Guide to Fermanagh’s Natural Heritage Trails
Explore, Discover, Enjoy!
fermanagh-lakelands.com
Welcome

Explore Fermanagh’s rich biodiversity through this informative guide which will bring you through some of the most beautiful trails in Ireland. Whether walking, cycling or driving you’ll find something for everyone while marvelling at the variety of wildlife and species that are in abundance here.

Explore the mountains, limestone pavements and cliffs, wooded river valleys, sandstone scarps as well as unspoilt hay meadows, hundreds of small lakes, and not forgetting the large expanses of Upper and Lower Lough Erne, with their numerous bays and islands.

The abundance of wildlife including wild flowers, birds, butterflies and mammals can be attributed to its geology and the relatively undisturbed landscape that Fermanagh is famous for. Orchid-covered roadside verges, hedges white with the blossoms of hawthorn, damp fields pink with ragged robin are just a few of the things you may see.

Skylarks and cuckoos call in the uplands while coots and great-crested grebes build their nests in reedy bays. In winter, Fermanagh has other attractions with hundreds of migrant wild-fowl flying in to escape the Arctic cold. Whooper swans, wigeon, and teal occur in large numbers.

We would like to acknowledge the following for their input into the production of this guide: Fermanagh District Council, Robert & Hannah Northridge, RSPB, Northern Ireland Forest Service, National Trust and Northern Ireland Environment Agency. All pictures are copyright and may not be reproduced for any other purpose.
Enniskillen, an island town surrounded by the River Erne, has a wide variety of wildlife and is the perfect place to explore from your door! Even otters have been sighted around the island. There are several easily accessible sites for viewing wildlife; no car is necessary; all you have to do is just walk, look, listen and smell.

Riverside Walk, Cornagrade, Enniskillen

Starting from the Queen Elizabeth Bridge, follow the riverside path northwards. In springtime this track is bordered by banks of the white-flowered greater stitchwort, stands of pink hairy willowerb and the umbellifer cow parsley. Common and black-headed gulls winter here and they are occasionally joined by Iceland and Mediterranean gulls. Large numbers of mallard and mute swans gather, expecting to be fed at the Round ‘O’ Park. Kingfishers can sometimes be seen skimming past while great crested and little grebes dive for food. The Back Lough has a wintering flock of tufted duck while in late spring a churring sound from the reed beds announces the return of the sedge warbler, a migrant which has wintered in Africa. The Devenish Local Nature Reserve at the western end of Back Lough has wet sedge and rush-rich meadows where common spotted orchids abound and reed buntings can be seen.

How to get there

- This walk is situated adjacent to the Cornagrade housing estate. It is easily accessed from Enniskillen town centre on the A32 across Johnston Bridge; once you cross this bridge take the first left where the path begins. This is a beautiful linear walk, the footpath which runs along the Lough Shore is 800m/0.5 miles long. Once you reach the playground, you may turn and return back to the town centre or alternatively a further 400m along the path lies a nature reserve.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- 800m/0.5 miles Linear Walk, even surface.
- Best accessed on foot or by bicycle.
- Parking available in various town centre car parks.
- Wheelchair accessible.
- Play areas.
Castle Coole National Trust

On the outskirts of Enniskillen, the National Trust estate at Castle Coole offers mature woodland carpeted with snowdrops, then bluebells, and patches of spring flowers, such as primroses, violets, early purple orchids, wood sorrel and wood anemones. The grasslands along the drives are species-rich with numerous grasses, common spotted orchids, and the occasional cowslip, greater butterfly and bird’s nest orchids. Buzzards, and long-eared owls are resident on the estate, while in winter whooper swans and tufted ducks can be seen from the walk around Lough Coole. Spring brings sand martins and house martins, and summer, migrant willow warblers, chiff chaffs and blackcaps. This site is also rich in dragonflies and butterflies: keep a look-out for the large brown hawker dragonfly, peacock and tortoiseshell butterflies. On summer evenings, bats swoop low feeding on insects along the tracks near the lake.

How to get there

- By road on A4 Enniskillen – Belfast road, approximately 1 mile/1.6km from town centre on left.
- By cycle NCN91.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- A number of looped walks: Lake walk 1 mile/1.6km, Beech Wood Walk 0.5 miles/0.8km, Gortgonnel Walk 2.5 miles/4km. All walks with even surface. Steps provide access to some of the walks.
- Car park with separate mobility parking and drop-off point.
- Children’s play area.
- Front-carrying baby slings for loan. Baby back-carriers admitted.
- Baby-changing facilities and accessible toilet.
- Tallow tea-room and gift shop.

