

Walton Lake



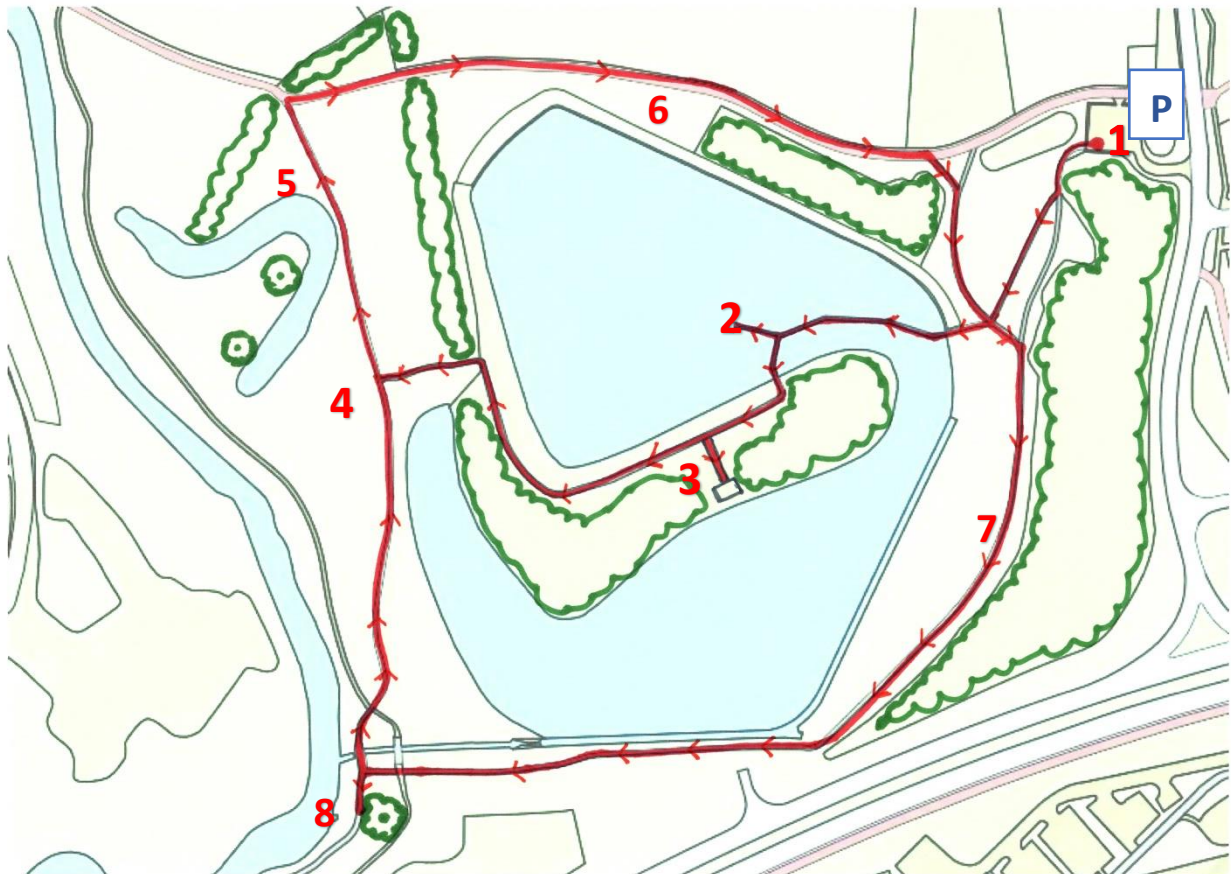
Milton Keynes Natural History Society

Walton Lake Self-Guided Walk

Entrance grid reference: SP879369 Post Code MK6 3BQ (nearest) Turn right off H8 Standing Way onto Newport road and the car park is first on the left.

Starting point: Car Park

Length: Approx 0.75miles



This walk is a figure of eight which offers plenty of variations if you want to shorten it, but it is an easy route on good paths. It is less than a mile so will not take very long but that depends on how long you stop en route! It is best done on a warm summer's day when you are likely to see and hear the most wildlife!

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1. Head off from the car park, down the hill and along the boardwalk to the half hide out in the centre of the lake.
2. Here you are surrounded by reeds and should be able to hear a few birds churring away in the reeds. These are likely to be sedge or reed warblers, which are little brown birds that arrive in our country to breed during the summer months. A moorhen might shoot off into the reeds as you arrive - it is the size of a small hen and black. The tiniest mouse in the UK also lives in these reeds – it is called the harvest mouse and climbs about using its long tail to wind around the stems. This stops it from falling in the water. You would be very lucky indeed to see one.
3. Retrace your steps a short distance and turn right following the path round until you reach the other hide on your left. This half of the lake is more open and you might see swans, mallard and coots on the open water.
4. As you move on watch out for grass snakes (completely harmless) who live around the lake and hunt for toads and frogs. You might be lucky enough to see one basking on the piles of woodchip or the paths, but they are very shy creatures and will quietly slither away if they hear you coming. So remember to stay quiet and tread lightly!! Rounding the corner you arrive at a meadow area that is full of insects in the summer months. On a sunny day there will be butterflies, spiders, day flying moths, grasshoppers, damselflies and dragonflies. Damselflies are like little flying sticks, usually blue in colour and they rest on grass stems with their wings behind their backs. Dragonflies on the other hand are bigger and faster fliers and when they do land they rest with their wings outstretched. See if you can spot any?
Later in the summer the meadow is full of grasshoppers and if you listen carefully you can hear them chirping or churring away. Can everyone in your group hear them? If not, who can't and why might that be? There are also some lovely meadow plants in this area such as greater burnet, birds foot trefoil and knapweed etc. See how many different types of flowers you can spot from the path but be careful not to trample on the meadow.
5. Turn right along the path and watch out for a small U-shaped body of water on your left. This is called an ox bow lake and is formed when the river winds so much that it eventually cuts off a loop of river and takes the shortest route again.
6. Follow along and turn right until you come to an open area. Stand here and listen quietly for a minute. How many different bird songs can you hear? You will hear more on an early Spring morning than in the heat of a summers day as the male birds sing to defend their territories in the morning. If you hear a very loud explosive song coming from a bush it is likely to be a tiny



Broad-bodied Chaser © Peter Hassett



Bird's Foot Trefoil © Peter Hassett

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brown bird called a Cetti's warbler, but even if this is not calling there should be many other types of bird song.

7. Follow the path, crossing over your previous route, and head slightly uphill to look down to your right onto the lake below.
8. Carry on down and round and turn left where the paths join by the river. Almost immediately on your left you will see a huge tree. This is a black poplar and is quite a special tree. The females produce huge amounts of fluffy cotton-like seeds in late summer which can make quite a mess, so they are often cut down. With few female trees left in the country there are very few new baby trees produced so they are becoming very rare. This big specimen is probably a male!

Retrace your steps to the car park by whichever route you prefer keeping your eyes and ears open for any interesting wildlife along the way.

To find out more about Walton Lake see our page of information in the Wildlife Sites section of our website <http://mknhs.org.uk/walton-lake/>

If you would like to check for any recent sightings of interesting species at this site, or would like to report what you see, go to <http://mknhs.org.uk/recent-sightings/>

Enjoy your walk!



Please remember to respect the wildlife you see. Take only pictures leave only footprints.