

Bog Meadows

Photograph courtesy of The Ulster Wildlife Trust



Route description

This route is through an area of floodplain, which provides a fantastic oasis for wildlife in the city. It mainly follows level stone paths and a wheelchair friendly route is available.

Distance

1.1 miles 1.7 km.

Average Time

30 - 40 mins.

Access

By bus - Metro Services: 10 A-F.

By car - Car park at bottom of Milltown Row. Entrance signposted off Falls Road.

Trail Route

From the car park follow the path to the left of the playing fields.

Cross the footbridge over the Ballymurphy Stream, then take the path on your left. This leads around the perimeter of the site past some willow trees with the Bog Meadows **(1)** on the right.

The path continues adjacent to some houses and near the M1 motorway. Around the site there are viewing platforms **(2)** which allow you to pause and appreciate the site's rich biodiversity and the views of the Belfast Hills.

Follow the path until you reach a junction then turn right alongside the main pond **(3)**; off to the right is another viewing mound and platform. Cross another footbridge and turn right out around the meadows.

The path runs alongside a drainage channel **(4)** on your left and another viewing mound on your right. The path then turns right with willow trees between the path and Milltown Cemetery **(5)**.

At the next junction turn left which leads you to the car park via a steep hill. Disabled users should keep right and follow the gravel paths around the playing fields back to the car park.



History

The Bog Meadows once covered an area of about 400 acres of the floodplain of the Blackstaff River. This was lush farmland, used for hay-making and grazing in summer and flooded in winter providing a haven for wildlife, such as corncrake. However, the expansion of Belfast in the 19th century saw increasing encroachment by housing and other developments. In the 1960s construction of the motorway, culverting the river and large-scale infilling, stopped flooding and further restricted the site.

A local group, 'Friends of The Bog Meadows', who later became affiliated to the Ulster Wildlife Trust, campaigned for many years for the protection of the meadows. Financial aid from various sources allowed the acquisition of the site by the Ulster Wildlife Trust, and to its development as a Nature Reserve.

Things of Interest

Bog Meadows (1)

This 19 hectare (47 acre site) is now a Local Nature Reserve. It is all that remains of the once extensive wetlands created by the flooding of the Blackstaff River.

Today the reserve is managed by the Ulster Wildlife Trust. It contains woodland and dry meadows as well as the low-lying marshes.

Viewing Mounds (3)

These provide excellent views over the ponds and meadows, the city and hills beyond.

Pond (3)

Open water was created to provide habitat for waterfowl and other birdlife.

Drainage channels (4)

The drains across the site are home to many aquatic plants, e.g. marsh marigold and watercress, and animals e.g. newts and frogs.

Milltown Cemetery (5)

This cemetery, owned by the Catholic Church was consecrated in 1870. It contains unmarked graves for over 80,000 victims of the 1918 flu pandemic.

Look out for

- sedge warblers singing in the reed beds in spring and summer.
- hedgerow plants, such as woody nightshade and guelder rose.
- snipe over-wintering in the marsh areas.

For more information see the UWT Bog Meadows Nature Reserve leaflet.