



Onny Meadows Walks

Gentle strolls around the flat meadows and along the riverside, much on easy access trails.

The Onny Meadows are 30 acres of water meadows on the flood plain of the River Onny. Some areas still flood occasionally, although most of the water drains away fairly soon into the drainage ditches and ox bow ponds. Once an important grazing habitat for cattle, today the meadows are a wonderful resource for people to walk, relax, play and learn about the nature and heritage of the Shropshire Hills. We are even hoping to have animals grazing the meadows again from time to time!

There are many routes you can take to explore the Onny Meadows.

The full **Onny Meadows Trail** round the orchard, along the riverside and back to the centre is about **1½ miles** or 2km.

Shorter loops are possible:

- to **Kingfisher Corner**, the Forest School and Wild Play areas, over the bridge into the wild flower meadow and back to the Centre (about ¾ mile)
- to the **Oxbow Pools** and back round the wildflower meadow (about ½ mile)
- You can also visit the **Community Garden**.

There are **easy access trails** all the way to Kingfisher Corner and round the wild flower meadow as far as the bridge over to the wild play area. There is also a wheelchair accessible platform by the ponds.

There are **picnic benches** in the Community Garden, at Kingfisher Corner and on the far side of the oxbow pools. There are also benches in several other locations around the meadows.

You are welcome to take your dog on your walk but please pick up after it throughout the meadows. There are several bins on the trail.

7 On your right are shallow depressions which mark the previous course of the river. **See if you can spot the sculpture of a leaping salmon. Salmon and trout both swim in the River Onny.** Otters have very occasionally been sighted along this stretch of river too.

8 You can explore to the right around the Ash Coppice and across to the pools where there is an old picnic table.

9 Keeping on ahead you reach a wooded area which is used for forest school classes. **Children can explore, build, create and cook amongst the trees. Family activities and birthday parties are also held here.** Skirt round this to the right or left and you will find another woody area which is the wild play area – feel free to stop here to play for a while!

10 From here you may want to take the bridge over to the wild flower meadow and head back towards the Centre, via the meadow or ox bow pools. There is a platform over one of the pools – from which children often pond-dip for insects **The ox bow pools were deepened during the building of the Discovery Centre at the millennium. They support a great variety of nymphs and larvae, snails, worms and tadpoles. We have been designated a dragonfly hotspot.**

11 If you're happy to continue then find the path across the ditch and follow it leftwards back to the riverside. Here there are a number of nut trees.

12 On the right is another hay meadow. There are plans to develop a community growing project in this area. **You may be lucky to see a red kite hovering above – they are regularly seen above the meadows scavenging for food.**

13 After a short distance you will see the double holly hedge leading off to the right. This is another option if you want to loop back towards the centre at this point.

14 Otherwise carry on along the riverbank. You reach a number of ancient willow trees which have been pollarded. **Pollarding is when trees are pruned at the same height over many years. The prunings were used for basket weaving and for many other uses. There are also several lower 'scrapes' which flood when the river is high. These are wonderful for wildlife – especially birds who love digging for worms and insects in the mud.**

15 Eventually you reach the end of the meadows and the river disappears off under the noisy road bridge of the A49 above. Just a few metres further down the river is a large curved weir with a salmon ladder to allow the salmon to swim up river. There is a footpath along the other side of the river if you want to explore there another day. **The river joins the river Teme just before Ludlow and this joins the River Severn to flow into the sea in the Bristol Channel.**

16 Turn right to head along the fenceline back towards the Discovery Centre. You pass through a large group of plum trees and an area where many teasels grow. These are particularly favoured by goldfinches which love their seeds in the autumn.

17 Follow the path through the holly hedge and take one of the paths ahead, parallel to the road.

18 As you get back to the path alongside the large wildflower meadow you will see several grassy areas sloping up to your left and a mini look-out platform. **The hedge on your right was planted to illustrate change over time. The older the hedge the more species it will have in it (Hooper's Law). This timeline hedge has fewer species in the hedge as you walk along it towards the centre – as if you were walking back in time.** You can walk back to the Centre directly from here or turn right through the hedge to follow the path over to the Oxbow Pools.

19 From the Pools you can continue following the path, past the dipping platform and loop back to rejoin the path you headed out on.

20 The wildflower meadow looks glorious in the summer. **The yellow rattle flowers are vital for meadows as they are semi-parasitic, taking nutrients from vigorous grasses, allowing more wildflower species to thrive. It's called rattle as the seeds rattle in their pods when they are ripe in late summer. There is a willow sculpture of a dragonfly in the meadow which is fun to explore close up.**

When you reach the scrambling logs again you will see the Centre ahead of you. **Do come in for some refreshment after your walk!**

There is also a geocache trail and an orienteering trail around the meadows which you might like to try on your next visit.



Onny Meadows Trail

1 Start from the Discovery Centre and walk to the meadows, through the Mammoth's Tusks. **While the Shropshire mammoth skeletons were found at Condover near Shrewsbury, they will have wandered through this area too as the ice retreated 14,000 years ago.**

2 At the next junction you can turn left to go into the Community Garden. (Many of the longer Discovery Walks head off in this direction). **There are over 30 plots in the garden which are tended by local people in Craven Arms.**

3 At the next junction keep left and you see the stack of scrambling logs ahead of you and the short easy access circuit where many children learn to ride their bicycles.

4 Heading along to the left you pass Ned's Shed. **A small shack in the 1960s, made into a music instrument as an arts project. Give it a play and hear the different tones.**

5 At the gate keep left and ahead and you'll see the orchard field – a large oval area. This contains many fruit trees with local varieties of apples, pears and there are even some medlars. **Fruit has been an important part of local diets for centuries. There are some specific local varieties of fruit such as the Shropshire Prune damson. Medlars, which look like a small brown apple, may have been introduced to the area by the Romans. They were very popular in medieval times but are less well known or cooked now.** You can either go round to the left hand side of the orchard, through the withy beds of coppiced willows, or keep to the easy access trail ahead which is a more direct route to Kingfisher Corner.

6 At Kingfisher Corner you reach the River Onny. **The source of the Onny is right on the English-Welsh border. It rises and falls very quickly according to the levels of rain falling on the border hills. Fresh Water Pearl Mussels once lived in the river but there are almost none left today – just a few in the Clun river nearby. If you're very lucky you may catch a glimpse of a kingfisher racing by as this is a favourite stretch of river for them.** Turn right and follow the riverside downstream.

7 After about 100 metres you may be able to see the ruins of an old mill in the river bed. **There was a water-powered undershot corn mill (Newton Mill) situated on the nearside.**

Continued overleaf

grow
cook
Learn

Shropshire Hills
Discovery Centre

**Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre,
the home of Grow Cook Learn**

School Road, Craven Arms, SY7 9RS
+44 (0)1588 676070
info@shropshirehillsdiscoverycentre.co.uk
www.shropshirehillsdiscoverycentre.co.uk



Grow Cook Learn is a registered charity, connecting people to the food, history and landscape of the Shropshire Hills AONB, providing opportunities to local people and visitors to learn and discover.

Visit the Centre for the Shropshire Hills exhibition and film, our cafe which serves delicious home cooked meals and for walks through 30 acres of riverside meadows.

There are regular bus and train services to Craven Arms.

The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is recognised as one of Britain's finest landscapes. It's one of 46 AONBs in the UK.

Walks produced with support from:

Shropshire Hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

mfg
solicitors

CRAVEN ARMS
Community Food
Initiative

Onny Meadows Walks

Explore the Onny Meadows and riverside – there's always something new to discover!

