

Dunsdon to Vealand Farm Wild Walk



Details

Approx time: Three hours

Approx length: Four miles
(6.4km)

Terrain: Level, some rough
ground

Start: Dunsdon National Nature
Reserve (OS map SS 302 081)
or Vealand Farm nature reserve
(OS map SS 288 068)

Child friendly: Suitable for
children with fairly level path

Dog friendly: Dogs on leads

Refreshments: None available,
bring packed lunch

Public Transport: None nearby



Culm grassland at Dunsdon nature reserve (Gary Pilkington)

Species to look out for

- Barn owl
- Devil's-bit scabious
- Lesser butterfly orchid
- Grey heron
- Roe deer
- Purple hairstreak butterfly
- Golden-ringed dragonfly
- Marsh fritillary butterfly (right)
- Meadowsweet
- Flag iris
- Willow
- Marsh cinquefoil
- Marsh thistle
- Marbled white butterfly
- Hazel
- Purple moor grass



Marsh fritillary (Gary Pilkington)

Introduction

Visit Devon Wildlife Trust's flagship Culm grassland site, Dunsdon National Nature Reserve and its neighbour Vealand Farm nature reserve connected by the stunning Bude Canal. See the Culm grassland meadows, then wander the winding historic waterway before taking a look at the ongoing restoration work at Vealand Farm nature reserve with its new network

of ponds, hedges and meadows.

Although level there is some rough ground but it is well worth exploring the wider reserve to see if you can spot the rare marsh fritillary or a swooping barn owl! The best time to do this walk is between May to September when the Culm meadows are at their best.

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Directions

1) Dunsdon National Nature Reserve is south of the village of Dunsdon, just before Gains Cross (grid ref SS 302 080). The entrance to the reserve car park is through a gate on the west side of the small lane. Drive up the driveway and park.

At the reserve entrance sign, turn left and follow the easy access boardwalk through the wet woodland, heading west.

2) Stop at the viewpoint where you can occasionally hear the harsh 'frank' calls from a heronry nearby. Cross the open marshy Culm grassland towards the Bude Canal (cattle may be grazing here). It can be very muddy, especially by the canalside gate.

The Culm grassland meadows are best to visit between May to September when the meadows are full of wildflowers, butterflies and dragonflies.

3) Cross the small bridge over the overgrown canal. Here you can either access the main Culm grassland fields of Dunsdon reserve or turn left and follow the towpath on the west side of the canal heading south all the way to Vealand Farm nature reserve.

4) The Old Bude Canal last carried tub-boats 100 years ago, transporting lime-rich sea-sand to improve the local

acid farmland soil. The canal today is a quiet place, great for wildlife, containing rushes and iris, and lined with meadowsweet, marsh cinquefoil and broad-leaved helleborine. Find out more about the canal at www.bude-canal-trust.co.uk

After you pass a dark conifer woodland on your right, you can glimpse Vealand Farm nature reserve through the willows.

5) When you reach a very small stone bridge with a sign to Vealand Farm nature reserve and car park, turn right and leave the canal. Turn left and follow a track parallel to the canal and enter the meadows (cattle may be grazing here). These fields are being restored to Culm grassland. The mature hedgerows give this area a more traditional feel. Return to Vealand Farm nature reserve car park and explore the new paths through the restored Culm grassland in front of you (cattle may be grazing here). New ponds have been created to encourage wildlife including dragonflies.

Return to Vealand Farm nature reserve car park and the canal towpath. Retrace your steps along the canal, back to Dunsdon National Nature Reserve car park.

You can also start the walk from Vealand Farm nature reserve car park (SS 288 068, EX22 7JY).

