

# Dunsdon to Vealand Farm Wild Walk



**Devon**  
Wildlife Trust

## 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

This walk takes you from Devon Wildlife Trust's Dunsdon National Nature Reserve, along the now disused Bude Canal, on land owned and managed by the Bude Canal Trust, before reaching Vealand Farm nature reserve. After enjoying Culm grassland at Dunsdon you then wander along the historic (disused) waterway before arriving at Vealand Farm with its grassland meadows, ponds and hedges.

Although the walk is level, it involves rough, uneven ground which can be wet and muddy in parts. Look out for barn owls (all year) and rare marsh fritillary butterflies (in summer). The best time to visit is between May and September when Culm grasslands are at their colourful best.

## Contact details

Devon Wildlife Trust  
Cricklepit Mill  
Commercial Road  
Exeter  
EX2 4AB  
01392 279244  
contactus@devonwildlifetrust.org  
www.devonwildlifetrust.org

## 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 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. The Bude Canal Trust owns and looks after the historic waterway. To find out more about its history go to [www.bude-canal-trust.co.uk](http://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).

