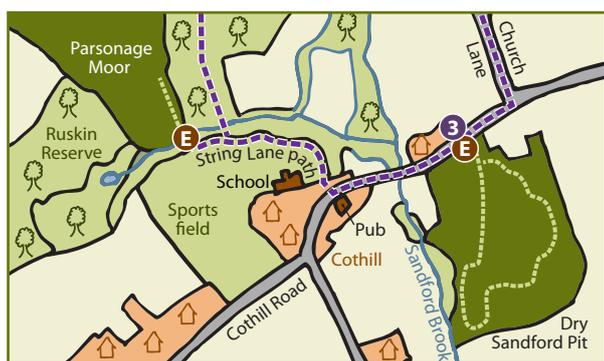
Stage 2: to Dry Sandford Pit

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

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 4: into the woods

To visit Hitchcose 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.



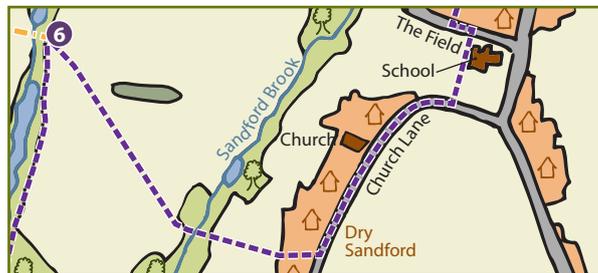
Stage 5: along the lakes

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.



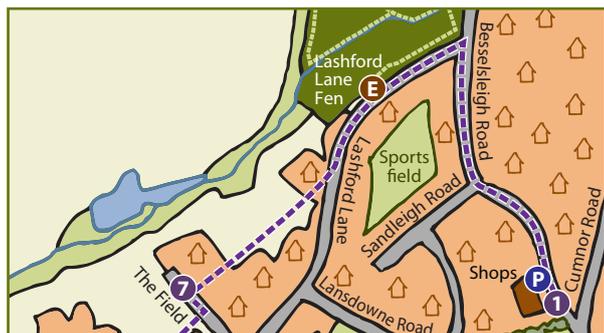
Stage 6: through the fields

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

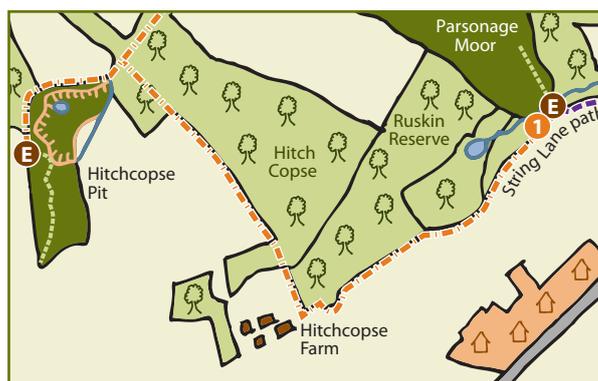
Follow the footpath between the houses. Go over a stile and continue in the same direction across grassland. Go over a stile onto Lashford Lane. Turn left, following the pavement for 150 metres to Lashford Lane Fen Nature Reserve.



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

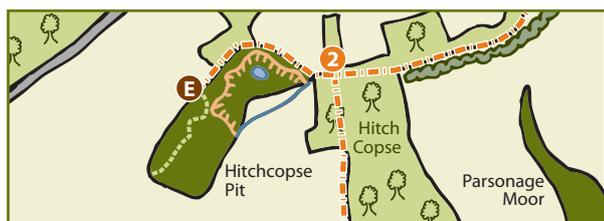
Extension 1: Parsonage Moor

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.



Exit through the metal kissing gate, turn right and retrace your steps along the path, continuing straight on at the T-junction.

Extension 3: return

Continue on for 500 metres, then 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.