• Enniskillen, BT74 6JY
• Tel: 028 6632 2690
• Email: castlecoole@nationaltrust.org.uk
• OS Grid Ref: H245431
• For house opening times and prices check website or call to confirm.
• Grounds 10am to 7pm during spring/summer.
West Fermanagh Uplands

West Fermanagh is particularly rich in natural history with many notable habitats and species in abundance. It is part of the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark, the area designated by UNESCO for its exceptional geological heritage of international importance. The area boasts some of the most scenic viewpoints in Ireland as well as a variety of walking and driving routes which give visitors the opportunity to explore the wealth of biodiversity in this area. The next three trails are all within easy reach of each other and are largely contained within the perimeters of the Lough Navar Forest, the benefits of which include a network of trails criss-crossing the forest along with parking, picnic areas and interpretation panels.

Lough Navar Forest, Scenic Drive & Walking Trails part of the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark

Lough Navar Forest near Derrygonnelly contains lakes, peat bogs, exposed cliffs and some amazing viewpoints. The north-facing sandstone scarps are botanically important for arctic-alpine species, most notably one-sided wintergreen, yellow mountain saxifrage, shady horsetail, holly fern and green spleenwort. Hen harriers, sparrowhawks, jays and ravens may be spotted throughout the year while crossbills and cuckoos also occur in season. Woodcock breed in the clearings while smaller birds, which are more likely to be heard than seen, include coal tits, goldcrests, treecreepers, and siskins. Red deer and feral goats can be seen from the forest tracks. The area is rich in insects with common hawker and black darter dragonflies being frequently seen while in August peacock butterflies occur in large numbers feeding on devil’s-bit scabious. Within Lough Navar Forest are many way-marked walking trails highlighting short and longer walks. Particularly lovely is the Blackslee Waterfall trail which is edged with deciduous woodland and in springtime there are primroses, anemones, wild garlic, bluebells and violets.

Trail Information, Facilities & Access

- Open all year round forest operations permitting.
- Forest drive is a looped 7 miles/11.2km drive starting in the car park. The scenic drive peaks at the top of the Magho Cliffs, a fantastic scenic viewpoint overlooking Lower Lough Erne and out towards the Atlantic Ocean.
- Blackslee Waterfall Walk is a 3.8 miles/6.1km looped walk along forest tracks starting in the carpark at Aghameelan Viewpoint.
- Throughout this scenic drive are a number of car parks, picnic areas, viewpoints and information panels. There are also a number of trails and five waymarked walking routes along forest tracks and gravel paths.
- Access for fishing is also available.
Magho Cliffs Walk

The viewpoint is the stunning background for 2 way-marked walks: one a steep 1 mile/1.5km assent and the other a leisurely 0.4 miles/600m trail. Marvel at the magnificent views over Lower Lough Erne and the Erne estuary, with its islands and promontories. There are also panoramic views of Mullaghmore and Slieve League. A peregrine may swoop past, or a pair of ravens tumble over the cliffs. Along the path there are heathers and bilberry between which can be seen the yellow flowers of cow wheat. The path gives views over the spectacular Cliffs of Magho which are flanked on their lower slopes by the most species diverse woodland in Northern Ireland.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- Magho Viewpoint Walk: 0.4 miles/600m linear walk. Easily accessible gravel path, all the one level.
- Magho Cliffs Walk: 1 mile/1.5km linear assent or descent depending on whether you start at the top of the cliffs or from the A46 Enniskillen – Belleek Road below. A challenging, but rewarding walk.
- Carpark, picnic area and information panels.

The Lough Navar Lakes Walk

Around Loughs Glencreawan, Meenameen, Navar and Achork in spring, marsh marigolds are abundant around all lakes while in summer, when the lake levels are low, the exposed shorelines can be carpeted with pink ragged robin and the delicate white flowers of grass of parnassus. The lake edges have breeding common sandpipers which draw attention to themselves by their piping calls given as they fly off. Sand martins skim over the lakes: they sometimes nest in holes excavated in exposed peat banks. In winter whooper swan, wigeon and tufted duck can be spotted on the lakes.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- The Lough Navar Lakes walk is a looped walk 6.75 miles/11km in length along forest tracks and gravel paths.
- Part of this walk is a shorter 1.25 miles/2km looped walk skirting the shoreline of Lough Achork.

Correl Glen Nature Reserve

Opposite Lough Navar Forest entrance car park lies a delightful path through the Correl Glen. This ancient oak and birch woodland is cut through by the Sillees River which tumbles in a succession of waterfalls beside the path. Dippers occur on rocks in the river and the footprints and spraints of otter and pine marten have been found at its edge. If you’re lucky, you may catch a glimpse of a red squirrel moving between the trees. In May holly blue, small tortoiseshell and speckled wood butterflies can all be seen. The sandstone geology has encouraged a ground flora largely of mosses, wood-rush and bilberry, and a variety of ferns including the rare hay-scented buckler fern.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- A 1 mile/1.6km looped way marked walk.
  A narrow gravel path with some steep sections.
- Interpretive panel.
- Scenic views.
How Many Have You Seen?

- Common Hawker
- Peacock
- Four Spotted Chaser
- Silver Washed Fritillary
- Marsh Fritillary
- Flowering Rush
- Grass of Parnasuss
- Wild Garlic
- Yellow Flag Iris
- Common Frog
- Red Squirrel
- Stag
- Kingfisher
- Female Hen Harrier
- Whooper Swan
- Tufted Duck
- Scarlet Elf Cup
- Puff Ball
Upper Lough Erne contains numerous wooded islands, many miles of reed-fringed shores, and dozens of satellite lakes connected to the main lough by deep drainage channels rich with plants and insects. In winter Upper Lough Erne has internationally important numbers of whooper swans which arrive from Iceland. These are often visible on fields around Lisnaskea and close to Crom at Corlatt where Icelandic greylag geese are often present in the same field. There are numerous access points to Upper Lough Erne via a range of public jetties, many of which have facilities including picnic areas.

How to get there

• By road on Newtownbutler to Crom road, or follow signs from Lisnaskea (7 miles).
• Crom is next to the Shannon to Erne waterway. Public jetty at visitor centre.
• By Cycle NCN91.

Upper Lough Erne, Newtownbutler, BT92 8AP
Tel: 028 6773 8118
Email: crom@nationaltrust.org.uk
OS Grid Ref: H380255

Crom Estate National Trust

This breathtakingly beautiful landscape contains many habitats: parkland, lough shore, species-rich grassland, wet woodland and mature oak woodland. Over 400 species of plants and many mosses and lichens have been identified here and it is this botanical diversity that supports a wide diversity of animals; all eight species of Northern Ireland’s bats have been recorded while pine martens and red squirrels have made it their home.

Crom has twelve species of dragonflies and damselflies making it one of the top sites in Northern Ireland for this group of impressive invertebrates. Along the >

< water’s edge look out for plants such as cowbane, greater water-parsnip, yellow water lilies, and arrowhead. There are orchid rich wet meadows. In the tall wet fen, birds like the water rail breed.

At the Old Castle, as well as the historically-significant yew trees and box hedges, look out for ivy broomrape and parsley on the walls, sweet violets under the trees, and the white bells of summer snowflake down by the water’s edge.

The mature stands of oak trees are rich in woodland birds such as treecreepers, woodcock and long-eared owls, while garden warbler are best looked for in woodland glades where there is a moderate understorey for nesting. The Silver-washed fritillary butterfly is most likely to be seen in these glades while the rare purple hair streak butterfly has also been recorded on the mature oak.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

• There are many walks throughout the Crom Estate; the Wildlife Walk which is 4.2 miles/6.6km in length. The grounds are partly accessible by wheelchair. The grass and woodland pathways are free of slopes with reasonably smooth and level surfaces, but can be muddy.
• Afternoon tea available in the Visitor Centre.
• Gifts and souvenirs available to buy.
• Dogs on leads only please.
• Try fishing, camping or hiring a boat.
• Baby-changing facilities.
• Family activity packs and special family days.
• Mobility parking spaces, toilet facilities and access route to Old Castle area.

Opening Times

• Grounds 10am to 6pm during Spring/Summer: For opening times and prices for the Visitor Centre check website or call to confirm.
Lower Lough Erne is fringed by woodland growing on the shore that was exposed during drainage schemes from the 1800’s to the 1950s. This damp woodland is a haven for mixed flocks of tits and siskins in winter, and in spring is carpeted with primroses, violets, wild garlic and marsh marigolds. Some islands are wooded and have heronries and breeding woodcock, others are grazed and have important breeding populations of curlew, lapwing, redshank and snipe, while on the exposed rocky islands gulls, common terns and Sandwich terns breed. Speckled wood, green veined white and orange tip butterflies are commonplace; sheltered areas usually also have peacock and tortoiseshell and wherever there are mature oak and violet there is the possibility of seeing silver-washed fritillaries.

Ely Lodge Forest Walking Trails
part of the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark

Along these two looped walks you may see great crested and little grebe, tufted duck, mallard and mute swan, as well as flowering rush and tufted sedge that grow at the water’s edge. Bluebells and wood anemones are abundant in spring, while later in the summer broad leaved helleborines and bird’s nest orchids grow beside the path. Feral goats can sometimes be seen on the wooded offshore islands while red squirrels and pine martens reside in the area.

How to get there

- From Enniskillen take the A46 Shore road towards Belleek, continue past the golf club. Ely Lodge Forest car park is sign posted on the right hand side of the road around 5 miles from Enniskillen.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- Two waymarked walks: Lough Shore Walk, loop 1.4 miles/2.25km walk & Carrickreaagh Viewpoint Walk, loop 1.6 miles/2.6km. Both easy walks along forest tracks and gravel paths.
- Carpark, picnic area and information panel.
The many trails through this park will guide you through a variety of habitats: mature woodland, alder and willow carr and a rather fine wild flower meadow in front of the stable yard has cowslips and lesser butterfly orchids. There are several specially constructed dragonfly ponds.

How to get there

A series of three looped walking routes: yellow, red and blue, ranging in length from 5 miles/8km to 1 mile/1.6km. There is also a 6 miles/9.6km cycle route. These go through mature woodland and lakeside paths.

- Even surface.
- Car Parking.
- Cafe & Visitor Centre/Museum – seasonal opening, please phone ahead for times & prices.
- Picnic Area
- Interpretive Panels

Castle Archdale Country Park

There are lovely trails through the wooded peninsulas at the eastern end of the lake. The bluebells are spectacular in spring and a wide variety of wildfowl occur off shore. The lake shore walks have numerous tree species including less common species such as spindle, guelder rose, purging buckthorn and the endemic Irish whitebeam. Yews occur on rocky outcrops.

How to get there

- Sign-posted from the A4 Kesh to Belleek Road. The entrance to Castle Caldwell Forest Park is clearly signposted.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- There are three way marked walking routes along forest tracks and gravel paths: Castle Scenic Walk 0.3 miles/0.5km, Beechwood Walk 1.25 miles/2km, Rosssergole Point Walk 2.5 miles/4 km. All with even surface.
- Carpark with picnic area and information panel.
- Ruins of Castle Caldwell.
- Rosssergole viewpoint.
- RSPB Nature Reserve.
- Also accessible by boat via jetty.

Castle Archdale Meadow

Bluebells at Castle Caldwell

Irish Whitebeam

Irish Damselfly
Marlbank Scenic Loop
(between Florencecourt and Blacklion)

This stunning landscape is dominated by limestone hills which were laid down hundreds of millions of years ago when the landmass which now forms Fermanagh was under a tropical sea. Evidence for this can be found in the numerous crinoids, seashells and coral fossils present in these rocks. The Marlbank scenic loop gives access to this important limestone habitat which forms a fundamental part of the UNESCO endorsed Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark. Marble Arch Caves are the focal point for the wider Geopark area. The Geopark stretches from the rugged landscapes of the northern shore of Lower Lough Erne in Co. Fermanagh to the rolling lowlands of Lough Oughter in Co. Cavan.

Killykeeghan & Crossmurrin – Marlbank National Nature Reserve part of the Marble Arch Cave Global Geopark

How to get there

- The Nature Reserves can be accessed from the Marlbank Scenic Loop. A signposted car park is located approximately 1 mile/1.6km from the Marble Arch Caves Visitor Centre entrance.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- A short looped walk over a grass path on flat terrain with some obstacles and low hanging vegetation in hazel groves.
- Facilities include interpretation panels, picnic tables and a public toilet.
- On the site an old traditional cottage has been restored and is open to the public.

This nature reserve’s limestone grassland is managed through conservation grazing and is characterised by low growing plants such as thyme and bird’s foot trefoil. Bird’s foot trefoil is the food plant of the caterpillars of the rare dingy skipper butterfly, which can be found here in early summer together with the common blue and another rarity, the marsh fritillary butterfly. In places the limestone is overlain by patches of more acidic soils which, in early June, are swathed with pink heath-spotted orchids. Scattered lesser butterfly orchids also occur here, their flowers mimicking white moths which are thus lured to pollinate them. Rarities found here include field gentian and the small white mountain orchid. Hazel scrub has found a niche within the nature reserve as well. Here you might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a red squirrel, pine martens or Irish stoat. Cuckoos can be heard calling as they seek out meadow pipits’ nests in which to lay their eggs.

Killykeeghan National Nature Reserve

Marsh Fritillary Butterfly

Killykeeghan & Crossmurrin – Marlbank National Nature Reserve part of the Marble Arch Cave Global Geopark

How to get there

- The Nature Reserves can be accessed from the Marlbank Scenic Loop. A signposted car park is located approximately 1 mile/1.6km from the Marble Arch Caves Visitor Centre entrance.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- A short looped walk over a grass path on flat terrain with some obstacles and low hanging vegetation in hazel groves.
- Facilities include interpretation panels, picnic tables and a public toilet.
- On the site an old traditional cottage has been restored and is open to the public.
Cladagh Glen - Marlbank National Nature Reserve part of the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark

The main interest of the Cladagh River Glen is its geology with the Marble Arch and the cascades being the highlights of this water-sculptured valley. The wooded glen is very atmospheric and makes for a magical walk for adults and children alike with its twists and turns revealing yet another inspiring scene involving rock, water, trees and dappled sunshine. The glen had some fine planted trees of beech and various conifers, along with native hazels, ash and yew trees. In springtime anemones and wild garlic carpet the valley floor, while toothwort can be found growing as a parasite on the roots of some of the hazel trees. Dippers and grey wagtails can be seen on the rocks in the middle of the fast-flowing Cladagh River, while in late summer silver-washed fritillaries occur beside the path.

Cuilcagh Mountain part of the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark

Cuilcagh is a well established location for hill-walkers with an established network of trails that lead you in and around the Mountain Park. If reaching the summit is not for you, venturing someway into the park using one of the walking routes will give you a taste of the bleak beauty that can be found here. The trail to the summit of Cuilcagh crosses a number of distinct habitats, first limestone, then the extensive blanket bog and finally after a tumble of rocks the steep cliff to the summit.

At the beginning of the trail look to your right at the Monastir Gorge and notice the yew clinging to...
> its precipitous sides and the juniper beside the path. These were the first tree species to colonise Ireland at the end of the last Ice Age some 10,000 years ago. The vegetation colour dramatically changes from green to brown where the trail leaves the limestone and heads across the peat of the blanket bog, now cross-leaved heather, bog cotton and yellow bog asphodel are abundant and insectivorous sundew can be found on bare peat.

Meadow pipits, skylarks and hen harriers occur in this area while golden plover breed in small numbers on the bog. The steep north-facing scarp below the summit plateau and chasms on the plateau itself, have arctic-alpine plants: starry saxifrage, three species of clubmoss, mountain willow and Bigelow’s sedge. Foxes and Irish hares are frequently seen and in winter snow buntings have been recorded.

How to get there

- From Enniskillen take the Sligo road A4 for 3 miles before branching left onto the Swanlinbar road A32. Join the Florencecourt to Blacklion road where there is signage for the Marble Arch caves Visitor Centre and the Cuilcagh Mountain Park.

Walk Information, Facilities & Access

- The Cuilcagh Way is a way marked 20 miles/33km route. The more popular Legnabrocky section of the way, which will bring you to the summit and back and offers stunning views of the area is a linear 9 miles/15km linear walk which usually takes around 5 hours to complete, along vehicle tracks and blanket bog.
- Open all year round.
- Carpark, picnic area, information panel.

Further Information & Resources

Fermanagh Lakeland Tourism
www.fermanaghlakelands.com

Biodiversity NI
www.biodiversityni.com
Website maintained by Local Biodiversity Officers across Northern Ireland which includes details of events being held in their areas.

Fermanagh District Council
www.fermanagh.gov.uk/biodiversity

Fermanagh Red Squirrel Group
www.fermanaghredsquirrelgroup.com

Forest Service Northern Ireland
www.dardni.gov.uk/forestservice

Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark
www.marblearchcavesgeopark.com

National Trust
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/local-to-you/northern-ireland
A charity organisation that manages both built and natural heritage for everyone to enjoy.

Outdoor Recreation
www.outdoorrecreationni.com
(New name for CAAN)

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
www.rspb.org.uk/northernireland

Walk NI
www.walkni.com
Biodiversity
It’s in Your Hands

Spot the Alien

www.biodiversityni.com